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**FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
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**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

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Ph.D. (Philosophy)

GRADE / DEGREE

Department of Philosophy

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**Intellectual Virtue and the Good: A Theory Concerning the Constitutive Value of Intellectual
Character**

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**Intellectual Virtue and the Good: A Theory Concerning the
Constitutive Value of Intellectual Character**

Mark Christopher Young

Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Ph D. in Philosophy

Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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ISBN: 978-0-494-73904-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-73904-4

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List of Abbreviations

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is abbreviated as *NE*

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is to offer a theory of the constitutive value of intellectual character due to its transformative influence. The specific transformative influence ascribed to intellectual character is that it counteracts self-deceptive mechanisms and disposes agents to obtain true beliefs and to avoid false beliefs. The true beliefs such character reliably produces are accurate representations, and not merely of empirical inputs but also conceptual schemes. Agents do not appear to require such accurate representations to fulfill various desires, or to achieve certain aspects of mental, social and physical well-being as identified by some psychologists. Consequently, agents do not require intellectual character to achieve a variety of things some have identified as good. Nonetheless, a distinction can be made between achieving the good and identifying the good, and it can also be acknowledged that the good is itself a matter of dispute. That is, there are a number of competing notions of the good, which appear to be influenced by various conceptual schemes, and this makes the identification of the good difficult. Intellectual character can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to settle such disputes through its ability to facilitate true beliefs concerning the good. In fact, intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true due to the imperceptible mechanisms of self-deception. This assurance is itself valuable for any agent who wants to identify the good due to the indispensable role of true belief in attempts to identify the good. Even further, identification of the good is valuable for any agent who wants to achieve the good, since the attempt to identify the good better facilitates achievement of the good. Consequently, the assurance that intellectual character is necessary for is valuable for agents who both want to identify and achieve the good, and for this reason such character is constitutively valuable.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge that funding for this thesis was provided by an Admission Scholarship for the Ph D. program at the University of Ottawa, and two SSHRC Summer Graduate Research Scholarships. The author would also like to acknowledge, and express his gratitude for, the tireless efforts, meticulous multiple readings, and insightful comments provided by Professor Andrew Sneddon – the supervisor for this project. This thesis would never have been completed without the support and contributions of Professor Sneddon. The author would also like to acknowledge and thank his committee members - Professor Paul Forster, Professor David Raynor and Professor Hilliard Aronovitch - for their contributions and support. The author would also like to thank Professor James Montmarquet for his participation as the external examiner for the thesis, and especially for his careful reading and support of the thesis. The author would also like to thank various individuals who contributed to the thesis through thoughtful discussions. These individuals include, but are not limited to, Daniel McArthur, Patrice Philie, Sophie Rietti, Stephen Gardner, Robbie Moser, Corey Mulvihill, Dean Lauer, Mark Raymond Brown and Devin Z. Shaw. Finally, the author would like to thank his partner, Morgen Patterson, for her tireless support throughout this whole process.

Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a theory concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character due to its transformative influence. This theory is developed through focusing on current debates concerning intellectual character within virtue epistemology plus confrontation with two criticisms of any truth-based cognitive strategy.¹ As an attempt to develop a theory concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character the thesis contributes to literature that attempts to offer comprehensive positions concerning the value of the virtues, both moral and intellectual. As an introduction this chapter has three goals. First, to indicate what is meant by ‘constitutive value,’ and how the virtues are typically held to possess such value. Second, to offer brief description of the notion of intellectual virtue that is the focus of this thesis. Finally, to summarize the content of the thesis in order to display how the argument for the constitutive value of intellectual character will proceed.

1.1 The Constitutive Value of the Virtues

Since the reemergence of virtue theory there have been several attempts to explain the value of the virtues, both moral and intellectual. Not all philosophers who write on the value of the virtues offer explicit theories concerning their constitutive value, but nonetheless such value is often implicit in their theories and has been part of the virtue tradition since its inception. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to contemporary literature on the value of the virtues by offering a novel theory of the constitutive value of intellectual character. The intent of this section is to clarify what is meant by constitutive value, and then situate this notion within the virtue tradition in order to display the merit of such a project.

¹ Confronting these two criticisms of truth-based cognitive strategies is relevant since intellectual character itself entails a truth-based cognitive strategy; i.e. a way of cognizing which focuses on truth as opposed to practical ends, personal desires and so on.

A strong and weak sense of ‘constitutive value’ can be distinguished. The strong sense entails the idea that some valuable end, or good, x cannot be achieved without the contribution of some other element y . Typically, under this construal, y fulfills an instrumental role in achieving x , but in such a way that y is necessary to achieve x . Since y is necessary to achieve x , y is constitutive of the value of x . That is, y is essential to the value of x and therefore possesses constitutive value.² The weaker sense proposes that some good y is not necessary to achieve another good x , but nonetheless y is considered constitutively valuable simply because it is good. That is, because y is considered good its possession constitutes some amount of good for the agent. Pleasure is a prime example of something that is constitutively valuable in this way; for if pleasure is held to be intrinsically valuable and an agent possesses it, then it will constitute a good for the agent. So, with the weaker sense y is not necessary for the achievement of some other good, but is nonetheless constitutively valuable due to its being a good itself.

Within the ancient tradition it was proposed that the virtues possess constitutive value in the strong sense, and this was due to their connection with *eudaimonia*, or human happiness, flourishing and well-being. This is because the virtues were held to not be simply conducive to *eudaimonia*, but also constitutive of it.³ The virtues were held to be constitutive of *eudaimonia*

² Peter P. Kirschenmann, (2001), “‘Intrinsically’ or just ‘Instrumentally’ Valuable? On Structural Types of Values of Scientific Knowledge,” *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*, volume 32, p 244. The distinction between the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ senses of constitutive value is not made by Kirschenmann. Rather, I have derived this distinction on the basis of what Kirschenmann has proposed concerning what constitutive value entails as well as the ways in which virtue theorists have written about the constitutive value of the virtues.

³ Alasdair MacIntyre, (1981), *After Virtue: a study in moral theory*, (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press), p 149. Gregory Trianosky, (1990), “What is Virtue Ethics All About?” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, volume 27, number 4, October, p 339. T. H. Irwin, (1996), “The Virtues: Theory and Common Sense in Greek Philosophy,” *How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp 43-44. Justin Oakley, (1996), “Varieties of Virtue Ethics,” *Ratio*, (New Series) September, volume IX, number 2, p 133. Guy Axtell, (1998), “The Role of the Intellectual Virtues in the Reunification of Epistemology,” *The Monist*, volume 81, number 3, p 496. Simon Blackburn, (2001), “Reason, Virtue and Knowledge,” *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 16-17. Gary Watson, (2003), “On the Primacy of Character,” *Virtue Ethics*, edited by Stephen Darwell, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), p 237. Nancy Sherman and Heath White, (2003), ‘Intellectual Virtues: Emotions, Luck and the Ancients,’ *Intellectual Virtues: Perspective from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p50. Linda Zagzebski, (2003), “Intellectual Motivation and the Good of Truth,” *Intellectual Virtues: Perspective from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp 140-141.

in the strong sense since they enabled agents to possess the appropriate perceptions and motivations that were required to achieve a eudaimonistic state. Through the influence of the virtues it was held that agents do not simply achieve particular ends, through perceptions and capacities shaped by the virtues, but also that the particular ends identified as worth pursuing are shaped and identified through the influence of the agent's virtuous dispositions. The virtues were therefore held to transform the perspective and life of the agent so that the general significance associated with various goods and goals was altered. Through this transformative influence of the virtues the agent could then assess the value of various goods accurately and in turn react to them appropriately. Thus, the virtues were held to be constitutively valuable for *eudaimonia* in the strong sense, since without them the agent would not be able to apprehend what constitutes her happiness, flourishing and well-being adequately. Ergo, they were considered necessary for *eudaimonia*.⁴

The claim that the virtues exert a transformative influence on agents is still advocated by many theorists, as we will see in the next chapter, but nonetheless most positions, as mentioned, advocate the weaker sense of the constitutive value of the virtues. For example, Rosalind Hursthouse has developed an axiological position similar to the ancients', but one that ascribes the weaker sense of constitutive value to the virtues. Her position is similar to the ancients' for it is a neo-Aristotelian position where the virtues are valuable because they are constitutive of *eudaimonia*, and this is due to their ability to fulfill human nature.⁵ Although Hursthouse proposes that the virtues are constitutive of *eudaimonia* she ascribes the weaker sense of constitutive value to the virtues since she backs away from claim that they are necessary for human well-being, happiness or flourishing. Citing examples where vicious

⁴ MacIntyre, (1981), p 160. Irwin, (1996), p 48-49, 52. Julia Annas, (1998), 'Virtue and Eudaimonism', *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Winter, volume 15, number 1, pp 47-51. Christine McKinnon, (1999), *Character, Virtue Theories and the Vices*, (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press), p 26, 68. Julia Annas, (2002), 'Should Virtue Make You Happy?' *Eudaimonia and Well-Being: Ancient and Contemporary Conceptions*, edited L. J. Jost and R. A. Shiner, (Kelowna, BC: Academic Printing and Publishing), pp 9-10, 14.

⁵ Rosalind Hursthouse, (1999), *On Virtue Ethics*, (Oxford University Press), pp 8-10, 167, 170, 192, 212, 222-223, 247-256.

agents flourish and are happy without requiring the virtues, Hursthouse proposes that we cannot claim that the virtues are necessary for *eudaimonia*. Rather, the most we can claim when confronted with such examples is that the virtues “for the most part” contribute to the flourishing of agents.⁶ Thus, Hursthouse ascribes the weaker sense of constitutive value to the virtues, since when they are possessed they reliably constitute some good for the agent, i.e. *eudaimonia*, but are not necessary for this good.

Another example of the weaker sense of the constitutive value of the virtues comes from Thomas Hurka. Although Hurka has developed a consequentialist construal of the intrinsic value of the virtues, he nonetheless proposes that the virtues are also constitutively valuable. Hurka’s position is consequentialist since the virtues are valuable due to their relationship to various intrinsic goods. The virtues within his position are not the fundamental units of value, but are nonetheless intrinsically valuable because they entail the proper attitude toward intrinsic goods. This proper attitude entails loving such intrinsic goods for their own sake and not due to any consequences of the possession of such goods.⁷ The virtues are constitutively valuable, though, not because they entail the proper attitudes toward intrinsic goods, but rather because they are one of the elements an agent should possess in order to achieve the good. This is similar to the eudaimonistic approach advocated by the ancients and Hursthouse. The significant difference is how the ‘good’ is construed. Hurka advocates a ‘perfectionist’ account of the good, in which it is proposed that certain intrinsic goods, such as knowledge and achievement, should be maximized even if they cause agents to be unhappy.⁸ Within this perfectionist approach the virtues represent one set of intrinsic goods among many, and therefore are not necessary to achieve the good, but since they are intrinsic goods they

⁶ Hursthouse (1999), pp 171-174

⁷ Thomas Hurka, (2001), *Virtue, Vice and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 3-4, 13-15, 20

⁸ Thomas Hurka (1987), ‘The Well Rounded Life’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 84, number 12, p 727

represent at least one of the elements that constitute the good⁹ Thus they are constitutively valuable in the weak sense

There are contemporary philosophers, though, who do propose that the virtues are constitutively valuable in the strong sense For example, J L A Garcia makes the distinction between a virtue being intrinsically valuable and being constitutively valuable He proposes that the virtues are not intrinsically valuable since they are not good in-themselves but instead are “good-making” This is because, according to Garcia, through the possession of certain moral virtues, for example, an agent becomes a good friend, and through the possession of the intellectual virtues a good reasoner As “good-making” the virtues are transformative The virtues change the agent in such a way that she becomes a good friend or a good reasoner They are also constitutively valuable in the strong sense, since they represent what is necessary to constitute a good agent¹⁰ Another contemporary example of this type of axiological approach to the virtues is offered by Michael Slote Slote has developed what he calls an agent-based approach to the value of the virtues according to which the individual virtues themselves are held to be the primary components of ethical value This means that the moral rightness of various acts is determined by the virtuous character trait that initiated it, as opposed to the consequences of the acts or whether it is in accord with some intrinsically right rule Consequently, it is the judgments of virtuous agents shaped, or transformed, through their virtuous dispositions that determine, Slote proposes, what is right, wrong, fine, noble, admirable and so on The virtues are therefore constitutive of ethical value, since they are necessary to determine what is ethically good¹¹

