

# The Goods and the Motivation of Believing

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## 1. EXPLORATION AND ITS GOODS

As epistemologists we are concerned with the processes and procedures involved in the *exploration* of ourselves and the world around us. Exploration comes in a wide range of forms, from the inattentive registering of new information into our belief systems as we pursue our projects, to the inquiries institutionalized in the natural and human sciences. Clearly, exploration is an activity that generates and embodies states and things of value, and so it should come as no surprise that the past twenty years has seen epistemologists turn to focus on exploration via the values that it embodies and generates—a change of perspective that Wayne Riggs (2006) has called ‘the value turn in epistemology’.<sup>1</sup> Put most generally, those involved in the value turn concentrate on the ways in which exploration contributes to the goodness of life. I suspect that this change of focus will, over time, prove useful, as it will (among other things) lead epistemologists to ask different questions about the same terrain. The present paper is intended as an illustration of this potential; I will be working towards pressing two questions in epistemology that emerge with great clarity when we look at exploration with an eye to the values that it generates.<sup>2</sup>

The starting point for my discussion is the thought that *believing* results in or embodies a range of *goods*; I will approach the values of exploration, in other words, through *doxastic goods*. Doxastic goods correspond to the ways in which believing is a valuable state, or contributes to valuable states or things. As with all starting points, this one is by no means innocent.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the more influential works in the Value Turn are Craig 1990; Alston 1993; Kvanvig 2003.

<sup>2</sup> It would be misleading to characterize this paper (or the value turn in general) as an exploration of the analogies and disanalogies between belief and action. Such a characterization would be motivated, I suspect, by the regrettable fact that value theorists have focused almost solely upon the values associated with voluntary action, and that, consequently, we understand them better than we do the values associated with exploration.

First, this starting point ignores stages, processes, and states involved in exploration other than believing. Inquiry also includes, for example, a phase that aims not at beliefs but at *questions*, a stage in which problems are raised and developed, and their importance discussed. This process, of recognizing our own ignorance and determining which aspects of our ignorance should be rectified, is not separate from inquiry; it is part of inquiry, with its own procedures, criteria for success, and goods. Particular inquirers engaged in the process of questioning may not see themselves as *at all* involved in the pursuit of belief. Furthermore, even if we ignore the questioning phase of inquiry, belief may not be the only or best aim of the 'later' or 'concluding' phase of inquiry. Perhaps the ultimate aim of inquiry is or should be some state distinct from belief. Bas van Fraassen has argued, for example, that the end product of theorizing should be something weaker than belief, a state he calls 'acceptance' (van Fraassen 1980).

A more significant concern about my starting point will be expressed by those who think that discussions of value should begin not with goods or benefits, but with norms and reasons. Proponents of this latter approach, who are often deontologists or Kantians, say that in many realms value should not be seen as residing in goods in the world, but should rather be understood in terms of our following or being able to follow norms and reasons. I do not wish to deny that this latter approach will, ultimately, prove to be the correct one to take regarding the values of exploration. However, as we will see, the extent and nature of doxastic reasons and norms have long been subjects of contention, and by approaching this area via the goods we gain in virtue of believing, we may find new ground for advancing the discussion.

The following is a list of some possible doxastic goods, which I will hereafter refer to as the 'List':

- the feeling of well-being or happiness that a belief can give us;
- the value of holding an emotion whose appropriateness is informed by an appropriate belief;<sup>3</sup>
- the value of being characterized by a virtue which is (partly) constituted by belief or is appropriately informed by a belief;
- the value of a relationship which is made possible or better because of a belief;
- the value of belonging to a social group in virtue of one's beliefs;
- the value of acting successfully on the basis of an appropriate belief;
- the value of believing something simple or useful;
- the credit I obtain or deserve when I am responsible for believing a truth or holding a justified belief;

<sup>3</sup> I use the word 'appropriate' here (and elsewhere in this list) rather than 'true', because many doxastic goods can accrue to us whether or not the belief that delivers the good is true.

- the value of believing something that will explain a wide range of phenomena;
- the value of believing something that fits with the rest of my belief system;
- the value gained by truly believing, by justifiably believing, or by justifiably *and* truly believing;
- the value gained by knowing.

As we can see, doxastic goods are by no means a trivial subset of the values of exploration. On the contrary, believing seems to provide or give access to an enormous range of goods. The List may look, at first glance, uncontentious. However, some philosophers would take issue with the List as I have presented it. They would want either to question whether many of the members on the List are, really, doxastic goods, or to stress a distinction between some of the goods on the List and others. The considerations that lead them to such responses are the central concern of this paper.

Perhaps the most prominent dispute regarding the List is that between so-called Evidentialists and Pragmatists—a debate going back in recent history to the work of W. K. Clifford (1887/1999) and William James (1923). This debate hinges upon whether believing in order to attain particular entries on the List are cases in which believing *per se* goes well. The Evidentialist says the members towards the top of the List are not germane to the nature of believing; believing in order to achieve happiness or group-belonging is not an instance of good believing. As a consequence, the Evidentialist says that the goods at the top of the List (if they are *doxastic* goods at all) do not provide us with reasons to believe (although they may provide us with reasons to act *so as* to believe). The Pragmatist, in contrast, denies that (at least some of) the entries towards the top of the List are not reasons to believe; for her, an agent's believing in order to gain happiness or group belonging may by that very fact be an instance of good believing.

My primary concern in this paper is not with the debate between the Evidentialist and Pragmatist, although some of what I say will have a bearing on this debate.<sup>4</sup> Rather, I am here interested more generally in what should be on the table as we talk about the various goods of believing. More precisely, I will be arguing that one consideration that must not be ignored is the ability of a doxastic good to *motivate* belief.<sup>5</sup> The plan of the remaining three sections of this paper is thus. In the Section 2 I argue that some doxastic goods are *surreptitious*

<sup>4</sup> My sympathies with the Evidentialist position, some of which I have pressed in Jones 2004, will be evident, but defending Evidentialism is not my primary aim here.

<sup>5</sup> When I speak of the 'motivation of belief', as I will throughout this paper, this phrase should not be understood in the more technical sense of 'motivated belief' that is found in work on self-deception and wishful thinking (e.g. Pears 1984). Rather, the 'motivation of belief' refers to any process in which an agent is motivated (moved, caused, led) by some consideration to adopt a belief.

*motivators*; that is, some doxastic goods are such that in so far as they work to bring about belief, they must do so without the agent herself being aware of their so working. The existence of surreptitious motivators raises two questions, which I address in the remaining two sections of this paper. First, I ask, 'Do surreptitious doxastic goods provide us with reasons to believe?' Recent work in value theory on the relationship between reasons and motives suggests an argument for the following claim: if a good cannot consciously motivate a believer to believe, then that good cannot provide a reason to believe. I am sympathetic to this position, and will rehearse three arguments for it. The question I turn to in Section 4 is the following, 'Is it possible that the important exploratory values in our lives are surreptitious motivators?' My discussion of this second question will involve looking at the so-called credit account of the value of knowledge, which conceives of the value of knowledge as a surreptitious motivator. Questioning whether the credit account is acceptable, I will end with a brief look at an alternative way of conceiving of knowledge and its value.

## 2. THE SURREPTITIOUS GOODS OF BELIEVING

The goods that we receive in virtue of believing fall into two categories, according to their ability to bring about belief *in the light of our conscious consideration of them*. Some doxastic goods are such that my consciously realizing that coming to believe that *p* will (or already does) allow me to attain them can, itself, determine my belief that *p*. Other doxastic goods, however, cannot. The latter can only work *surreptitiously* in bringing about belief; they cannot bring about belief in a way that is 'open' to the believer.

The core of the phenomenon is the following: many of the benefits that can be gained from believing are such that the agent's thinking that she believes what she does *in order to* gain that benefit is in tension with the belief itself. I may believe that my sick mother is recovering from her illness, and I may recognize that this belief makes me feel relief. However, in so far as I think that my belief is dependent upon my feeling relief—that I am believing that my mother is recovering only in order to feel relief—so far will that belief be weakened. Another example: I may believe that God exists, and I may recognize the goods that this belief gives me (e.g. alleviates my fear of death, increases my chances of immortality), but as long as I continue to believe that God exists, I will not see my belief as being wholly *dependent upon* my concern for these goods. My believing that *p* is incompatible with my seeing my doing so as determined by my concern for these kinds of gains.

This feature of believing separates it from other truth-aimed states like guessing, speculating, or conjecturing. It is true that when I guess or speculate, as when I believe, I am after a truth about the subject matter before me (Velleman 2000). However, in contrast to belief, I can be fully aware that I am guessing,

speculating, or conjecturing *right now* because of other goods that these states give me. I can in full awareness have each of the following thoughts, for example: I am guessing that *p* now because I am playing a trivia game; I am speculating that *p* now because I have a student before me and I need to give her some ideas; I am conjecturing that *p* right now because I am having a friendly conversation about politics or history, and I find it enjoyable to do so. In all of these cases I see myself as aiming at a truth, but I also see each of these states as a *pressurized*, *motivated*, or *enjoyable* aiming at truth. Belief is different. One of my beliefs *may be* a pressurized, motivated, or enjoyable aiming at truth, but I cannot see it as such. As David Owens has written, 'The guesser can [decide what to guess] by reflecting on how best to strike a balance between the goal of truth and other goals her guessing serves; the believer cannot' (Owens 2002: 395). Someone can see herself as guessing that *p* (rather than that *q*) in order to win a game or gain a prize, but she cannot see her belief this way. In acknowledging that I have a belief that *p*, I characterize myself as being in a state *only* for the purpose of being committed to a truth (or knowledge, or understanding) about the subject matter at hand.

The stronger I think that my commitment is held in the light of a concern for this kind of gain, the stronger will be my inclination to characterize this as something other than a belief. We all suspect that some of our beliefs are affected by certain surreptitious determinants; to cite just one familiar example: given my pervasive agreement with my friends, colleagues, and peers, I often find myself with the suspicion that my personal relationship with them—or feelings for them—has had an effect on my beliefs, an effect that is not dependent upon my having some reason to think that this person is more likely to have true beliefs about the subject matter upon which we agree. However, the stronger these suspicions are, the weaker is the belief itself. As Michael Ayers has written, 'In so far as we doubt that grounds wholly determine our belief, so far is our belief itself subjectively insecure' (Ayers 1991: 148).

It is a familiar feature of folk psychology that we say of other persons (or ourselves in the past) that they are (or we were) believing in order to gain relief or to avoid pain. We say that a believer is engaging in wishful thought, or that she believes that *p* because it is too painful to believe otherwise. However, it is revealing that we are very reluctant to accept that person's explaining her own belief in this way. Imagine being confronted with a friend, Jones, who tells you that he believes that it will be sunny tomorrow because he wants to have a picnic. Jones is telling you that he believes something about the weather because of his own wishes for what the weather will be like. It seems clear, however, that you would not take Jones's claims at face value. You would not accept his assertion of both the belief *and* the explanation. Instead, you would tend to re-interpret Jones's statement: either he believes that it will be sunny tomorrow and he is joking about the explanation, or he is merely confessing that he does not really believe that it is going to be sunny tomorrow at all. The best explanation for this

is that we recognize that Jones's believing something is in tension with his seeing it as an attempt to gain such a good.

Some of the goods on the List are going to be surreptitious, but not all of them. A believer can readily recognize that her believing that  $p$  was and is motivated by a concern to grasp a truth about a subject matter. She wants, for example, a true belief about the status of her mother's health, and she believes that her mother's health is not improving because her father (whom she trusts) told her so. She can readily acknowledge the immediate good of this belief—that of gaining the true belief about her mother's health that she sought. And she can readily acknowledge that *achieving this good* is what motivated her to hold this belief. She believes what she does because she wants a truth about her mother's health. Grasping a truth is one of the ways in which believing can go well, and one of the ways in which exploration can be successful; it is one of the things that we seek from believing, and one of the goods that results from it. However, in contrast to the other goods that have been discussed in the present section, it is not true that my thinking that I have a belief because it is true interferes with my holding the belief. To recognize that I believe that  $p$  in order to have a true belief about some subject matter is not in tension with believing that  $p$ . On the contrary, this explanation of my belief is readily acknowledgeable by me.

In sum, we can divide the members of the List into those that are *acknowledgeable* or *open* motivators, and those that must motivate *surreptitiously*. The latter cannot be recognized by the believer herself as playing a determining role in her belief. They can be admitted in third-personal doxastic explanations, but not in first-personal, present-tense doxastic explanations. I can be motivated to believe something by a concern for surreptitious goods that I might get from such a belief, but my doing so must be hidden from me.<sup>6</sup>

Why does it matter, to questions regarding the values of exploration, that some doxastic goods are surreptitious? This is the question that I will be answering in the remainder of this paper.