⁹ Hurka, (2001) p 7 Thomas Hurka, (2002), *Capability, Functioning, and Perfectionism*, *Eudaimonia and Well Being: Ancient and Modern Conceptions*, edited by L J Jost and R A Shiner, (Kelowna, B C Academic Printing and Publishing, 2002), p 137

¹⁰ J L A Garcia, (2003), *Practical Reason and its Virtues*, *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Oxford University Press), pp 106-107

¹¹ Michael Slote (2003), *Agent-Based Virtue Ethics*, *Virtue Ethics*, edited by Stephen Darwall, (Malden, MA Blackwell Publishing), pp 203 204 206, 208 211

This agent-based approach has been adopted by Linda Zagzebski in her explanation of the value of the intellectual virtues. According to Zagzebski the various intellectual virtues are considered good-in-themselves, or good independently of other goods, so that their value is not explained or derived from prior notions of good, such as human happiness or their relation to intrinsic goods. Thus, Zagzebski proposes that the virtues are themselves intrinsically good¹². Since the intellectual virtues are good-in-themselves they are also constitutively valuable in the weak sense. That is, through their possession some amount of good is achieved by the agent. Zagzebski's position, though, also entails that the intellectual virtues are constitutively valuable in the strong sense. They are constitutively valuable in the strong sense since Zagzebski defines knowledge as true belief achieved through an act of virtue¹³. Consequently, intellectual virtue is necessary, at least according to Zagzebski, to achieve knowledge, and is, in turn, constitutive of the value of knowledge, i.e. we cannot achieve the good of knowledge without intellectual virtue because we simply cannot achieve knowledge without intellectual virtue.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the former literature on the value of the virtues by developing a novel theory concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character. This theory is developed through engagement with various contemporary virtue theorists, as well as philosophers and psychologists who do not stand within this tradition. Through engagement with contemporary virtue theorists a precise theory of the contribution of intellectual character to human agency is developed. This theory of the contribution of intellectual character to human agency is indispensable for determining its constitutive value, since it will be proposed that intellectual character is constitutively valuable due to the way it transforms agents. Thus, a clear indication of how intellectual character transforms agents is offered in order to determine its constitutive value. By proposing that intellectual character is transformative, and for this reason constitutively valuable, the position to be developed aligns

¹² Linda Zagzebski (1996), *Virtues of the Mind: An inquiry into the nature of virtue and the ethical foundations of knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 79-84, 202-203, 209.

¹³ Zagzebski (1996), pp. 241-243. Linda Zagzebski, (2000a), 'Precis of the Virtues of the Mind', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LX, number 1, pp. 172-173, 175-176.

itself with the ancient eudaimonistic approach to the value of the virtues as well as positions offered by contemporary philosophers such as Garcia and Slote. Such alignment also occurs with the claim that intellectual virtue is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. That is, the theory to be offered in this thesis will propose that intellectual character is necessary to achieve some particular valuable end, or good, and is such due to its transformative influence. The particular valuable end in question is assurance that the agent's beliefs concerning the good are true. We now turn to a description of the relevant notion of intellectual virtue.

1.2 The Relevant Notion of Intellectual Virtue

There are two notions of intellectual virtue that are the focus of contemporary virtue epistemologists; one advocated by virtue reliabilists and another advocated by virtue responsibilists.¹⁴ The intent of this thesis is to focus solely on the notion of intellectual virtue advocated by the virtue responsibilist. In what follows a brief description of each notion of intellectual virtue is offered followed an explanation for focusing solely on the notion of intellectual virtue advocated by the virtue responsibilist.

According to virtue reliabilism an intellectual virtue is any aspect of first-nature, or capacities and faculties we are born with, that reliably produces true belief.¹⁵ Specifically, virtue reliabilists count as intellectual virtues capacities and faculties that fulfill a causal role in the maximization of true beliefs, and minimization of false beliefs. These aspects of first-

¹⁴ Baron Reed, (2001), "Epistemic Agency and the Intellectual Virtues," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, volume XXXIX, p 509 Christopher Hookway, (2003), "How to be a Virtue Epistemologist," *Intellectual Virtue Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Oxford University Press), p 187 John Greco, (2000), "Two Kinds of Intellectual Virtue," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume, LX, number 1, pp 179-184 Guy Axtell, (1997), "Recent Work on Virtue Epistemology," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, volume 34, number 1, (January), p 13

¹⁵ For a good consideration of the various forms of virtue reliabilism see Axtell (1996), (1997), and (1998) See also Ernest Sosa, (1980), "The Raft and the Pyramid Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, volume 5, See especially pp 5, 8, 15-16, 23 Greco, (1993), Fairweather, (2001), Paul Bloomfield, (2000), "Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LX, number 1, January, pp 23-43, and Alvin Goldman, (1993), *Liaisons: Philosophy Meets the Cognitive and Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, MA MIT Press)

nature are referred to as intellectual virtues by the virtue reliabilist because they entail aspects that agents possess, or the virtues of agents, that are conducive to the epistemic end of true belief. And the position ultimately earns the nomenclature ‘virtue reliabilism’ because it individuates the intellectual virtues on the basis of their reliability to produce true belief and avoid false belief.¹⁶ Examples of intellectual virtues identified by the virtue reliabilist include: sight, hearing, memory, introspection, deductive and inductive reasoning, and rational intuition.¹⁷ The virtue responsibilist’s notion of such virtue differs significantly from the previous notion. This difference is due to the fact that the virtue responsibilist advocates a character-based notion of intellectual virtue. Virtue responsibilists therefore focus on aspects of second-nature, or aspects that agents are not born with but can develop or habituate in order to become intellectually virtuous. This is why the position earns the nomenclature ‘responsibilist,’ because it focuses on aspects of character that agents can be responsible for developing or habituating.¹⁸ Their list of intellectual virtues therefore includes various character traits, as opposed to capacities and faculties, such as intellectual courage, intellectual humility, intellectual integrity, curiosity, intellectual caution and diligence in intellectual matters.¹⁹ In this thesis the constitutive value of intellectual character is explained primarily through the intellectual virtue of intellectual conscientiousness, or the love of truth. This virtue is considered in depth in chapter two, where an attempt is made to explain and defend explicitly the transformative role of intellectual character. The reason for focusing primarily on this virtue will emerge in chapter five, where a specific criticism of truth-conducive cognitive strategies offered by Stephen P. Stich is explained and addressed.

¹⁶ Sosa, (1980), p 23 Sosa, (1985), pp 227, 229, 238, 243 Greco, (1992), p 520 Greco, (1993), pp 414-415 Axtell, (1996), p 178-180 Axtell, (1997), p 4 Axtell, (1998), p 492 Greco, (2000), p 179 Fairweather, (2001), p 66 Ernest Sosa, (2003), “The Place of Truth in Epistemology,” *Intellectual Virtue Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Clarendon Press), p 163

¹⁷ Sosa, (1980), pp 15-16 Sosa, (1985), p 227 Greco, (1992), p 520 Fairweather, (2001), p 66-67

¹⁸ Montmarquet, (1993), p 99 Zagzebski, (1996), p 241, 245-246 Axtell, (1996), p 179-180 Axtell, (1998), p 491, 497 Fairweather, (2001), p 63

¹⁹ Zagzebski, (1996), pp 114, 155, 167

Debate between these two camps of virtue epistemologists concerning how the intellectual virtues should be construed is typically focused around attempts to explain, descriptively and prescriptively, epistemological terms. That is, virtue reliabilists and virtue responsibilists often criticize one another's notions of intellectual virtue on the grounds that either cannot adequately account for notions such as justification or knowledge.²⁰ The focus of this thesis is not to enter into this debate, but rather simply address the axiological issue of the constitutive value of intellectual character. Investigating the possible value of the intellectual virtues as identified by the virtue reliabilist would likely entail a worthwhile project, but cannot be accomplished alongside a consideration of the constitutive value of intellectual character. The attempt to explain the value of each notion of intellectual virtue simply would be too ambitious. Consequently, only one notion of intellectual virtue can feasibly be the focus of this thesis. The notion of intellectual virtue advocated by the virtue responsibilist is the focus of this thesis for two reasons. First, since this notion entails a character-based construal of intellectual virtue it is congruent with previous attempts within the virtue tradition, outlined on the previous section, to claim that the virtues are constitutively valuable due to their transformative influence on agents. As stated, the goal of this thesis is to contribute to this literature by first clarifying the specific transformative role of intellectual character and then arguing for the constitutive value of such character based on this role. The second reason that can be offered for concentrating on intellectual character is that criticisms of cognitive strategies focused on true belief have recently emerged in both philosophy and psychology. These criticisms are briefly outlined below, but what they suggest is that agents should not adopt cognitive strategies which focus on obtaining and sustaining true beliefs. As it will become clear in the next chapter, the development of intellectual character is something an agent can choose to engage in or not. If the criticisms of cognitive strategies focused on true belief are effective, then it would be the case that agents should choose not to develop their

²⁰ See for example the following: Axtell, (1997), pp 12-13; Axtell, (1998), p 497-503; Greco, (2000), pp 179-184; Reed, (2001), pp 507-526; Fairweather, (2001), pp 63-81.

intellectual characters for such character would have very little, or no, value for agents. The goal of this thesis, in part, is to address these criticisms in order to make room for the value of intellectual character. Thus, in order to engage in a project that is both feasible and constructive, the focus is solely on the notion of intellectual virtue as construed by the virtue responsibilist. We will now turn to a consideration of the content of the thesis in order to indicate how it will proceed.

1.3 Summary of the Content of the Thesis

The first step in the thesis, and the focus of chapter two, entails clarifying the specific transformative influence of intellectual character. In order to offer a theory concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character via its transformative influence specific clarification of this transformative influence is required. This clarification is achieved through reliance on a descriptive psychology advocated by both virtue ethicists and virtue responsibilists. It should be noted that this general psychological theory of virtuous character is not itself the subject of investigation. This theory is neo-Aristotelian, and it is controversial even amongst those who work within virtue theory.²¹ The focus of this thesis, though, is not to consider the merit of this psychological theory, but instead the axiological merit of intellectual character, i.e. the value of intellectual character. This not to say that various lacunae which surround the psychology of intellectual character are not addressed, for assuredly they are addressed. The point is simply that significant aspects of the neo-Aristotelian notion of virtuous character are assumed in order to focus on questions concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character. What is presented in chapter two, then, is a detailed account of this psychological theory as it pertains to intellectual character. By providing this detailed account this thesis surpasses previous

²¹ John Doris (1998) 'Persons, Situations and Virtue Ethics' *Nous* volume 34 number 4 pp 504-530. Maria Merritt (2000) 'Virtue Ethics and Situationist Personality Psychology' *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: An International Forum* volume 3 number 4 pp 365-383.

explanations of intellectual character provided by virtue responsibilists. Specifically, chapter two will explain how a general desire for true belief manifests itself in agents who possess intellectual character, and how such character enables agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs. Hence, via the content of chapter two the specific transformative influence of intellectual character is clarified.