### 3. GOODS, REASONS, AND MOTIVATION

The relationship between goods, reasons, and motivation is both intricate and contested. I have two aims in this section: (i) to illustrate the two main sources of disagreement over the relationship among this trio of notions, and (ii) to support my sympathy for one view of the relationship between doxastic reasons and doxastic motivation, a view that entails that the surreptitiously motivating goods on the List are either not goods at all or not goods that can provide us with reasons to believe.

<sup>6</sup> The claim of this section is discussed and defended at length in Jones 2002. There I also defend the claim that this is a necessary phenomenon, constitutive of believing, a claim that need not be defended here.

### 3.1. Reasons and Motivation, Reasons and Goods: A Rough Map

The main source of disagreement in the debate over the relationship between reasons and motivation arises with the following question: if Jones is in the presence of a reason to  $\emptyset$ , is he *necessarily* in the presence of a *potential motivator* of his  $\emptyset$ -ing? Must, in other words, Jones's reason to  $\emptyset$  also be something that can move him to  $\emptyset$ ?

Those who answer this question negatively will claim that it is at least possible that there is a reason for Jones to  $\emptyset$  even though it would in no way be possible for Jones to be motivated by that reason to  $\emptyset$ . Whether or not Jones's reason to  $\emptyset$  can motivate him is *contingent* (e.g. upon Jones's psychological status). In a recent discussion of reasons, Allan Gibbard eloquently spells out this view. He writes,

The Marquis, suppose, has no motivation to keep from hurting me, and no motivation could be aroused by sheer information, vivid awareness, and moves toward consistency. I can still say that he has reason not to kick me: kicking me would hurt me, and that, in and of itself, is reason not to kick me. (Gibbard 2003: 291)

On this conception of reasons, a reason to  $\emptyset$  is *simply* something that *favours*  $\emptyset$ -ing, irrespective of whether it has the potential to motivate any particular agent to  $\emptyset$ .

While other writers agree that reasons to  $\emptyset$  favour  $\emptyset$ -ing, they think that this is only part of the story. This is only one side of reasons, their *normative* side. However, they will continue, reasons also have another side, in that they can make a difference to what we do. They are also, by their nature, that *in the light of which* we do something.<sup>7</sup> Reasons, according to this position, have a *motivating* side in addition to their normative side.<sup>8</sup> On this position, it is constitutive of a reason that it be a potential motivator of an agent's behaviour. Accordingly, in order to determine whether something provides a reason to  $\emptyset$ , we also have to determine that it has the potential to motivate; if Jones could not have acted or believed given the consideration of  $\emptyset$ , then  $\emptyset$  cannot be considered one of Jones's reasons.<sup>9</sup> Reasons are necessarily potential motivators.

The claim that reasons are necessarily potential motivators is complicated by the various ways in which we can understand what it means to be a 'potential motivator'. A vivid example of this arises in the debate between Bernard Williams (1980; 1995) and John McDowell (1995a) over 'internal and external reasons'. Both agree that reasons are necessarily potential motivators, that 'Any reason

<sup>7</sup> It is important that the italicized phrase in this sentence be left imprecise, as different ways of making it more precise define the camps that are the concern of this section. A closely related (but just as loose and more awkward) phrase is 'in response to the consideration of which'.

<sup>8</sup> The conception of reasons as having 'two sides' comes from Dancy's 2002: ch 1.

<sup>9</sup> For explicit defences of this position, see Williams 1980 and Dancy 1994.

for action must be something that *could* explain someone's acting in the way for which it is a reason' (McDowell 1995a: 70). However, Williams argues that nothing counts as a reason for Jones to do something unless it can, *by Jones's own deliberation*, be brought within what Williams calls Jones's 'motivational set'. An agent does not have a reason to  $\emptyset$  unless it is possible for that agent to come to desire  $\emptyset$ -ing or its possible result by deliberation. Jones does not have reason to  $\emptyset$  unless Jones can, by deliberation, come to see  $\emptyset$ -ing as desirable. McDowell has a more liberal view than Williams with respect to the 'could' here, that is, with respect to what counts as a potential motivator. He suggests that something should be seen as a potential motivator—and, thus, a reason—for Jones to do something even though it could only reach Jones's 'motivational set' by some route other than deliberation.

As a consequence, Williams's list of potential reasons is smaller than McDowell's. By having a *stricter* conception of a potential motivator, Williams rules out certain reasons—those he calls 'external'. On the other hand, by being more *liberal* in the ways in which a reason can motivate behaviour, McDowell allows, we might say, for the existence of more (kinds of) reasons, including those that are external. These two categories—strict and liberal—are *relative* to each other, and not absolute; Williams has a *more* restricted attitude towards potential motivation than McDowell.

So, we have three positions on the relationship between reasons and motivation. Proponents of the position that denies a necessary relationship between reasons and motivation hold that *anything that favours*  $\emptyset$ -ing gives one a *prima facie* reason to  $\emptyset$ , independently of whether or not it has the potential to motivate. Their opponents claim that reasons are necessarily potential motivators. Once one occupies this latter position, then one's view of what it means to be a potential motivator becomes important, and will necessarily affect one's view of whether something is or is not a reason. Figure 6.1 lays out these various positions. There are various ways in which one can have a more or less restricted view of potential motivators. Williams and McDowell show us one way—in terms of accessibility via deliberation—but we will see a different way—in terms of surreptitiousness—in a moment.

In the doxastic realm, I think that the right-hand, 'stricter' view of doxastic reasons and their motivating power is the most attractive. Before defending this, however, I want to briefly look at the two views of the relationship between goods and reasons. On the first, all goods are reasons; if something does not provide us with a reason, then it *ipso facto* is not a good. On the second position, something can be a good even if it does not provide a reason.