With chapter three two claims are established that are significant for demonstrating the constitutive value of intellectual character. First, adopting a position developed by Martha Nussbaum, it is proposed that the intellectual virtues are identified as truth-conducive through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere. Nussbaum has developed a method of identifying the virtues that is meant to display that they are objectively good. This method addresses concerns over whether our list of virtues is merely relative to specific cultural perspectives or the desires of specific agents. Nussbaum proposes that we can avoid such relativity by first isolating spheres of human experience which all human beings encounter, and therefore are not relative to specific cultures or agents. Through perspicuous mapping of these spheres of experience, Nussbaum suggests, we can then discern what are the objectively best ways for agents to be motivated and therefore generate a list of virtues that are not relative to specific cultures or agents.²² Relying on this method, it will be proposed that we can generate our list of intellectual virtues through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic, or belief, sphere. Establishing this claim is relevant for addressing a sceptical challenge offered by Stephen P. Stich against any truth-conducive cognitive strategy. This sceptical challenge will be the focus of chapter five. One concern that Nussbaum raises in her development of this method of identifying the virtues is the inevitability of our experiences of the world being shaped by various conceptual schemes. The concern is that we cannot achieve an objective perspective in regard to various spheres of human experience, since all of our experiences are inevitably shaped by various conceptual schemes. For this position Nussbaum cites

²² Martha Nussbaum (1998) 'Non Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach' *Ethics: The Big Questions* edited by James P. Sterba (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), pp 261-264.

philosophers such as Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam.²³ No attempt will be made to criticize the positions of Goodman or Putnam, but rather their positions will provide the means for reconciling claims concerning intellectual character with the possibility of scheme determinism. The second claim to be defended in this chapter, then, is that we can reconcile the possibility that our experiences of the world are inevitably shaped by conceptual schemes with claims offered in this thesis concerning intellectual character.

With chapter four the claim that the virtues of intellectual character are truth-conducive is clarified and defended. The goal of the thesis is to propose that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense because it assures agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true. The latter claim is premised, at least in part, on the ability of intellectual character to facilitate the obtaining and sustaining of true belief, as set out in chapter two. The specific notion of true belief which intellectual character is conducive to is therefore clarified in chapter four in order to further understanding of how intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. The claim that intellectual character is truth-conducive must also be defended against criticisms from contemporary virtue epistemologists that the virtues of such character are not truth-conducive. For example, Jonathan Kvanvig has proposed that due to the possibility of a Cartesian Demon it is best to think of the intellectual virtues as justification-conducive as opposed to truth-conducive.²⁴ Similarly, Wayne Riggs has proposed that given the plethora of intellectually virtuous agents who have possessed false beliefs, such as Aristotle and Isaac Newton, it is best to think of intellectual character as wisdom-conducive.²⁵ In response to such philosophers, as well as others, an attempt is made to maintain the claim that the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive so that their constitutive value can be understood with this in mind.

²³ Nussbaum, (1998), pp.266, 270.

²⁴ Jonathan Kvanvig, (1992), *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: On the Place of the Virtues in Epistemology*, (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), pp.131-132.

²⁵ Wayne D. Riggs, (2003), "Understanding 'Virtue' and the Virtue of Understanding," *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University), pp.203-226.

With chapters five and six two challenges to the value of truth-conducive cognitive strategies are considered; one from philosophy and the other from psychology. The one from philosophy, and the focus of chapter five, comes from Stephen P. Stich. Stich argues against the value of truth-conducive cognitive strategies by proposing that valuing truth entails merely valuing idiosyncratic intuitions given to us either by our culture or our biology. Such a conclusion, Stich suggests, would mean that the value of truth is dubious and so too, then, any cognitive strategy focused on truth.²⁶ Part of the response to Stich entails pointing out that one only has to accept this conclusion if one also accepts several questionable assumptions made by Stich. Nonetheless, a reformulated version of Stich's position is offered, which is applicable to assumptions and assertions made in this thesis. This reformulated position is then responded to by relying on the method of identifying the intellectual virtues set out in chapter three. Specifically, by relying on the method of identifying the intellectual virtues via a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere it is proposed that valuing truth does not inevitably amount to merely valuing the idiosyncratic intuitions given to us by either our culture or biology. This does not mean that the general position developed in this thesis remains untouched by Stich's criticisms. For given his criticisms, it is acknowledged that one can only understand the value of intellectual character through the single intellectual virtue of intellectual conscientiousness, as opposed to other intellectual virtues such as intellectual humility and intellectual courage.

Chapter six addresses criticisms of truth-conducive cognitive strategies offered by contemporary psychologists. Specifically, various psychologists have claimed, on the basis of empirical investigations, that agents tend to be happier, healthier and more successful if they possess false rather than true beliefs.²⁷ Such a conclusion appears to be devastating to the claim that intellectual character possesses constitutive value in the strong sense, as it

²⁶ Stephen P. Stich, (1990), *The Fragmentation of Reason*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), pp 116-122

²⁷ Shelly E. Taylor, and Jonathon D. Brown, (1994), 'Positive Illusions and Well-Being Revisited: Separating Fact From Fiction', *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 116 number 1, p 24

suggests that true belief is not required to achieve various human goods. In response it is argued that the empirical evidence offered by such psychologists is inconclusive when it comes to the constitutive value of intellectual character. It is inconclusive, first, because other psychologists have conducted empirical investigations which show that the types of false belief cited actually may be detrimental for agents, at least in certain contexts. Second, even if the empirical evidence was conclusive concerning the value of certain false beliefs intellectual character may still possess constitutive value in the strong sense. This is because such empirical literature merely displays the value of false belief and is almost silent when it comes to the value of true belief or intellectual character.

Chapter seven draws together the various strands of argument developed and established throughout the thesis to demonstrate the constitutive value of intellectual character due to its transformative influence. Since intellectual character is not required to prosper in various ways – as argued in chapter six – its value must be explained in some other way. It will be argued that intellectual character is valuable because it is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true, and such assurance is itself valuable for agents who want to identify and achieve the good. We come to this conclusion, first, through the realization that what is ‘good’ is itself a matter of dispute. That is, what is identified as good is controversial and often determined through various conceptual schemes. For example, the good life as identified by a welfarist conceptual scheme differs significantly from the good life as identified by a perfectionist conceptual scheme. In order to identify the good agents therefore require true beliefs concerning empirical inputs and conceptual schemes. Building upon claims established in chapters two, three and four it is proposed that intellectual character fulfills a valuable role in enabling agents to obtain true beliefs about the good by facilitating true beliefs about empirical inputs and conceptual schemes. Even further, intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true when they are attempting to identify the good, since it is necessary to mitigate the imperceptible influence of

self-deceptive mechanisms which could lead agents to misidentify the good. If true beliefs are required to identify the good, then the assurance provided by intellectual character will itself be valuable for any agent who wants to identify the good. It is then argued that identifying the good is also valuable, since it better facilitates achievement of the good. If identifying the good is valuable for agents who want to achieve the good, the assurance intellectual character provides will also be valuable for agents who want to achieve the good. It is therefore concluded that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense, because the assurance it is necessary for is valuable for both identifying and achieving the good.

Chapter Two: The Transformative Influence of Intellectual Character

The focus of this chapter is to offer a detailed account of the transformative influence of intellectual character. This account proceeds by first consulting a predominant psychological theory of virtuous character offered by contemporary virtue ethicists and virtue epistemologists which is derived from Aristotle. The theory is then refined in regard to intellectual character through responding to criticisms that propose that intellectual character fulfills a limited, or no, role in belief formation. This response is facilitated through consulting literature on self-deception. Through combining the latter literature with the general theory of virtuous character a thorough description of the transformative influence of intellectual character is achieved. It is argued that intellectual character provides a set of dispositions that counteract dispositions that lead to self-deception. The transformative influence that is consequently ascribed to intellectual character is that it enables agents to overcome self-deceptive cognitive mechanisms in order to assure agents that their beliefs are true.

2.1 The Psychology of Virtuous Character

The goal of this section is to become familiar with the predominant psychological theory of virtuous character offered by a variety of contemporary virtue theorists and based on Aristotle's notion of virtuous character.¹ This familiarity is facilitated through consulting both virtue responsibilists and virtue ethicists. Consultation with virtue ethicists is indispensable for filling out our understanding of intellectual character, since the latter notion is based on the notion of moral character. Familiarity with this theory of virtuous character is indispensable to the goal of the thesis, since the constitutive value of intellectual character is tied to its transformative influence. We must first therefore become familiar with this general theory of virtuous

¹ Aristotle, *NE* II-V. Montmarquet, (1993), pp 19-20. Axtell (1997), p 2, 14. Hursthouse, (1999), pp 8-12, 15-16. Merritt, (2000), pp 367, 374-376. Huika, (2001), pp 42-44. Sherman and White, (2003), pp 39, 42.

character in order to understand how such character is supposed to transform agents. When elaborating on the psychology of virtuous character the specific focus is therefore on this supposed transformative influence. This general psychological theory of virtuous character is then consulted and extended in order to understand the specific transformative influence of intellectual character.

The first point to note about virtuous character, in order to understand its transformative influence on agents, is that the virtues entail attempts to correct certain natural shortcomings. This is why a virtue is often described as a mean between an excess and a deficiency, for to be virtuous typically entails overcoming excessive or deficient psychological motivations and dispositions that are held to lead to inappropriate behaviour. For example, to exhibit the virtue of courage an agent must typically overcome dispositions toward cowardice and rashness.² The virtues therefore entail motivational and dispositional states, such as empathy, benevolence and courage, but since virtues are held to be appropriate manifestations of such states they represent attempts to guide, or mold, inappropriate motivations and dispositions. It is claimed that agents are often tempted by personal desires that have to be corrected, or regulated, by a conscientious effort to curb their influence.³ For example, to be courageous the agent must overcome unwarranted contrary desires for safety, and to be temperate an agent must overcome an excessive desire for pleasure.⁴ To exhibit a virtue, though, does not always entail suppressing a vicious desire that hinders appropriate action, for it also entails cultivating motivations and dispositions that are not present. Some virtue theorists propose that this is what occurs when an agent cultivates the virtues of charity and justice, as such virtues involve compensating for motivations or dispositions that are not typically present.⁵ Also, the types of psychological dispositions identified for correction are often understood to be selfish desires,

² Aristotle *NE* II 6 1107a 5+8 1108b20

³ Zagzebski (1996), pp 104-105. Philippa Foot, (1997), *Virtues and Vices*, *Virtue Ethics*, edited by Roger Crisp and Michael Slote, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 169-170

⁴ Foot (1997), pp 169-170
Foot p 170

but this is not always the case; for to be virtuous can also entail the correction, or altering, of the influence of positive and altruistic desires, since an agent can be altruistic to her own detriment and the detriment of others.⁶ The virtue responsibilist shares this descriptive psychology, since it is held that agents are susceptible to cognitive excesses and deficiencies, i.e. intellectual vices, which must be replaced and corrected by the appropriate character traits deemed to be intellectual virtues.⁷

Since the virtues are understood as correctives to certain natural shortcomings they are also held to be psychological dispositions that can be acquired through effort so that they become permanent aspects of the agent. This is why the virtue responsibilist earns this label, for she holds that agents can intentionally alter their intellectual habits, and that they do such positively by adopting various character traits deemed to be intellectual virtues. Thus agents are responsible for their intellectual character, and can develop such character appropriately by becoming intellectually virtuous.⁸ Of course, it is readily admitted that since the virtues are described as ‘correctives’ they involve something that tends to be difficult for humans to achieve. That is, becoming intellectually virtuous is not something that is easy to achieve, although it may be for some. The virtues are not thought of as unnatural for humans, but nonetheless to acquire them generally requires a diligent and intentional effort on the behalf of agents. Thus, one must typically engage in a conscious and conscientious effort to develop the virtues; whether intellectual or moral.⁹ This process begins by attempts to imitate agents who

⁶ It should be noted that not all in the virtue tradition hold that to be virtuous entails altering one’s desires so as to be appropriately motivated or disposed. Most notably it was Socrates’ position that to be virtuous entailed gaining knowledge, and, in turn, to be vicious was simply the result of ignorance and not inappropriate desire. So differences between the virtuous and the vicious was explained not in terms of differences in psychological dispositions but instead in terms of differences in knowledge and ignorance. This position is no longer prevalent in virtue ethics, as it is now a common position that the virtues entail psychological dispositions that shape agent reasoning and behaviour and do not merely entail the acquisition of knowledge. T. H. Irwin, (1996), “The Virtues Theory and Common Sense in Greek Philosophy,” *How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues*, (Oxford Clarendon Press), pp 48-49

⁷ Montmarquet, (1993), p 23. Zagzebski, (1996), p 105, 152-153. Axtell, (1997), p 14. Axtell, (1998), p 495. Sherman and White, (2003), p 42. Fairweather, (2001), pp 67-70.