On the first view, a good has a straightforward and internal relationship to a reason: a good is necessarily something that gives me a reason for behaving—acting, believing, feeling—in some way or another with respect to it. If something of value is attainable, creatable, or conservable, then I *ipso facto* have a *prima facie* reason to behave in such a way that I can attain that good,

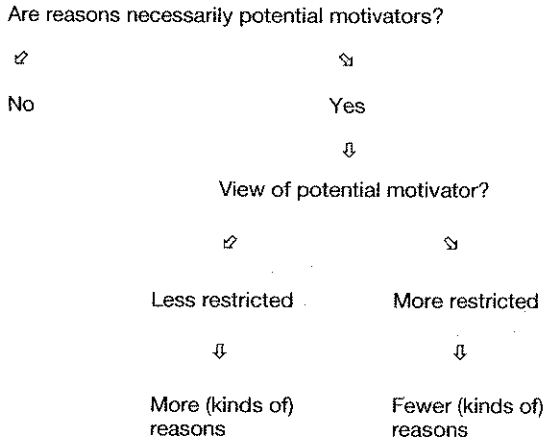


Figure 6.1.

bring it about, preserve it, or respect it. As a *prima facie* reason, it can be overridden by a conflicting good (reason), but if something is a good, it provides a reason nonetheless. Joseph Raz expresses this straightforward conception of the relationship between goods and reasons when he writes,

In general the value of what has value, and the action its value is a reason for, are intrinsically connected. We cannot understand what is of value [e.g.] in a party without understanding what [a party] is a reason for, that is, when one has reason to go to one, and how one behaves at a party. . . . What goes for parties goes for musical compositions, mountaineering, philosophy, love, and everything else. (Raz 2001: 164–5)

To see something as being of value, this passage claims, is necessarily to see it as providing one with a reason to behave in such a way as to attain, preserve, or respect it. If something does not or cannot, for some reason, provide us with a reason to act, feel or believe, then it thereby does not count as a good. Such a thing might *seem* to us, at first, to be a good, but were we to discover that it does not after all provide us with a reason, then it would be thereby revealed to be only an *apparent good*, and not a good at all.

The alternative position denies this necessary link between goods and reasons. While goods are the kind of thing that as a matter of fact provide us with reasons, something can still be a good, this position allows, even though it does not provide someone with a reason. On this view, a good or valuable thing or state of affairs need not be related to a person or persons in such a way that it can drive them to act or believe. On the contrary, a person may be *alienated* in some way (e.g. spatially, temporally, cognitively, motivationally) from a good such that it does not or cannot provide them with reasons; nonetheless, this does not disqualify it from being a good.

Because the proponent of the stricter view of reasons and motivation—recall the right-hand position of Figure 6.1—rules out certain *apparent* things or states of value as providing us with reasons, she must face a choice between these two positions on goods and reasons. The proponent of the stricter view says that something can only provide us with a reason to  $\emptyset$  if it is able to motivate us in a certain way. So: if  $X$  cannot so motivate us, is it a good or not? The proponent of the first position on goods and their relationship to reasons says that if  $X$  cannot provide us with a reason to  $\emptyset$ , then it is not a good; the proponent of the second position says that  $X$  may still count as a good even though it cannot provide us with a reason to  $\emptyset$ .

### 3.2. Interrogating the List

The discussion of the previous few pages is meant to show that there is a range of questions to be asked in a discussion of possible goods. It is time to consider how such questions should be brought to bear on our List of possible doxastic goods from Section 1. I have been suggesting that the first question we should ask about a member of the List is the following:

(Q1) Can it provide someone with a reason to believe something?

Our answer to this question depends upon our answer to a second question:

(Q2) Are reasons necessarily potential motivators?

Those who respond in the negative will say that whether a member of the list can motivate belief is irrelevant to its status as a doxastic reason; this is the position depicted on the left-hand side of Figure 6.1. Those who claim, on the other hand, that reasons must be potential motivators will say that we must look at the motivating power of a member of the list in order to determine whether it can provide us with a doxastic reason.

We saw in Section 2 that some of the members of the List can only bring about belief in a surreptitious manner. A believer cannot be led to belief by the conscious consideration of those members towards the top of the List. So, those who think that reasons must be potential motivators now have a third question to answer:

(Q3) Must doxastic reasons be able to motivate consciously?

A lenient view of potential motivation (recall the middle position in Figure 6.1) will allow that reasons can motivate surreptitiously. If someone has believed in order to gain some benefit, then, according to this lenient position, we can see the believer as having believed for a reason (i.e. to gain the benefit) *even if* the belief-formation had to proceed unconsciously. Even the surreptitious goods on the List can be doxastic reasons. A stricter view of potential motivation (the right-hand position in Figure 6.1), on the other hand, will say that surreptitious

motivation is not good enough. If someone can only unconsciously be brought to believe in the light of considering a member of the List, then that member will not count as a doxastic reason. Only non-surreptitious motivators are potential reasons to believe.

In the next sub-section, I will rehearse three arguments for a version of this stricter view of doxastic reasons. As we saw in the previous sub-section, however, the proponent of such a strict view has a fourth question to answer:

- (Q4) Are the non-surreptitious motivators on the List only *apparent* doxastic goods, or are they *bona fide* goods that do not provide us with doxastic reasons?

I will not look at reasons that the proponent of the stricter position may give for adopting either of the positions described in (Q4). Nonetheless, even if she ends up adopting the weaker of the two options, and allows that all members of the List are *bona fide* goods, her answers to the first three of our questions reveals her denial of something significant to some of the members of the List, namely that they can provide us with reasons to believe anything at all.

### 3.3. The Case against Surreptitious Goods as Reasons

The case for a strict position on doxastic reasons can be summarized into the following argument:

#### The Argument

Something is or provides us with a reason to believe only if it can motivate belief in the light of the believer's conscious consideration of it. Doxastic goods that can only motivate surreptitiously, therefore, do not provide us with *reasons* to believe (although they may provide us with reasons to *act* so as to gain a belief). If they are goods at all, then they are, at best, beneficial side-effects of believing.

Analogously to Bernard Williams's dismissal of external reasons in the light of his strictures on action motivation, we here have a serious demotion of surreptitious doxastic goods in the light of strictures on doxastic motivation: either they do not exist at all, or they cannot provide us with doxastic reasons. The crux of the argument is in its restriction on what counts as a reason to believe. If my being aware of some good that I will gain by believing cannot consciously lead me to believe, then the thing I am aware of cannot provide me with a reason to believe. If the members towards the top of the List are goods, they are not goods that can provide reasons to believe. It might be *to my advantage* to believe in order to gain such goods, and such goods might provide me with reasons to *act* so as to believe (*à la Pascal*), but it cannot itself be or provide a reason to believe.

Can the Argument provide us with an argument for Evidentialism, for the view that only truth-aimed reasons are doxastic reasons? Indeed it can, and I am

aware of two recent attempts, by Jonathan Adler (2002) and Nishi Shah (2006), to use something like the Argument to establish Evidentialism. However, the Argument needs supplementing in order to provide a case for Evidentialism. First, the Evidentialist needs to defend an extra claim to get from the conclusion of the Argument to her position. The conclusion of the Argument is

- (1) Only non-surreptitious doxastic goods provide us with reasons to believe.