⁸ Montmarquet, (1993), pp X, 1, 13-15, 32, 34, 40. Zagzebski, (1996), p 178, 228-229. Axtell, (1996), pp 180-181. Axtell, (1997), pp 2, 12-13. Axtell, (1998), p 503. Reed, (2001), p 509-510.

⁹ McKinnon, (1999), p 32.

possess the virtues. It also entails attempts to engage in practices relevant to the specific virtues in order to develop the habits and feelings associated with the virtue, or virtues, in question. For example, in order to cultivate the virtue of intellectual courage the agent must first engage in actions where she intentionally questions and defends her own beliefs until the virtue becomes a natural and unconscious disposition. Hence, through the exercise of self-control, combined with an understanding of the appropriate virtues, it is claimed that the agent eventually will be able to train his natural tendencies in order to become virtuous. If it is still difficult to be virtuous, or to exercise specific virtues, then the agent has not reached the preferred state, i.e. the virtuous character trait has not yet become fully integrated into the agent's character. The goal is to achieve a "firm and unchangeable character" where the agent acts virtuously without effort.¹⁰ Once inculcated it is held that the virtues then dispose agents to act in specific ways, and to hold particular ends to be worthwhile, by influencing the agent's motivations, perceptions and reasoning.¹¹ It is this influence on the agent's motivations, perceptions and reasoning that then leads to the claim that the virtues transform agents. We will now consider this supposed transformative influence of the virtues.

Virtue theorists have identified a variety of motivational states as virtues, from strong feelings, or emotions, such as love and compassion, to the motive of duty, which is thought to be absent of any type of emotive influence.¹² Typically, though, the virtues are held to be motives that contain at least some emotive content, and it is this emotive content that is held to initiate activity toward specific ends.¹³ Thus virtuous agents possess specific emotions that act as motives, and cause agents to want to change themselves, or the world, in specific ways.¹⁴ Since the virtues do not simply involve acting through the influence of one's emotions, but instead through the influence of those emotions deemed worthwhile, these emotive states are

¹⁰ Zagzebski (1996), pp 150-151+154-155. Hursthouse, (1999), p 12.

¹¹ Ibid. pp 35-37, 57.

¹² Zagzebski, (1996), pp 129-130.

¹³ Zagzebski, (1996), p 131. Hursthouse, (1999), pp 99-100.

¹⁴ Zagzebski, (1996), p 131-132. Hursthouse, (1999), p 108.

connected to the fulfillment of specific values. For example, a compassionate individual has certain feelings associated with compassion, such as love and sympathy, which then initiates compassionate activity.¹⁵ Not all virtuous motives, as mentioned, entail intense emotional reactions, as some entail emotions that operate with very little, or moderate, intensity. Such is the case for the intellectual virtue of fair-mindedness. In fact, agents who are fair-minded must give equal consideration to contrary positions and therefore must typically avoid emotive influence.¹⁶ The virtues, as motivations for action, are also held to be persistent. Virtue theorists recognize that some motives are episodic since they only occur at particular times - if I am hungry I eat - but it is also proposed that certain motivations are persistent and therefore dispositional. That is, individuals possess certain motivations which are enduring and initiate behavior consistently and are therefore considered to be dispositions – they consistently dispose agents to act and think in specific ways.¹⁷ This is an important aspect of virtue psychology that has been part of the virtue perspective at least since Aristotle,¹⁸ which is the idea of the motivational self-sufficiency of virtuous character traits. What this idea entails is that the virtues, when they become integrated into individuals, become robust character traits that dispose agents to act in certain ways regardless of external conditions. So, for example, if an agent is generous she will remain such even if resources are scarce. Agents may need to rely on social conditions to initiate the development of virtuous character traits, such as educational institutions and the family, but once the virtues are instilled into agents such agents will possess enduring dispositions that act as impetuses for action.¹⁹ In fact, once a virtue has become fully integrated it is held that counter inclinations, such as fear, do not exercise any influence. Such inclinations do not simply compete with virtuous motives to determine action in the fully virtuous agent, but instead are completely silenced by the relevant virtue, or

¹⁵ Zagzebski, (1996), pp 131-132. Hursthouse, (1999), pp 99-100.

¹⁶ Zagzebski, (1996), pp 131-132.

¹⁷ Zagzebski, (1996), p 132. McDowell, (2003), p 134.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *NE*, 1100b, 1105a.

¹⁹ Merritt, (2000), pp 366-368, 374-376. McKinnon, (1999), p 29. Hursthouse, (1999), p 123.

virtues²⁰ The virtues therefore enable agents to act consistently, and to adopt the necessary skills needed to act in accord with various virtues²¹ For example, the agent who possesses the intellectual virtue of intellectual conscientiousness, or, as it is sometimes referred to, the love of truth, will develop those skills that will enable her to better achieve true beliefs Thus, it is generally held by virtue theorists that the virtues tend to have motivational components, which are emotive, dispositional, robust and consistent

Besides a motivational impetus for action, though, the virtues are also held to influence an agent's perception and reasoning²² Focusing first on perception it is proposed that the virtuous agent does not simply want the right things, through being motivated or disposed by the virtues, but is also able to apprehend the "salient aspects of the relevant situation" through the influence of the virtues²³ This occurs because the virtues constitute the agent in a particular way We have already seen this in regard to the idea that the virtues act as motivations and dispositions for agents, and therefore influence the agent's choices and actions Since the virtues can influence the agent in this way they can also influence how agents perceive and think²⁴ In order to display how the latter is the case we will focus on one particular moral virtue, i.e. courage, and then generalize these remarks to other virtues

A common claim among virtue theorists, mentioned previously, is that a virtue is a psychological disposition which is itself a mean between two extremes²⁵ These extremes tend to be inappropriate ways of feeling, desires or motivations, which can then obscure agent perception In the case of courage the two extremes are cowardice and rashness The coward is overcome with inappropriate fear, and/or desire to save himself, and this then causes him to perceive the particular situation as more dangerous than it actually is The rash agent, on the

²⁰ McDowell, (2003), p 125

²¹ Zagzebski (1996), p 133

²² Louden (1997) p 206

²³ Annas (1998) p 40 Hursthouse, (1999), pp 207-208 Nancy Sherman and Heath White, (2003), *Intellectual Virtue: Emotions, Luck and the Ancients*, *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p 36

²⁴ McKinnon, (1999), pp 29-30

²⁵ Aristotle *NE* 1106b Zagzebski (1996), pp 96-97

other hand, is overconfident. Such an agent, due to his overconfidence, perceives the situation as less dangerous than it actually is, and in this way does not perceive the situation accurately. The courageous agent, on the other hand, is held to perceive the situation accurately, and therefore will, in turn, act appropriately. Such an individual has silenced the influence of irrational fears, and therefore does not give inappropriate weight either to his personal safety or to the actual dangers involved in a situation. The courageous agent is also aware of his own limitations, and therefore what his realistic options are in the situation. For example, it is generally held that courageous actions entail facing an immediate danger, but this is not always the case. It could be that in a particular situation the courageous act entails retreating from immediate danger. The agent who possesses the virtue of courage knows whether it is better to retreat or to face the immediate danger since the psychological disposition associated with courage enables such an agent to recognize considerations that either warrant retreat or making a stand.²⁶ Courage is therefore held to enable the agent to perceive whether there is a genuine threat that cannot be overcome, or whether, through personal effort, the threat can be overcome.

The general psychological theory that underlies this description of the influence of courage on human perception, especially in contrast to its relevant vices, is that the agent's psychological states affect her cognitions. That is, the virtue theorist ascribes to a psychological theory which proposes that psychological states such as desires, passions, motivations and dispositions, and not merely the agent's various beliefs, influence human cognition. The vices are those psychological states – passions, desires, etc – that detrimentally affect agent perception since they disable the ability to perceive accurately. This is exemplified in the perceptions of the rash agent as well as the coward. Obviously, such agents view, or perceive, the same situation differently from the courageous agent, and this is explained due to

²⁶ Adams, (2000), pp 39-40. Irwin, (1996), pp 45-46. James Wallace, (1973), 'Cowardice and Courage', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, number 7, pp 64-66.

their divergent psychological constitutions. That is, the virtues constitute the agent in a particular way, which in turn produces accurate perceptions and choices. For example, when an agent possesses the virtue of fairness he is assuredly motivated to give to another agent what is owed, but he can do such only through the ability to perceive what the other is actually entitled to. The mere perceptive capacity of ‘vision’ would not enable an appreciation of actual entitlement, for two agents could possess the same visual capacities but this would not ensure that each would act fairly. In addition one would have to possess the virtue of fairness, or a disposition toward being fair, to remove undue bias and enable the ability to apprehend what the other is entitled to. The virtues therefore make agents sensitive to particular aspects of situations, as well as specific warranted expectations, by constituting the agent in specific ways. They shape and order the agent’s concerns and interests. They cause agents to be concerned with courageous, benevolent, fair, charitable acts, and so on, and in this way influence agent perceptions in particular situations. Thus the virtues do not simply remove vicious obstacles, but they also provide a type of knowledge, or understanding. That is, the agent who is virtuous gains insight through the influence of the virtuous psychological dispositions he possesses.²⁷

Since the virtues cause agents to perceive in specific ways they also cause agents to reason in specific ways by influencing their perceptions of facts, situations, principles and so on. For example, the courageous agent is cognizant of particular aspects of a situation – i.e. certain aspects are salient – and then decides what to do based on his perception of those salient aspects. So, the virtues do provide an impetus for action by being motivational and dispositional, but they also fulfill a role in the reasoning process of agents when reasoning does occur. That is, there are instances when little to no reasoning occurs, and the relevant virtue, or

²⁷ Irwin, (1996), p.40, 48-49, 53. McKinnon, (1999), pp.32-33. McDowell, (2003), pp.122-127, 135-137, 140. Hursthouse, (1999), pp11-12, 111, 129-131, 207-208.

virtues, shapes perception and a virtuous action results without deliberation.²⁸ This situation is analogous to visually perceiving a lion with the result being a fear reaction, i.e. one perceives a situation through the filter of a particular virtue and then acts. In other situations, though, deliberation occurs before the virtuous action results, and such deliberation is also constituted by the virtuous, or vicious, state of the agent. For example, an agent who possesses the virtue of charity reasons through its influence in various ways to bring about charitable acts. In such situations the impetus for an action is not simply a virtue acting as a motivational or dispositional state, but rather the agent acts because of specific reasons and such reasons appear warranted, or appropriate, due to her virtuous perceptions. The agent does not have to be aware that she is acting from some general impetus for behaviour, such as charity, but instead may mention more situation specific reasons. For example, the agent does not have to say ‘I did act X because it was courageous,’ but rather can cite reasons such as “Someone had to save him,’ or ‘I knew that I could save him if I tried.’ The significant point is simply that it is through the influence of a virtue, or virtues, that the agent recognizes such reasons as warranted and compelling. Once the virtues are fully inculcated into the character of the virtuous agent such an agent does not always have to be cognizant that she is reasoning due to the influence of a virtuous disposition. The virtue in question instead simply constitutes the agent in a particular way to shape her understanding and then this understanding is applied to the particular situation. The virtues therefore first facilitate appropriate perception, and then, in turn, facilitate appropriate reasoning based on those perceptions.²⁹

It is also generally held by virtue theorists that the virtues not only enable agents to reason correctly, but also enable such an agent to act in accord with appropriate reasoning. The ability to accomplish this latter task is tied, of course, to the fact that the virtues entail affective states that influence motivation and perception. The idea is that the virtues remove, or replace,

²⁸ Hookway, (2003), p.184.

²⁹ Irwin, (1996), pp.48-50. Watson, (2003), p.234. Crisp, (1996), p.17. Pence, (1984), pp.287+289. MacIntyre, (1981), pp.161-162. McKinnon, (1999), pp.29-30, 34, 44. McDowell, (2003) pp.133-136. Hursthouse, (1999), pp.108, 111, 123-129, 136, 145. Hursthouse, (2003).

inappropriate psychological conditions, i.e. the vices, from having a deleterious influence on motivations and perceptions, and this includes the reasons for which the agent acts. So, the virtuous agent both perceives and acts correctly through the influence of the relevant virtues. This means, then, that the virtuous agent will also act in accord with the outcome of her virtuous deliberations. That is, the virtuous agent first deliberates through the cognitive filter of the virtues to come to specific conclusions, and then she is able to act in accord with the conclusions of virtuous deliberation through the motivational/dispositional capacity provided by the relevant virtue, or virtues.³⁰ This claim is significant for later attempts to refine the specific contribution of the intellectual virtues. For it will entail not simply that such virtues enable agents to perceive and reason correctly when it comes to assessing whether some belief is true, but also to believe in accord with those perceptions and virtuous deliberations. Thus, the intellectual virtues will dispose agents to not only reason and perceive in certain ways, but also to believe in certain ways.³¹

Having become familiar with how the virtues are supposed to shape, and therefore transform, the psychology of the agent we must become familiar with one final claim concerning virtuous character. This is the claim that the virtues are teleological. To say that the virtues are teleological means that the virtues possess a particular *telos*, or end, to which they are directed. Broadly speaking, the particular end of the moral virtues is proposed to be the 'good,' and that of the intellectual virtues is the 'true'.³² It is appropriate to use the phrase 'broadly speaking' here, because, with both the moral and intellectual virtues, there are sometimes more immediate ends toward which each type of virtue is directed. For example, within the context of moral character there is a cluster of virtues that have the well-being of

³⁰ MacIntyre, (1981), p 162. Pence, (1984), p 289. Irwin, (1996), pp 46, 49-50. Annas, (1998), p 40. Hursthouse (1999), pp 11, 12, 92, 102-103, 108-109, 123-125, 129-130, 136. McKinnon, (1999), pp 29, 31, 34, 44. Annas (2003), p 30.

³¹ James Montmarquet (1987), *Epistemic Virtue 'Mind'*, volume 96, pp 486-487. Montmarquet (1993) p 43. 65. Axtell, (1998) pp 498-499. Zagzebski, (1996), p 149. Fairweather (2001), pp 67-69. Hookway, (2003) p 188.

³² Watson, (2003), pp 230-241. Annas, (2003), pp 21-22.

others as their end. Such virtues include kindness, compassion, benevolence and generosity.³³ A similar dynamic occurs with the intellectual virtues, for, as Jonathan Kvanvig suggests, when an agent is attempting to be intellectually virtuous she may do such not with truth in mind but rather other specific ends such as being creative or original.³⁴ And Neil Cooper, although he proposes that the intellectual virtues are dispositions that aim at the truth, generates a taxonomy of the intellectual virtues by offering more refined ends toward which certain dispositions aim. This causes Cooper to divide the intellectual virtues into the five categories of “the inquisitive, the forensic, the judicial, the educative and the all-pervasive.”³⁵

The claim that the virtues are teleological deserves mentioning, especially in the context of focusing on the transformative influence of virtuous character, for this transformative influence will be understood in terms of the *telos* of truth, or true belief. There is debate concerning how the intellectual virtues are related to the end of truth, and whether truth is the specific *telos* of intellectual virtue. For example, some philosophers have proposed that the intellectual virtues do not instrumentally lead to the truth, but instead merely *aim* at the truth.³⁶ Also, other ends, such as wisdom, have been postulated as the *telos* of intellectual virtue as opposed to truth.³⁷ With the rest of this chapter, building upon the psychological theory just outlined, a description of the transformative influence of intellectual character is offered where the specific *telos* of such character is true belief and the relationship to this end is instrumental. That is, it is argued that the intellectual virtues fulfill an instrumental role in enabling agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs. This claim is then defended in chapter four against criticisms that propose that true belief is not the *telos* of intellectual character and that intellectual character does not fulfill an instrumental role in the obtaining and sustain of true belief.

³³ Zagzebski, (1996), p 252

³⁴ Jonathan Kvanvig, (1992), *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: One the Place of the Virtues in Epistemology*, (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), pp 6-7

³⁵ Cooper, (1994), pp 459, 461

³⁶ Montmarquet (1993), pp 21-24, 27-28, 30

³⁷ Riggs, (2003), pp 214-215, 217-218, 220-221

2.2 Scepticism Concerning the Relevance of Intellectual Character

As just claimed, the specific transformative influence that will be ascribed to intellectual character in this thesis is that it disposes agents to obtain true beliefs, and avoid false beliefs. Two basic claims are implied by the former first, that the intellectually virtuous agent who has developed her intellectual character aims to have true beliefs, and, second, that a certain set of character traits are conducive to this aim. These two claims have been developed and defended by various virtue responsibilists who write on intellectual character. For example, Linda Zagzebski proposes that an individuating characteristic of the intellectual virtues is that they are truth-conducive. That is, in order for a character trait to be considered an intellectual virtue it must be truth-conducive³⁸. Although James Montmarquet disagrees with the claim that the individuating characteristic of the intellectual virtues is that they are truth-conducive, a consideration that is addressed in chapter four, he does emphasize the claim that the intellectually virtuous agent aims at obtaining and sustaining true belief. Specifically, he focuses on the intellectual virtue of intellectual conscientiousness, or the desire for true belief, and claims that other intellectual virtues, such as impartiality and intellectual courage, simply entail different ways of being intellectually conscientious or exhibiting the desire for true belief³⁹. Abrol Fairweather conveys the importance of these two claims for the virtue responsibilist with his proposal that a “person has an epistemic [i.e. intellectual] motivation if and only if he has a desire for the truth and this state influences his conduct.”⁴⁰ Ernest Sosa, as well as others, has questioned these two basic claims. What is questioned is whether a desire for true belief is required to obtain and sustain true beliefs, and whether a construal of the

³⁸ Zagzebski, (1996), pp 96-97, 149, 167-168, 177-186. Axtell, (1997) pp 19-20. Axtell, (1998), pp 498-499. Linda Zagzebski, (2001b), Responses, *Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LX, number 1, pp 209, 217. Zagzebski is not the only virtue responsibilist to hold that reliably bringing about true beliefs is necessary for a cognitive attribute to be an intellectual virtue. See also Fairweather (2001) pp 67-69.

³⁹ Montmarquet, (1987), pp 482-484. Montmarquet, (1993), pp 21-23.

⁴⁰ Fairweather, (2001), p 70.

desire for true belief, or intellectual conscientiousness, can be offered that does not reduce to absurdity⁴¹ In response to Sosa, the former literature on virtue psychology will be connected to literature on self-deception in order to provide a detailed account of how a desire for true belief can influence belief formation Connecting these two sets of literature will facilitate both a response Sosa's criticisms and a clear understanding of the transformative influence of intellectual character

Sosa begins his consideration of the desire for the truth by offering a seemingly effective *reductio* He proposes that we could construe the desire for truth as follows to desire the truth entails that "If *P* is true, then one is to believe *P*"⁴² According to this construal if a belief is true, then the agent should desire to believe it simply because it is true This construal appears to be susceptible to a *reductio*, as proposed by Sosa, for it would entail a desire for any truth, including trivial truths For if the desire for true beliefs entailed that we should have a belief simply because it is true we would be motivated to memorize a phone book, or the relative positions of various pieces of sand in a desert, because through doing either of these activities we would fulfill our desire for true beliefs Cast in this way the desire for true beliefs seems rather absurd, and not worth having⁴³ Realizing that this formulation does not work, since it is subject to such a *reductio*, Sosa proposes that the desire for true belief could actually amount to a desire that those beliefs we already possess are true This possibility is also dismissed by Sosa, for it could be the case that a friend of ours is terminally ill and, of course, we would not desire that our belief concerning his terminal illness is true So we do not always desire that the beliefs we have are true, and it seems difficult to suggest that we should have such a desire⁴⁴

Sosa's next target as a possible construal of intellectual conscientiousness is the one to be defended in this chapter It entails what Sosa refers to as exhibiting *care* toward our beliefs

⁴¹ Sosa (2001a), pp 52-53 Sosa (2003) p 159

⁴² Sosa (2001a), p 50

⁴³ Sosa, (2001a) pp49-50

⁴⁴ Sosa, (2001a) p 50

Sosa construes *care* as follows: it is the desire that if p then the agent believes that p , and if not- p then the agent believes that not- p .⁴⁵ *Care*, as Sosa proposes, entails a twofold desire. First, it entails the desire that if a proposition is true then the agent believes it is true, and second that if a proposition is false then the agent believes it is false. Sosa claims that *care* is either not always required to achieve true belief, or is subject to the *reductio* mentioned above.⁴⁶ Before we consider Sosa's criticisms of *care* some clarification of it is beneficial.

The *care* construal of the desire for true belief appears to be rooted in remarks offered by William James. For it was James who first proposed that the pursuit of truth and the avoidance of error are two distinct aims and therefore entail two distinct desires. In avoiding error, James says, an agent does not pursue true belief, for when some belief is dismissed as false the agent does not in turn gain a true belief. He has instead only avoided believing a falsehood. The agent avoids believing p , because it is false, but he does not in turn gain the true belief q .⁴⁷ This position does not completely seem tenable, because it can be easily proposed that by discovering that some belief is false the agent does in fact obtain a true belief. The true belief obtained is that the former belief that was held is false, and with any such discovery some new belief with its own content and truth-value emerges. For example, if an agent discovers that his belief that the world is flat is false he may not discover the truth of the matter – i.e. that the earth is roughly a sphere – but nonetheless a new belief with its own content emerges; in this case the belief that the earth is not flat, which is surely a belief and is true. So, it does not seem that James' claim that when an agent avoids some falsehood he does not obtain a true belief is accurate, but nonetheless there is something to the position he offers which is conveyed in the *care* construal of the desire for true belief; specifically, that the pursuit of true belief and the avoidance of false belief entail two distinct motivations that

⁴⁵ Sosa, (2001a), pp.51-52, 60.

⁴⁶ Sosa, (2001a), pp.50-52.

⁴⁷ William James (1956), "The Will to Believe," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (New York: Dover Publications), pp.17-19.

influence belief formation in different ways. A brief elaboration of each type of motivation will display that this is the case.

An agent may attempt to obtain true beliefs but this is not the same as the attempt to avoid having false beliefs. Each end requires a different focus and leads to different behaviours from the agent. To pursue the truth the agent must desire true belief, be focused on what it means for a belief to be true, and, as well, be aware of how to accomplish the end of true belief. The agent will therefore gather evidence, become acquainted with reliable authorities and divergent fields of knowledge, discover the methods that will lead to the accumulation of true beliefs, and maybe even attempt to become intellectually virtuous. This is because the former behaviours facilitate the accumulation of true beliefs, and if an agent desires true beliefs she will therefore adopt such behaviours. By engaging in the former an agent can assuredly avoid believing falsehoods, since he will be focused on accumulating beliefs that are true and will therefore have certain false beliefs overturned. But this is not the same as intentionally avoiding false beliefs. To intentionally avoid believing falsehoods the agent must consciously attempt to rid himself of any belief that maybe false and also consciously attempt to avoid the acceptance of false beliefs. In order to accomplish these two latter goals the agent cannot simply accumulate evidence, discover appropriate methods of belief formation, and so on, but must exercise caution and doubt toward the beliefs he or she has, or will have. The agent must be willing to take a critical stance toward his or her beliefs and question their warrant in order to discover whether they are false. She must acknowledge the possibility that the beliefs she has could be false, and also be willing to critically assess new beliefs. To avoid false beliefs entails its own intentional activity that is distinct from the intentional activity of pursuing true beliefs specifically because it requires the exercise of doubt and critical reflection toward the beliefs one has or will have.