What the Evidentialist wants is

- (E) Only truth-related goods provide us with reasons to believe.

For all that (1) tells us, there might be a doxastic good that does not motivate surreptitiously, but which generates reasons that are not truth-related. So, the Evidentialist needs to defend the claim that

- (2) All non-surreptitious doxastic goods are truth-related.

Various recent discussions of the phenomenon of *transparency* in conscious doxastic deliberation have revealed the plausibility of (2).<sup>10</sup> As Shah, for example, writes, ‘the [conscious] deliberative question *whether to believe that p* inevitably gives way to the factual question *whether p*’ (2006: 481). When consciously reflecting on whether to believe or continue believing that *p*, *all* that we take to be relevant are considerations that bear upon whether or not it is true that *p*. If this is right, then non-surreptitious doxastic goods—those which we can pay attention to in conscious doxastic deliberation—will be co-extensive with those goods that generate truth-related reasons.

More fundamentally, the Argument itself needs substantiation; we need a *reason* to believe its main premise, namely that doxastic reasons cannot motivate surreptitiously. We need a reason not to accept either the middle or left-hand position in Figure 6.1—either the view that allows that non-deliberating doxastic motivators can be reasons to believe, or the view that wholly ignores a good’s ability to motivate in considering it to be a reason. At issue, clearly, is the nature of a reason, an enormous topic, and one that I cannot hope to make a significant contribution to here. Nonetheless, I want to briefly gesture towards three considerations in favour of the more restricted view, looking first at Jonathan Adler’s recent defence of Evidentialism in the first chapter of his book *Belief’s Own Ethics* (Adler 2002).<sup>11</sup>

Adler argues that Evidentialism can be shown to be true by a close examination of the concept of *belief*. Adler defends a claim closely related to that defended above in Section 2: while it is true that beliefs can be formed and held on the basis

<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive recent discussion of transparency can be found in Moran (2001). Also see recent work by David Velleman and Nishi Shah.

<sup>11</sup> I will be presenting a version of Adler’s position that is weaker (and I think more plausible) than his own.

of no epistemic evidence at all, this fact cannot be recognized by the conscious believer. Adler's explanation of this phenomenon is that the concept of belief has strict norms built into it, and among them is the norm that one should believe something only if one is believing on the basis of epistemic evidence. The reason that it is impossible to consciously believe in order to gain non-epistemic goods, is that 'in first-person awareness we recognize the demands of belief' (2002: 52); in particular, we recognize both that a norm for believing is to be held only on the basis of epistemic evidence *and* that we are not following this norm.

Put in terms that I have been using in this paper, Adler's suggestion seems to be this: the fact that certain goods can only motivate surreptitiously reveals that believing in order to gain such goods is a violation of the norms of believing. The key player in Adler's argument is conscious reflection; conscious, reflective believing is necessarily going to be a case of believing in accordance with (what the believer takes to be) the basic norms of belief. Any case of believing that *must* be non-conscious and non-reflective, therefore, must be a case of believing that violates the basic norms of belief. Any good on the List that must motivate belief behind the scenes, as it were, must not be a motivation in accordance with the norms of believing. Therefore, surreptitious goods—which must work behind the scenes—are working illicitly. Believing on the basis of surreptitious goods is illicit, a violation of the basic norms of believing, and so surreptitious goods do not provide us with reasons to believe. While some of the details of Adler's argument need filling in, I find its central thought plausible: the fact that our reflective awareness blocks certain goods as being attained in believing is a function of our being aware that believing in order to gain such goods is not a case of believing going well.

A second defence of the Argument hinges, like the first, on thinking of doxastic reasons as intimately related to norms governing believing. Norms need be neither consciously considered nor consciously followed. I can adhere to a norm without ever having thought explicitly about what that norm is. Norms of language and concept-use are well-known examples. Jones's using a concept in a certain way at a certain time can be explained in virtue of her accepting and following a particular norm, even though Jones could not state the norm that she is following. Nor, *a fortiori*, need it be true that in order to have my behaviour dictated by a norm, I must be thinking about the norm at the time of use. I can follow a norm without being aware of what I am doing, without, that is, knowing what norm I am behaving in accordance with. Norms play a pervasive role in our lives, but in doing so they often remain in the background, hidden from our conscious purview of what we are doing. There is a difference, however, between claiming that a norm *need not* be consciously followed, and claiming that it *cannot* be consciously followed. The latter makes no sense. It is essential to something's being a norm that it be such that we are able, reflectively, to 'lead ourselves to follow it'. Put succinctly, even if not consciously followed, a norm must be consciously followable. Behaving on the basis of an accepted norm is

necessarily to behave on the basis of something that one *can* consciously endorse and follow.

Is that which is true of norms also true of reasons? Any answer here will be controversial, but the positive response has its adherents. Christine Korsgaard, for example, writes in *The Sources of Normativity* that 'the normative word "reason" refers to a kind of reflective success' (1996: 93). And speaking of doxastic reasoning in particular, Bill Brewer writes that: 'Epistemically productive reasoning is . . . a compulsion in thought *by reason*, and as such always involves some conscious understanding of why one is right in one's conclusions' (1995: 242).<sup>12</sup> If these thoughts are along the right line, that is, if reasons are like norms in possessing the necessary characteristic of being consciously followable, then it would follow that surreptitious doxastic goods cannot provide us with reasons, for a surreptitious doxastic good cannot, by its very nature, allow a conscious awareness of being led us to believe.

A third, closely related, consideration that supports the Argument can be found earlier in Korsgaard's discussion in *The Sources of Normativity*. She is concerned, at the outset, with the conditions upon an acceptable portrayal of our adherence to morality.

[A] successful normative theory must meet a condition which is sometimes called 'transparency' . . . If a theory's explanation of how morality motivates us essentially depends on the fact that the source or nature of our motives is concealed from us, or that we often act blindly or from habit, then it lacks transparency. The true nature of moral motives must not be concealed from the agent's point of view if those motives are to be efficacious . . .

Otherwise, Korsgaard claims, the theory would not be a *normative* theory at all:

A normative moral theory must be one that allows us to act in the full light of knowledge of what morality is and why we are susceptible to its influences, and at the same time to believe that our actions are justified and make sense. (Korsgaard 1996: 17)<sup>13</sup>

A non-transparent moral theory would ultimately amount to a portrayal of moral behaviour as motivated by considerations that are hidden from us. Similarly, a non-transparent theory of believing would portray believing as motivated by considerations that are hidden from us.