This position, inspired by James, appears to be the position that we exhibit *care* toward our beliefs, as outlined by Sosa. Recall that *care* entails not only that if p is true the agent

believes that p , but also that if not- p the agent believes that not- p . With *care* the agent is motivated not simply to believe a proposition if it is true, i.e. to believe p if it is the case that p , but also to believe a proposition is false if it is false, or to believe not- p if it is the case that not- p . As mentioned, Sosa proposes that this construal of the desire for true belief is problematic for two reasons: because it is not always required to obtain true beliefs, or to avoid false beliefs, and because it too would be subject to the *reductio* mentioned previously. Beginning with the claim that *care* is not always required to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs, Sosa admits that agents can at times be influenced by nonintellectual preferences that can, in turn, cause agents to adopt false beliefs. Nonetheless, agents are not always influenced by nonintellectual preferences, or personal biases, and therefore do not always have to exhibit *care* in regard to their beliefs. To understand this we can rely on a specific example developed by Sosa. Consider an agent who is attempting to discern whether his parents loved him or not. This agent could be so adverse to the claim that his parents did not love him that when faced with evidence that attested to their lack of love he will merely discount or deny this evidence. Nonetheless, Sosa claims, such an agent could have plenty of evidence for the fact that his parents loved him and would not have to rely on *care*, or any other desire, in order to form a true belief in this situation. The evidence would be sufficient on its own to cause the agent to have a true belief, and therefore no guiding desire to obtain true beliefs, or avoid false beliefs, would be required. Or it could be the case that there is evidence that the agent's parents did not love him, and yet the agent is not subject to any type of aversion to this evidence and therefore does not attempt to deny or discount it. Again, then, the agent does not require *care* in order to come to a true belief, or to avoid a false belief, but rather merely has to attend to the evidence. With this criticism Sosa is not proposing that agents are never subject to self-serving biases that could cause them to form false beliefs, but rather that agents are not always subject to such biases and therefore do not always require *care* to obtain true beliefs or avoid false beliefs.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ What Sosa specifically questions is whether a desire for true belief is required to achieve knowledge. In this

As mentioned, other philosophers have offered criticisms similar to Sosa's such that they propose that belief formation is primarily the result of evidential adherence and therefore that no desire for true belief, or aversion to false belief, could play a significant role in belief formation. For example, Charlotte Katzoff and Baron Reed propose that belief formation is an involuntary process where the agent simply adheres to the evidence for the belief so that the belief forms automatically. Belief formation is subject solely to the reasons in favour of the belief, such that if the agent apprehends sufficient evidence for a particular belief then she has the belief and if the evidence is insufficient then no belief is formed. In such a situation there is no role one could ascribe to a deliberate attempt to form a belief one way as opposed to another. The agent cannot intentionally attempt to form her beliefs on virtuous grounds, either through a general desire for the truth, or any of the other psychological dispositions identified by the virtue responsibilist. The agent could not refrain from having the belief if he discovered that no virtue was involved in the formation of the belief. If the agent did refrain from having the belief this would simply be due to the fact that there was either no reasons or evidence in favour of the belief, or because there are reasons that undermine the belief. There is therefore no room for virtue, or a desire for true belief, in belief formation, since such formation is solely the result of acquiescence in the evidence.⁴⁹

In response to the former criticism offered by both Katzoff and Reed it must be pointed out that the virtue responsibilist does not have to advocate doxastic voluntarism, or the claim that agents can choose what to believe. Some virtue responsibilists do advocate doxastic voluntarism, for example Zagzebski,⁵⁰ but it is not required to emphasize the relevance of intellectual character for belief formation. Doxastic voluntarism is not required for one does

thesis we are not concerned with whether beliefs that result from being intellectually virtuous constitute knowledge, but instead with whether the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive and, in turn, how this ability of intellectual character to facilitate true believing is good. Nonetheless, the above formulation of his criticism is accurate and relevant, for what he is questioning is whether *care* is required to obtain true beliefs and consequently knowledge. We are only concerned with whether *care* is required to obtain true beliefs and not whether knowledge results from beliefs formed through exercising *care*. Sosa, (2001a), pp 51-52

⁴⁹ Reed, (2001), pp 516-517, 519-520. Charlotte Katzoff, (2001), Epistemic Virtue and Epistemic Responsibility, *Dialectica*, volume 55, number 2, pp 107-113

⁵⁰ Zagzebski, (1996), p 66

not have to hold that agents can choose what to believe in order exercise control over their beliefs. Rather, one can emphasize that agents can choose *who to be*, and that this choice can impact how their beliefs are formed. More specifically, agents can make choices in regard to their character, and these choices will exert a direct influence on the beliefs they form⁵¹. So, for example, an agent can choose to be intellectually courageous and this will impact the beliefs the agent forms. If an agent is intellectually courageous she is willing to question her beliefs but also defend them, and through doing such she will form beliefs in one way as opposed to another. She will be open to evidence that may disconfirm a belief she cherishes and therefore will adhere to, or acquiesce in, this evidence so that her belief is altered. With the next two sections, then, the goal will be to display how an agent's character can impact the beliefs that the agent forms. It will be argued that agents can be influenced by desires, motivations and background beliefs that lead to self-deception, or false belief, and that intellectual character can mitigate this influence in order facilitate true believing. It will therefore become apparent that agents can exercise indirect control over their beliefs by exercising direct control over their character. Consequently, it will be displayed that intentionally attempting to form a belief in an intellectually virtuous manner can have an impact on the beliefs of the agent.

Sosa's criticism differs slightly, though, from those offered by Katzoff and Reed, as he acknowledges that nonintellectual preferences can sometimes influence an agent's belief formation but not always. It is always possible that nonintellectual preferences may exert no influence on an agent's belief formation, and in such situations intellectual character would not be required to form true beliefs or avoid false beliefs. The agent would simply believe as the evidence dictates. In order to respond to this criticism offered by Sosa it will be argued that intellectual character is always required to assure the agent that her beliefs are true due to the nature of self-deception.

⁵¹ Zagzebski (1996) pp 59-61. Axtell (1997) p 1.

Of course, Sosa claims that there is another problem with *care*. Specifically, that it is also subject to the *reductio* mentioned previously. Sosa acknowledges that desires, or nonintellectual preferences, could fulfill a role in belief formation, but that typically these desires are relative to the content of specific beliefs. For example, when an agent is considering whether his parents loved him any desire or aversion will be directed specifically at the contrary claims 'My parents loved me' and 'My parents did not love me'. An agent will typically desire the former and be averse to the latter, and these nonintellectual preferences may cause the agent to believe the former even if he has insufficient evidence that his parents loved him or sufficient evidence that his parents did not love him. In such situations nonintellectual preferences are directed at the content of specific beliefs, and could be overcome with belief specific preferences. That is, Sosa proposes that the agent could overcome his aversion to the claim that his parents did not love him by simply focusing on this belief and then attempting to not let any aversion to it influence the belief formed. This criticism again has the consequence that a general desire for true belief, as well as an aversion to false belief, is not required to obtain true beliefs, or avoid false beliefs. For it entails that belief specific desires are sufficient to obtain true beliefs or avoid false beliefs.⁵² The virtue responsibilist, though, does not advocate belief specific desires, but instead holds that a general desire for true belief, and an aversion to false belief, is required to obtain true beliefs.⁵³ Since virtue responsibilists advocate a general desire for true beliefs, Sosa claims that their position is subject to the *reductio* mentioned previously. That is, since *care* entails a general desire for true belief it will entail a desire for even trivial truths, such as phone numbers or the relative positions of various pieces of sand in a desert. Agents, though, do not desire such trivial truth, and it would be absurd to

⁵² Sosa (2001a), pp 53-54, 60-61

⁵³ Montmarquet, (1993), pp 21-23. Zagzebski, (1996) pp 153-154, 167-168, 175-176, 185. Axtell, (1997), pp 16-17. Axtell (1998) p 495. Fairweather, (2001), pp 65, 67-68.

expect them to desire such truths. Consequently, *care* appears to be an inappropriate way to construe the desire for true belief⁵⁴

In order to offer an explicit and tenable account of the transformative influence of intellectual character one must respond to the above criticisms offered by Sosa. It must be displayed that a general desire for true beliefs, as well as a general aversion to false beliefs, are both required in order to obtain and sustain true beliefs. Specifically, *care* will be defended as the appropriate construal of the desire for true beliefs, or intellectual conscientiousness. In order to make the case for *care* a theory of human psychology which focuses on the role of desires, motivations and background beliefs in the formation of beliefs will be consulted. It is a theory of human psychology that relies on desires, motivations and background beliefs to explain self-deception. This theory of self-deception will then be combined with the theory of virtue psychology outlined earlier in order to provide an explicit account of the transformative influence of intellectual character. Once this explicit account has been offered a response to Sosa's criticisms is formulated.

2.3 Contaminants of Belief Formation

In response to the criticisms of the previous section we will consider the possibility that the beliefs of agents are not merely formed and sustained by complying with what the evidence dictates. Rather, agents often interpret the evidence they are confronted with through the influence of desires motivations, and background beliefs. By elaborating upon how the former can influence belief formation two things will be demonstrated. First, that they *can* play a role in the formation of beliefs. Second, that the role they do play often leads to having false beliefs. This is because the range of doxastic states that desires, motivations, and background beliefs produce include self-deception, and wishful thinking, as well as questionable cognitive

⁵⁴ Sosa, (2001a), pp 53-54, 60-61

strategies such as rationalization. Motivations, dispositions and background beliefs can thus contaminate belief forming processes by leading agents away from the possibility of obtaining true beliefs. These various claims concerning belief formation will open the door for a role for intellectual character to be elaborated on in the next section.

To begin it is important to recognize that there are several philosophers who offer nuanced positions concerning how motivations and dispositions can influence doxastic formation so as to cause states such as wishful thinking and self-deception. Our focus is not on these nuances, and fortunately such a focus is not required to understand how motivations, dispositions and background beliefs can cause agents to possess false beliefs. This is because we can extract from the writings of such philosophers two general ways in which the former fulfill a causal role in the production of false beliefs. First, desires and motivations can cause agents to offer explanations that conform to the content of their desires and motivations. That is, a specific explanation of the situation is favoured due to the influence of the agent's own desires and motivations, and this causes the agent to gather evidence in a way that will either confirm the explanation offered, or conform to the agent's explanation.⁵⁵ As Alfred Mele explains, an agent's desire causes him to engage in acts of both negative and positive misinterpretation. The former occurs when the agent's desire for some belief, or some state of affairs represented by the belief, leads that agent to misinterpret evidence as not disconfirming her belief although, in the absence of such a desire, the evidence would easily disconfirm the agent's belief. Relying on Sosa's example, an agent could have evidence that his parents did not love him and yet his desire for his parents love could cause him to ignore such evidence in order to maintain a belief that they did. Positive misinterpretation occurs when the agent interprets evidence, through the influence of some desire or motivation, as counting in favour

⁵⁵ Sanford, (1988), p 161-162, 169. Johnston (1988), p 75. McLaughlin, (1988) p 39-52-53. Audi (1988), p 97-99, 101-105, 107-108. Oksenberg Rorty (1996), pp 79-80. Baier (1996), p 58. Mele, (2001) p 29-30. McLaughlin, (1996), p 38.

of her belief when in fact it does not⁵⁶ So, for example, an agent who wants to maintain a view of himself as generous will misinterpret his actions in specific situations as conforming to this virtue This will occur even if there are significant reasons to believe that the agent is not generous⁵⁷ Hence, what the agent does in such situations is provide an explanation to himself that makes the evidence fit together so as to confirm, and conform to, his desires and motivations As explained by Herbert Fingarette, the agent possesses a cover story to which facts are bent so as to confirm the cover story The agent skillfully interprets aspects of his engagement in the world in order to maintain the plausibility of the cover story and make it as natural and internally consistent as possible even when the evidence continues to mount against this story This is accomplished by engaging in inventive acts of rationalization in order to fill in the gaps of the cover story not confirmed by the evidence to which the agent is exposed⁵⁸

The second way in which motivations and desires can influence agents so as to produce false beliefs is by simply causing agents to miss the facts in the first place Through the influence of motivations and desires agents either evade an issue altogether or they engage in selective attention and evidence gathering For example, the agent will be hypersensitive to evidence that confirms what is desired, or what the agent is motivated to believe, so that her