Why would this be a problem? Why would it matter if a moral or doxastic theory portrays us as motivated by hidden considerations? One thought is that in so far as it does, it would portray us as diminished agents. It is crucial to our identity as agents that we can allow reflective adherence to reasons to guide our lives. It is because it is possible for me to act *because* and *in the light of* my reflection upon what I think is the right thing to do, that I am an agent of

<sup>12</sup> See also Millar 2004: ch 7.

<sup>13</sup> Korsgaard's use of the word 'transparency', which is here being used to characterize a *theory*, differs from the use of the same word discussed on p. 150, where it is used to characterize *believing*.

moral action. Similarly, it is because it is possible for me to believe *because* and *in the light of* my reflection upon what I think is the right thing to believe, that I am a doxastic agent. While it is clearly true that we are sometimes moved to believe on the basis of hidden motives (e.g. when we engage in wishful thinking or self-deception), in so far as we do so we are not believing as agents. My doxastic agency is essentially tied up with the fact that reasons can, in my full awareness, dictate what I do. If we are doxastic agents, goes this thought, then it must be that we are at least capable of following doxastic reasons. The realm of reason-following is the realm of agency. A theorist who allows there to be reasons that are not consciously followable would be, on this account, a theorist confused about the intimate relationship between reasons, conscious following, and agency.

These three considerations in favour of the claim that surreptitious doxastic goods do not provide us with reasons to believe seem to me to have considerable strength. However, I do not take any of them (or their conjunction) to be decisive, especially in the abbreviated version presented here. At a minimum, however, all three point towards the large issues—among them self-reflection, norms, and our doxastic agency—that need exploring as we work to decide the relevance of surreptitiousness to doxastic reasons and goods.

#### 4. HOW SIGNIFICANT CAN A SURREPTITIOUS VALUE BE?

##### 4.1. The Attenuated Role of Surreptitious Goods

Surreptitious doxastic goods must be all but absent in two areas of our doxastic lives. First, surreptitious doxastic goods can be of little or no positive significance in our reflective view of ourselves as believers. This is a consequence of the fact that they will not be something that we consider in our deliberations about what to believe. As Richard Foley has astutely observed, 'when people reflect upon what reasons they have to believe something . . . they rarely even consider the practical advantages that might accrue to them by believing it' (Foley 1987: 214–15). In my own doxastic deliberation, in considering what to believe, I do not focus on all of the goods that may accrue to me in coming to believe one thing rather than another. The reason for this, as we saw above, is that a believer cannot acknowledge that he believes out of a concern for what Foley calls 'practical advantages'.

As we saw above, doxastic deliberation is transparent; in deliberating about what to believe, we focus not upon the belief and its features, but upon the world and what we know of it, upon what features the world is likely to have or not have. That, and not 'practical advantage', is the locus of doxastic reflection. As a consequence, surreptitious doxastic goods are not going to loom large in our

views of ourselves, our lives, and the direction that we want our lives to go. We are not going to rank surreptitious believing as an important feature of ourselves; we are not going to seek out surreptitious believing as a significant goal; we are not going to be proud of or prize ourselves as surreptitious believers. Again, the reason for this is that surreptitious doxastic goods are, as their name implies, hidden from us.

A second arena from which surreptitious goods will be almost wholly absent is that of doxastic discourse; surreptitious goods can play little role in *argumentation*. Again, this is something that Foley has pointed out to us: 'Likewise, when someone tries to convince another person that he has reasons to believe something, they rarely even mention the practical benefits that might result from believing it' (Foley 1987: 215). The 'practical benefits' of believing are rarely spoken of in our doxastic discourse. In attempting to convince someone of something, we almost never raise these kinds of benefits (e.g. happiness, relief, fame) that a believer will attain from doing so. Scientists, philosophers, historians, and those engaged in informal arguments at the pub do not attempt to win over their opponents by pointing out that goods of this ilk will accrue to them by converting to the other side. An argumentative move of the form 'You should believe that  $p$ , because it will make you happy or bring you fame', is almost wholly impotent to move belief.

I say *almost* impotent, because, while a surreptitious doxastic good cannot consciously motivate belief, it can consciously motivate *action*. In particular, such a good can motivate an action *that is meant to lead to belief*. I may act with the intention of gaining the belief that  $p$ , in full awareness that what I hope to gain is a surreptitious good from this belief. This, indeed, is what Blaise Pascal was attempting to get his readers to do in the *Pensées*. After arguing that we should believe in the Articles of Faith because of the pragmatic benefit it will give us, Pascal suggests engaging in behaviour that will lead to such belief. 'Learn from those who were once bound like you and who now wager all they have', goes his famous advice to his reader, 'They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on. That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile' (Pascal 1966, fragment 418, Lafuma numbering).

Pascal recognized that even though a desire for salvation (or a fear of damnation) cannot in full awareness lead one to believe, it can lead one to act in order to gain the belief. It is the latter that he offers as a way to belief. He also recognized that we do not immediately respond with belief to the prospect of this kind of doxastic good; we can only seek such goods indirectly. What is more, even if Pascal's indirect argument for belief works on one of his readers, its success must, in the end, be hidden from the believer. Once I become a Pascalian believer, I can recognize that it was the desire for immortality led me to follow Pascal's advice to *act* in certain ways; however, I cannot think that my *believing* in God's existence depends upon my desire

for immortality. Pascalian belief-formation must, in a sense, cover its own tracks.<sup>14</sup>

In short, surreptitious goods must by and large drop out of our evaluative views of ourselves and discourse directed at convincing or undermining belief. As a consequence, questions arise as to what explanatory role we can give them in our accounting for the goods of exploration.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2. The Value of Knowledge as Surreptitious

One of the primary objectives of those involved in the value turn in epistemology is to describe and explain the more important doxastic values. How does good believing contribute to the value of being virtuous, of relationships, of social belonging? What, if anything, is the value of holding a belief that aids explanation or that coheres with other beliefs I have? What, precisely, is the value of holding a true or justified belief, or of possessing knowledge? As we proceed in answering such questions, it will emerge that some doxastic values are more important than others, that some are more central or fundamental in our lives. For these, the question arises, 'Can an *important* value be one that only surreptitiously motivates?'