⁵⁶ Audi, (1988), pp 97-99, 103-105, 107-108 Mele, (2001), pp 26-27

⁵⁷ Mele, (2001), p 11

⁵⁸ It may seem that the explanation of self-deception offered by Fingarette is at odds with the explanation that is favoured in this thesis This is because Fingarette replaces 'cognition-perception' with his explanation of self-deception with 'volition-action' terms It will be proposed in the next section that the intellectual virtues mitigate the influence of desires, motivations and background beliefs to produce true beliefs, and thus, it seems, I am relying on the 'cognition-perception' terms that Fingarette rejects as leading to paradoxes in the explanation of self-deception The incompatibility of Fingarette's explanation with the one to be offered is only apparent The first reason for this conclusion is because Fingarette does not propose to eliminate 'cognition-perception' terms, but rather to simply shift the emphasis to 'volition-action' terms Second, the explanation of how intellectual character can mitigate the possibility of self-deception to be offered is compatible with this shift in emphasis This is because the agent who is both affected by desires, motivations and beliefs to engage in self-deception, as well as the agent who possesses intellectual character to avoid the former and have true beliefs, could be described as making certain choices or engaging in certain types of actions As outlined in the current section, the self-deceptive agent engages in actions of rationalization and selective attention The agent with intellectual character on the other hand, makes certain choices and engages in certain actions as well For example, the agent with intellectual character decides to be intellectually virtuous, and will do such for the purpose of obtaining true beliefs Once the agent is intellectually virtuous she then engages in certain actions shaped by the understanding and motivational structure of her intellectual character For example, constituted by intellectual courage the agent will be motivated to both question and stand by her beliefs, and will engage in the appropriate actions to do such Thus, the type of shift advocated by Fingarette is compatible with the explanation to be offered in the next section Fingarette, (2000), pp 34, 37-40, 46, 48-49, 52, 61-63, 69-71

attention is constantly focused on confirming evidence and fails to acknowledge evidence that would disconfirm a cherished belief. In situations of evasion and selective attention no misinterpretation occurs, since the evidence is never acknowledged. The agent simply ignores the evidence due to the influence of some desire or motivation. For such an agent only specific aspects of situations, i.e. those aspects which confirm, and conform to, the agent's desires and motivations, are perceived as salient, and this is directly the result of the agent's desires and motivations. For example, an agent who wants to believe that her husband is faithful, and is strongly motivated to maintain this belief, ignores evidence that attests to his infidelity while focusing on the evidence that attests to his devotion even when this evidence is minimal. Through the influence of desires and motivations, then, agents either evade disturbing evidence altogether or engage in selective evidence gathering, so that it is only the evidence that confirms the motivationally biased belief that is recognized while evidence that disconfirms such belief is not even acknowledged.⁵⁹

The two ways, then, that desires and motivations can influence agents so that they form false beliefs is by causing the agent to either formulate elaborate explanations which in turn influence how facts are interpreted, or by causing such facts to be missed in the first place. Because the agent *wants* something to be the case she is influenced to offer explanations and gather evidence that either confirms, or conforms to, what is desired. Even the agent's perspectival capacities are altered by her desires and motivations, for both influence what appears salient to her when she is engaged in various situations.⁶⁰

As mentioned, besides desire and motivation, the agent is also significantly influenced by the background beliefs she possesses. For example, if an agent is Catholic he interprets the event of the Mass in a particular way due the influence of the claims of Catholicism. If an agent is a fanatical Muslim, then events such as 9/11 are interpreted in a particular way and if

⁵⁹ McLaughlin, (1988), pp 42-43. Johnston, (1988), pp 67, 68, 75, 87. Audi, (1988), p105. Oksenberg Rorty, (1988) p 11. 18. Taylor, (1989), p 146, 147. Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 77-79. Baier, (1996), p53-55. McLaughlin, (1996), p 38. Fingarette, (2000), pp 38-40, 46, 167. 169. Mele, (2001), pp 26-27, 51-52.

⁶⁰ Taylor, (1989), pp 11, 13-14.

one is an experienced scientist, equipped with the theoretical backdrop of his scientific beliefs, his perception of experimental situations is significantly influenced by the beliefs already possessed. In fact the influence of background beliefs on agent perception and reasoning is considered by many to be ubiquitous and by others to be inescapable.⁶¹ The general claim can be put as follows. We are immersed in particular societies, cultures, communities, and so on, that equip us with a set of beliefs. Once we possess these beliefs they then shape the way we perceive events when confronted with them, and also how we think and reason about them if we do such. Through such influence, then, the beliefs the agent already possesses can cause the agent to engage in self-deception, or simply accumulate false beliefs, since the background beliefs upon which she relies are false.⁶² For example, an agent who believes that her son possesses an outstanding character fails to recognize the evidence that attests against this fact. Or, the racist, who is constituted by racist beliefs, possesses many false beliefs concerning the inferiority and characteristics of agents from other ethnic groups. In such situations desires, motivations and dispositions can still fulfill a significant role in initiating self-deception, for agents may be disposed to favour those beliefs already possessed. Nonetheless, the background beliefs of the agent can be an independent impetus for instances of self-deception, since they too can mislead the agent. Consequently, the agent must be cognizant of their misleading influence in order to avoid self-deception or being deceived by her own beliefs.

⁶¹ Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 83 Nelson Goodman, (1978), *Ways of World Making*, (Indianapolis, Indiana Hackett Publishing Company), pp 2-4, 6-7, 17, 96-97 Hilary Putnam, (1981), *Reason, truth and History*, New York Cambridge University Press), 49-50, 52-54, 68 Mark Johnston, (1993), *Moral Imagination*, (Chicago University of Chicago Press), p.9 William B Rouse and Nancy M Morris, (1986), "On Looking Into the Black Box Prospects and Limits in the Search for Mental Models," *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 100, pp 349-363 Louis Caruana, (2006), *Science and Virtue An Essay on the Impact of the Scientific Mentality on Moral Character*, Burlington, VT Ashgate Publishing), pp 16-22

⁶² Goodman, (1978), pp 2-4, 6-7, 14-15, 92-93, 97 Anthony G Greenwald, (1980), "The Totalitarian Ego *Fabrication and Revision of Personal History*," *American Psychologist*, volume 35, number 7, July, pp 603, 606-607, 612 Putnam, (1981), pp 29-31, 41-45, 47-50, 52-54, 68 Rouse and Morris, (1986), pp 349-363 Taylor, (1989), pp 13-14 Johnston, (1993), p 9 John Heil, (1983), "Doxastic Agency," *Philosophical Studies*, volume 43, p 361-362 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 77-80, 83 Baier, (1996), p 58 Hilary Kornblith, (2000), "Ever Since Descartes," *Knowledge, Belief, and Character Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Guy Axtell, (New York Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc), pp 47-48

Before we move on to consider how intellectual character can mitigate the influence of biasing desires, motivations and beliefs there are three more important points that must be noted about how the former can influence belief formation. The first is that such desires, motivations and beliefs tend to be reinforced by self-serving motivations. That is, such doxastic contaminants are significantly influenced by the agent's desire to see herself, as well as loved ones and cherished beliefs, in a positive light, or to remove the anxiety that would arise if the agent were confronted with a belief that she either did, or did not, want to be true. For example, the agent desires to see herself as a person of a particular type, as rational or virtuous, or to maintain the truth of some favoured explanation or theory. In such situations the agent is not concerned with the truth of her beliefs about her own character, the character of loved ones, nor about the truth of cherished explanations. Instead, it is the maintenance of what is favoured, often to remove anxiety and maintain psychological well-being, that motivates the gathering of evidence as well as the explanations provided.⁶³ Thus, self-serving desires and motivations are often the cause of self-deception and, in turn, false belief.

Second, the influence of such desires, motivations and background beliefs are typically unconscious. The agent who engages in self-deception is not conscious that the process is occurring, and this lack of awareness is indispensable for the occurrence and success of self-deception. If the agent were to become aware of the fact that she was influenced by specific desires, motivations and beliefs that, in turn, led her away from an accurate awareness of her own beliefs and various states of affairs, then such motivations and desires would no longer be

⁶³ Johnston, (1988), p 66, 73, 86 Audi, (1988), p 97, 101-102, 105, 107-108 Taylor, (1989), 8-45 Eliot Deutsch, (1996), "Self-Deception A Comparative Study," *Self and Deception a cross-cultural philosophical enquiry*, edited by R T Ames and W. Dissanayake, (New York State University Press), p 316 Sanford, (1988), pp 157-159 van Fraassen, (1988), p 145 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 77 Baier, (1996), p 55 Jens B Asendorpf and Fritz Ostendorf, (1998), "Is Self-Enhancement Healthy? Conceptual, Psychometric, and Empirical Analysis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 74 No 4, 961-962 Fingarette, (2000), pp 65-69, 86, 139, 142, 145 Ronald B de Sousa, (1988), "Emotion and Self-Deception," *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, edited by Brian P McLaughlin and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, (Los Angeles University of California Press), p 327 Richard Paul, (2000), "Critical Thinking, Moral Integrity, and Citizenship Teaching for the Intellectual Virtues," *Knowledge, Belief, and Character Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Guy Axtell, (New York Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc), p 172 Cameron Anderson, Sanjay Srivastava, Jennifer S Beer, Sandra E Spataro, Jennifer A Chatman, (2006), "Knowing Your Place Self-Perceptions of Status in Face-to-Face Groups," *Journal of Personality of Social Psychology*, volume 91, number 6, pp 1095

efficacious. This is because the agent would then be aware that her beliefs were the result not of evidence, but rather her own biased states. The agent would thus realize that she was being duped by her own motivational structure, and would, in turn, no longer be taken in by it. Hence, the agent must be oblivious to their influence.⁶⁴

Finally, the influences of desires, motivations and beliefs that can cause self-deception, or simply the accumulation of false beliefs, are generally not simply episodic. That is, they are not determinants of belief that arise only periodically, but instead represent enduring psychological stratagems of the agent, or, more simply, habits of the mind. Agents typically maintain specific desires, motivations and beliefs that can cause occurrences of self-deception, or mere false beliefs, so that perceiving, reasoning, and ultimately believing through their influence is habitual or dispositional. The agent does not usually adopt a particular desire, motivation, and especially a belief system, for only a moment, but instead has long-term commitments to them. For example, the agent who desires to see herself as courageous does not do such only momentarily but instead is committed to such a perspective. This is not to deny that desires, motivations and beliefs can be held only episodically, but rather the point is that typically they are not. Agents can be quite committed to maintaining specific desires, motivations and beliefs, and will therefore continue to be influenced by them when forming new beliefs. In such situations these stratagems, and patterns of entrenched doxastic behaviour, act as an “automatic filtering process” through which evidence and reasons are considered, so that those beliefs that serve the agent’s interests, by conforming to desires, motivations and beliefs already held, are maintained.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Johnston refers to such mechanisms as subintentional, because they are purposeful mechanisms but not mechanisms initiated intentionally, whereas others tend to refer to them as either unconscious or subconscious Johnston, (1988), p 65-66, 70-76, 78, 87 Audi, (1988), p 94, 102-105, 109 Baier, (1996), pp 54-55 Deutsch, (1996), p 317 Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-49, 60-61, 65-66, 78, 98-99

⁶⁵ McLaughlin, (1988), pp 43-44 Johnston, (1988), p 66, 87 Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), p 18-19 Taylor, (1989), pp 227-228 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 76-78 Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-47

2.4 The Mitigating Influence of Intellectual Character

Having gotten a sense of how false beliefs can result due to the influence of desires, motivations and background beliefs we will now turn to a consideration of how intellectual character can mitigate the influence of the former to produce true beliefs. In our consideration of how intellectual character can mitigate the influence of desires, motivation and beliefs we will rely significantly on the theory of virtuous character outlined in the first section of this chapter, as well as draw on new sources. Once this is established, a conclusive response to Sosa can be offered and a clear understanding of the transformative influence of intellectual character will have been achieved.