I feel a strong inclination to deny that it can, to insist that the more important a value is, the more open it must be in its effect upon us. Indeed, one might wonder how what we view to be an important value could become so viewed were it *not* open. How could a surreptitious value, one that only worked behind the scenes, come to *seem* important? However, an initially plausible account of one of the more important doxastic values—that of knowledge—appeals to a surreptitious motivator. In this final part of the paper, I turn to this account and the implications of its dealing in surreptitious currency.

One of the more elusive targets in the burgeoning discussion of epistemic values has been an explanation of the value of knowledge. Sometimes called the 'value problem', the question can be put in various ways. What value accrues to us as knowers that we do not gain from being true believers? What accounts for the value that we place on knowledge over that of *mere* true belief (i.e. true belief

<sup>14</sup> For a more extensive discussion of Pascal on this issue, see Jones 1998.

<sup>15</sup> In this context, it may be worth comparing surreptitious doxastic goods to surreptitious ethical virtues. Here is Bernard Williams, for example, on *generosity*: 'It is not the basic characteristic of a generous man's deliberations that they use the premise "I am a generous man" . . . Though the generous man is partly characterized by what goes into his deliberations, it is not that what goes into them are reflections on his generosity.' From Williams 1976. In the reprint in Williams 1981 the passage is at p. 48. And here is Julia Driver describing *modesty*: 'A desired feature of any account of modesty is that it explain the oddity of: (1) I am modest. (1) seems to be oddly self-defeating. If I were to utter (1), the charitable person would think that I was joking. Others would think that I was being nonsensical.' And, again: 'an asymmetry exists between the self-ascription of the virtue and the other-ascription of it. I can ascribe the virtue to another, but I cannot coherently and sincerely ascribe it to myself' (Driver 1989: 375, 380).

that does not count as knowledge)? What is our concern for knowledge or being knowers a concern *for*?

On a widespread view of the difference between knowledge and true belief these questions do not allow for easy answers. According to this instrumentalist view, knowledge is a true belief with the property of *having been gained from good (e.g. warranted) position* or *having been gained by using a good (e.g. justifying, reliable) method*. But that account—in which good belief-forming methods are seen as only a *means* to getting true beliefs—leaves us without an obvious account of the value of knowledge. This is because it leaves us without an account of the value of a true belief achieved by good means *over* the value of a true belief *not* gotten by good means. In both situations *we have all that we seek*, namely a true belief. There is nothing of value, in this story, to distinguish a true belief gained from good means over one gained from some other means. To use an analogy: if *all* you wanted to do is to have gotten across a river, then it does not matter whether you used a reliable or unreliable, safe or unsafe, method, as long as you are on the other side. In this case, *having gotten across the river using a safe method* is no more valuable a state than *having gotten across using a risky method*. In both situations, one has achieved what one wanted to achieve.<sup>16</sup>

One initially plausible response to the value problem appeals to the notion of credit. The evaluative difference between possessing knowledge and possessing merely true belief, it is claimed, is that in the former case the believer is responsible for her possession of the true belief, and deserves credit for it. Just as we deserve credit for our successful actions, we also deserve credit for our successful beliefs. It is not that one actually *receives* credit from another person, in the form of praise or commendation; rather, it is that one has fulfilled the conditions under which praise or commendation might be appropriate. If commendation is to be given for Jones's belief, then Jones himself is the one to receive it. This account explains the value of knowledge, because, it is claimed, credit is valuable. Wayne Riggs summarizes the position thus:

A person who is causally efficacious in bringing about some positively valuable outcome is 'due' some amount of credit for having done so. . . . [W]e value coming to hold a true belief in a (sufficiently) non-accidental way because we get more epistemic credit for the true belief than we would have had we gotten it right accidentally. (Riggs 2002: 92–3)<sup>17</sup>

The value of knowledge lies in the credit that an agent deserves for accomplishing the task of gaining a true belief. Just as the state of *being a hero* is a valuable one because one deserves credit for some good deed, *being a knower* is a valuable state because one deserves credit for having gained a true belief.

Credit is something that we attain directly upon and in virtue of believing a true or warranted belief. However, like many of the doxastic goods discussed in

<sup>16</sup> To date, the most extensive discussion of the Value Problem is Kvanvig (2003).

<sup>17</sup> See also John Greco (2002).

Section 2, credit is a good that can only surreptitiously motivate one to believe. While my concern to gain a true or justified belief can consciously lead me to believe that *p*, my concern to gain *credit* for a justified true belief cannot. I cannot explain my believing that *p* as being done in order to gain credit for doing so, any more than I can explain my believing that *p* as being done in order to be famous or happy. Being in the state *deserving of epistemic credit* is not identical with the state *believing well enough to gain knowledge*; rather, the former state is achieved *in virtue of* the latter state. Credit is a pragmatic good that we gain *through* believing well enough to gain knowledge. So, if *achieving the good of credit* motivates a believer to believe, then it must do so surreptitiously. If the credit account is correct about the value of knowledge, then knowledge is a surreptitious doxastic good.<sup>18</sup>

The implications of surreptitiousness have already been described. Making knowledge into a surreptitious doxastic good relegates our concern for knowledge to a concern for that which can only surreptitiously motivate believing. Knowing, on the credit account, is not a good that we can openly recognize as being responsible for our believing, or which can openly lead us to believe. My conscious desire to be a knower is not itself, except indirectly, something that can lead me to be a knower; such a desire is not going to consciously work in achieving its fulfilment. In sum, the credit account must claim that my being a knower is the result of either a *hidden* concern to be a knower or an open concern for something *other than* knowledge. Consequently, on the credit account knowledge will not play a role in the interpersonal dialectical phenomena—testimony, advice, argument—in which we engage and which directly affects what beliefs we hold. Credit must play, at best, an attenuated role in these procedures. Advice or argument that runs, ‘You should believe that *p*, because in doing so you will get credit for doing so’ will not get me immediately to a belief any more than will the advice or argument, ‘You should believe that *p* because it will make you happy’. Appeals to credit in doxastic discourse will (unless presented as a Pascalian way) fall on deaf ears. Such appeals may work ‘behind the scenes’, but they will not directly and consciously affect belief as, say, an appeal to evidence would. My concern for knowledge will not, for example, lead me to trust the expert over the novice, or to respond to the good argument over the weak one; on the credit account, this doxastic behaviour is to be explained by some other concern (i.e. for true belief).

If the Argument from Section 3.3 is correct, then according to the credit theorist we have no *doxastic reason* to be a knower. That I will become a knower of *p*, or that I will gain knowledge that *p*, does not provide me with a reason to believe that *p*. In relegating the good of knowing to a surreptitious good, says

<sup>18</sup> This is not to say that the credit view of the value of knowing cannot be combined with another view of the value of knowing. My claims here apply only to the work that appeals to credit, by themselves, can do in explaining such value.

the proponent of the Argument, the credit theorist must deny that the good of knowing can provide us with reason to believe, and—depending upon her answer to (Q4)—may be forced to deny that knowing is a good of believing *at all*.

The proponent of the credit account can, of course, recognize that a desire for knowledge can openly motivate, and provide reason for, epistemic *action*. I can *act* in order to receive credit for doing so; the man who waits until the video camera is on before jumping in the lake to save the drowning victim looks to be acting more out of concern for his own credit than for his victim. The same is true for what we might call *epistemic actions*, actions that we undertake in order to achieve beliefs about the world. I can launch an experiment, or start a philosophy paper, or work on a mathematical proof, while being well aware that my primary concern is for getting credit for what I believe after the investigation is done. However, even though credit can in full awareness lead me to these actions, it cannot be what I think has determined my belief. Knowledge may be something I actively seek, and it may be something of which I am proud when I have attained it, but on the credit account my concern for being a knower will be at one remove from believing itself.

These points should come as no surprise to the defender of credit. Credit accounts work within a framework in which the aim of exploration is true belief. The value problem arises in the face of an instrumental view of epistemic justification, and the credit account gives us an answer to the value problem *within* this instrumentalist framework. However, in doing so, it accepts one prominent feature of this framework: knowledge is relegated to a secondary aim of exploration. By not rejecting the instrumentalist framework the proponent of the credit account must see the good of knowledge as something of a by-product of exploration. This is reflected in the fact—which I have just been pressing—that credit cannot play an open role in epistemic discourse, and in the fact that credit accounts cannot acknowledge more than an indirect motivating role for believing.

Is the fact that credit is a surreptitious motivator a strike against the credit answer to the value problem? It is if you think that the following is and *must be explained to be* a platitude: 'Even unsophisticated curiosity is a desire to know' (Williamson 2000: 31). If you think that *this* must be a starting point for the exploration of epistemic value, then, contrary to the credit theorist, you will think that we must conceive of exploration as aiming at knowledge and, consequently, that a desire or concern for knowledge itself must directly motivate our epistemic behaviour. You will think that something has gone quite deeply wrong in analytic epistemology, and you will advocate embarking on a search for a quite different view of exploration, one in which not (or not only) true belief, but *knowledge itself* is a goal of inquiry, something a concern for which motivates our exploratory behaviour. Acknowledging that our concern for knowledge plays a more fundamental role in exploration requires that we throw out the framework

in which we see exploration as concerned only for truth. We need to find some way of showing that knowledge is its own goal. It is only then that we will have a way of seeing a concern for knowledge as directly motivating doxastic behaviour, and only then will we see our concern to be a knower as not being shorthand for our concern for something else.

What would an alternative framework, in which knowledge was seen as a primary concern of exploration, look like?<sup>19</sup> We have begun to see what such a framework would look like in recent work by John McDowell and Timothy Williamson.<sup>20</sup> Both authors are fighting a 'hybrid' conception of knowledge, in which knowing is seen as a kind of true believing. Knowledge, on the hybrid account, is a true belief with a particular status. While neither McDowell nor Williamson is concerned with denying that what we know we believe, and that what we know is true, both are concerned to deny that knowing is constituted or comprised of true beliefs. On the contrary, both writers argue that knowledge is a distinct mental state. By making knowledge a mental state with all of the properties that we know knowledge must have—for example, it is true, it is intimately related to action, it has been gained in a good way—McDowell and Williamson can then make the state of knowing itself a goal of inquiry.

The McDowell/Williamson position on knowledge needs (and deserves) a good deal more scrutiny, and I do not wish to be seen as fully endorsing this position here. Rather, my concern is to point out that, as the McDowell/Williamson view straightforwardly conceives of knowing as a goal of exploration, it properly respects the platitude that inquiry aims at knowledge. This is because, in making *believing in such a way as to achieve knowledge* the goal of inquiry, it makes it the primary good to be attained from believing. The McDowell/Williamson view conceives of exploration in such a way that it does not separate—as the instrumental view does—believing well from believing truly. On this conception of exploration, we aim at both at the same time. As such, the McDowell/Williamson view has the potential to allow us to conceive of knowledge as something that we can value in ourselves, and as something the concern for which can openly—and not only surreptitiously—lead us to believe. It has, in short, the potential to allow us to see ourselves as believing in order to be knowers.

The credit account of the value of knowledge, on the other hand, does not have this potential. Starting from a position in which *true believing* is the core aim of inquiry, the credit theorist must look elsewhere for the value of knowledge. As a consequence, the credit theorist ends up telling us that the value of knowing lies

<sup>19</sup> My own earlier response to the Value Problem (Jones 1997)—in a paper heavily influenced by the work of Edward Craig and Michael Ayers—involved spelling out an 'indicative' for knowledge. I am not convinced that this account will fare any better than the credit account in allowing us to conceive of knowledge as something that believers aim for.

<sup>20</sup> The relevant papers are McDowell 1982; 1994; 1995*b*, which together comprise part IV of his (1998*a*). Williamson's work in this area has culminated in his (2000). Their respective positions have differences that I need not discuss here.

in a surreptitious good of exploration, and this leaves us having to gloss over our platitudes about our curiosity for knowledge. For the credit theorist, the driving motivation behind exploration—our ‘unsophisticated curiosity’—is, in reality for truth. In so far as our concern to be knowers per se drives exploration and determines the states in which it results, this concern must work in a surreptitious and hidden manner.

Is the search for an answer to the value problem a search for an acknowledgeable value, a value the conscious consideration of which can lead us to belief? This question is only one of those that will rear their heads when we recognize, as I have pressed in this paper, two central features of the doxastic realm. First our conception of the values that lie in the doxastic realm—that is, as goods as providing reasons to believe—is intimately tied up with our conception of the motivating power of those values. Secondly, that many of the goods that we receive from believing have a severely limited motivating power, in that they must work surreptitiously. The theoretical use of surreptitious goods may not ultimately, be a problem, but surreptitiousness is a feature of the doxastic realm that needs to be in the forefront of our attention if we are to take seriously the exploration of epistemic and doxastic value.<sup>21</sup>

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