The first thing that should be apparent from the content of the previous section is that desires and motivations can fulfill a role in belief formation, which provides for the possibility that intellectual character could also fulfill a role in belief formation. Recall, as explained earlier in this chapter, that the intellectual virtues also possess a motivational component. They entail a general desire for true belief as well as a variety of specific motivations, such as a motivation to be open-minded, intellectually humble, intellectually courageous, and so on. Since it is the case, as outlined in the previous section, that desires and motivations can play a role in belief formation, so that such formation is not simply the result of evidential adherence, it is not inconceivable that the motivations associated with intellectual character could also fulfill a role in belief formation.⁶⁶ When agents form their beliefs they do not simply have to be exposed to the appropriate evidence in order to avoid possessing false beliefs. They must also have the right attitude toward that evidence. They must be open to what the evidence suggests, and if they are influenced by desires or motivations that cause them to reinterpret the

⁶⁶ Johnston, (1988), pp 68-69. Fairweather, (2001), pp 68-69.

evidence in a self-serving manner, or to ignore the evidence altogether, they will come to believe as they want to believe and not as the evidence suggests. What seems to be required, then, to overcome such a situation is not simply to re-expose such agents to the evidence, or to even expose them to further evidence, since such evidence will always be filtered through their motivational biases. Instead, in order to enable agents to obtain true beliefs in such situations it appears that it is their motivations that must be altered. Since desires and motivations fulfill such a significant role in belief formation the only way to overcome their influence is to replace them with motivations focused on obtaining true beliefs. The virtues of intellectual character provide such a motivational structure, and therefore seem to be what is required to obtain true beliefs in such situations.⁶⁷

That it is the motivational structure of intellectual character that is required in such situations to obtain true beliefs is further confirmed if we revisit some of the other aspects of virtuous character outlined earlier in this chapter and then compare this to what was proposed in the previous section. Recall first the claim that the virtues entail attempts to overcome natural shortcomings and personal desires that can exercise an inappropriate influence on agents in order to be appropriately motivated, or disposed, in various situations.⁶⁸ For example, to be courageous an agent must overcome inappropriate desires for personal safety and to be temperate the agent must overcome a strong desire for pleasure. This appears similar to what occurs with the desires and motivations that lead to wishful thinking and self-deception, and therefore leads to the possibility of the intellectual virtues as correctives to such desires. For, as stated in the previous section, agents who engage in acts of self-deception and wishful thinking are typically motivated by self-serving desires. These often include desires to see oneself, those close to oneself, and cherished beliefs in a positive light. The agent wants to

⁶⁷ Fairweather, (2001) pp 69–71, 78. Mark Leon, (2002), 'Responsible Believers', *The Monist*, volume 85, number 3, p 423.

⁶⁸ Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, (2003), 'Humility and Epistemic Goods', *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp 261, 263.

maintain specific beliefs about herself, and others, or to simply maintain some meaningful belief, in order to avoid the anxiety that could result if their falsity were exposed⁶⁹ From the perspective of the intellectually virtuous agent such desires and emotional reactions are inappropriate and must be overcome, since they can cause agents to be narrow minded, produce stereotypes and prejudices, and be immersed in delusions and illusions⁷⁰ They are inappropriate from such a perspective, for what matters to the intellectually virtuous agent is to overcome such false believing in order to obtain true beliefs In such a situation, then, the intellectually virtuous agent attempts to guide, or mold, her motivational structure so as to not be subject to inappropriate motivations, or dispositions, that could lead to false beliefs The types of motivations and dispositions to be thwarted include the very general self-serving dispositions outlined above, but also very specific motivations and dispositions Examples include a tendency to believe too easily, i.e credulity, fear of questioning one's beliefs, being dogmatic, being diffident in regard to one's beliefs and intellectual abilities, being overconfident, being concerned with status as opposed to truth, and so on⁷¹

Thus the explanation of the inappropriate cognitive mechanisms that lead to states such as self-deception, as well as the attempt to overcome them, corresponds to the explanation of human agency and appropriate behaviour advocated within virtue psychology Agents are influenced by natural but inappropriate shortcomings which can be overcome through the influence of the virtues In this case the natural shortcomings pertain to the beliefs of the agent, and the attempt to maintain desirable yet unwarranted beliefs The intellectual virtues therefore become correctives to such dispositions because they are directed toward obtaining true beliefs, but also because they are specific dispositional components that can answer to the dispositional components that lead to false beliefs Instead of being disposed to sustain, or obtain, beliefs

⁶⁹ Lorraine Code (1984) Toward A Responsibilist Epistemology *Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* volume XLV September, p 42 James Goumlock *Rediscovering the Moral Life Philosophy and Human Practice* (Buffalo, New York Prometheus Books) p 300

⁷⁰ Paul (2000) p 172

⁷¹ Sheiman and White (2003) p 42 Roberts and Wood (2003) p 263

that confirm, and conform to, self-serving desires the agent is disposed to have beliefs that are true. The possession of such a general disposition, as well as the other more specific dispositions of intellectual character, then influence how the agent forms beliefs just as the self-serving dispositional structure influenced belief formation to cause self-deception. In this situation, though, since the agent is focused on truth, or obtaining true beliefs, it will be this disposition that will be fulfilled as opposed to the self-serving disposition.⁷²

So far, then, we have a fairly good picture of why intellectual character is significant for overcoming cognitive mechanisms that lead to having false beliefs, and how the virtues of such character can do this. Intellectual character is relevant since obtaining true beliefs is not merely a matter of exposure to the appropriate evidence, but also a matter of the motivational, and/or dispositional, structure of the agent. Agents can be influenced in their belief formation by self-serving motivations and dispositions, and the intellectual virtues can act as correctives to these natural short-comings in order to facilitate true beliefs. The next aspect of virtuous character to be explored to display its transformative influence is the effect of such character on the perceptual and rational capacities of the agent.

In the first section of this chapter significant attention was given to the idea that virtuous character can influence not only the agent's motivational structure, but also her perceptions and rational capacities. Inappropriate motivations and dispositions were said to obscure, or contaminate, agent perception, while the virtues were proposed to mitigate this influence to enable the agent to perceive accurately. This explanation of the role of virtuous character is congruent with the explanation of occurrences of self-deception considered in the previous section. Recall that the perceptual capacities of agents who engage in acts of self-deception are significantly influenced by the motivations, dispositions and background beliefs possessed. The agent perceives situations in a way that either confirms, or conforms to, what is desired or already believed. The agent is therefore disposed to perceive in specific ways which

⁷² Zagzebski (1996) pp 146-147-154. Fairweather, (2001), p 72

then influences the beliefs formed. Intellectual character can mitigate this perceptual influence by replacing self-serving dispositions with dispositions for true beliefs.⁷³ For example, an agent who wants to maintain some cherished belief will overestimate the evidence in its favour, and avoid being cognizant of evidence that could disconfirm his belief.⁷⁴ If the agent were instead constituted by the dispositional structure of intellectual character, then the evidence would not be overlooked. The agent would be disposed to maintaining beliefs only if they are true, since he would be guided by a general desire for true beliefs as well as other more specific dispositions. Thus the agent would be open to both confirming and disconfirming evidence for his beliefs, and would also perceive the evidence which either confirms or disconfirms his beliefs as salient due to the influence of his intellectual character.⁷⁵

This influence of intellectual character on agent perception also means that the virtues influence agent reasoning or deliberation. In the first section of this chapter it was proposed that the virtues cause agents to perceive in specific ways and therefore also cause agents to reason in specific ways. This occurs by influencing the agent's perception of evidence in particular situations, and therefore the content of the agent's deliberations. Through causing appropriate perceptions the virtues ensure that the evidence the agent relies on in her deliberations are accurate. The intellectually virtuous agent does not reason based on a self-serving interpretation of the evidence, but instead based on an interpretation of the evidence that is directed at achieving true beliefs. This influence of intellectual character is therefore similar to the role of the self-serving dispositions that were proposed in the previous section to lead to self-deception. In that section it was claimed that self-serving motivations and background beliefs can initiate a rationalization process so that the beliefs formed conform to the content of these motivations and background beliefs. Intellectual character mitigates the possibility of false beliefs by replacing the latter impetuses for rationalization with a disposition

⁷³ Sherman and White, (2003), p 36

⁷⁴ McLaughlin, (1988), p 43

⁷⁵ Fairweather, (2001), p 71

toward true belief. Instead of desiring to maintain some cherished belief, and having her perceptions and deliberations influenced by such a desire, the intellectually virtuous agent is motivated to obtain true beliefs and this, in turn, influences both her perceptions and deliberations and therefore disposes her to obtain and sustain true beliefs.⁷⁶

Another aspect of this transformative role of virtuous character must be dwelt on to strengthen the connection between occurrences of inappropriate believing, such as self-deception, and the mitigating influence of intellectual character. Recall that it was proposed that not only do the virtues clear away inappropriate motivations so that agents can perceive accurately aspects of various situations, but also that the virtues provide a type of understanding for the agent. This occurs partly through constituting the agent's concerns and interests in specific ways, for example by providing a concern for true believing, but also because the virtues are held to be instructive concerning how the agent should think and act in particular situations. Consider, for example, intellectual virtues such as open-mindedness and intellectual humility. The agent who is intellectually humble realizes that some of her beliefs, if not all, could be false, and that she can always learn from others. The agent who is open-minded is not simply willing to listen to the positions of others, but admits to himself that such positions could actually be true while his own beliefs could be false. Other general influences of intellectual character include causing the agent to carefully scrutinize the evidence, to consider alternative explanations and arguments, and to be thorough in her inquiries.⁷⁷ With such virtues, as well as others, the agent who possesses intellectual character therefore possesses a certain type understanding of her current doxastic state and how she should interact with others when forming beliefs. With such an understanding in hand she is then willing to question the beliefs she does profess and is well aware that they could always be false. She is therefore less susceptible to dispositions and beliefs that would lead her to self-deception or wishful thinking. For example, instead of being motivated to maintain the belief about herself

⁷⁶ Hookway, (2001), pp.190-192. Reed, (2001), p.517.

⁷⁷ Fairweather, (2001), p.73. Hookway, (2001), p.194.

as rational, which can then lead to instances of self-deception, she is willing to admit that such a belief could be wrong, especially if this is pointed out to her by someone else. Thus, the virtues of intellectual character can also mitigate the influence of factors that lead to self-deception by providing a certain type of understanding for the agent. It is an understanding focused on the fallibility of one's doxastic states and the means to overcome this fallibility.

Another way in which the psychology of self-deception lines up with the psychology of intellectual character, which also displays how the latter can mitigate the possibility of the former, is the fact that neither is considered episodic. In the last section it was pointed out that the desires, dispositions and background beliefs that lead to self-deception represent enduring psychological stratagems of the agent, or, more simply, habits of the mind. As such these habits of the mind act as an "automatic filtering process" through which evidence and reasons are considered, so that those beliefs that serve the agent's interests, by conforming to desires, motivations and beliefs already held are maintained.⁷⁸ A similar role was also ascribed to virtuous character in the first section of this chapter. It was proposed that once the agent has fully integrated the virtues he achieves a firm and unchangeable character so that virtuous actions follow naturally and without effort. The virtues become an enduring aspect of the agent so that the virtuous agent is not subject to the vicissitudes of situations. His perceptions, deliberations and choices are a consequence of his enduring virtuous character and not situational factors. In fact, this occurs to such an extent that virtuous perceptions, deliberations and choices often occur automatically and unconsciously.⁷⁹ To acquire the virtues, and this includes the intellectual virtues, the agent must do such consciously and conscientiously, but once they are fully integrated they also become an automatic filtering process through which

⁷⁸ Oksenberg Rorty (1996), p 78

⁷⁹ Johnston (1988) p 88. Sherman and White, (2003), p 36. Richard Foley, (2001) *The Foundational Role of Epistemology in a General Theory of Rationality, Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility* edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p 224

beliefs are formed⁸⁰ For example, an agent will at first often have to make an effort to be open-minded, but through diligent effort and attempts to be open-minded this intellectual virtue will become fully integrated into his character Once the virtue of open-mindedness becomes fully integrated the agent will be open to the claims of others so that the beliefs he does form will be automatically and unconsciously influenced by this intellectual virtue In both of these ways, then, the influence of the intellectual virtues mirrors the mechanisms of self-deception and other forms of false believing That is, the intellectual virtues represent enduring ‘habits of the mind’ that influence the agent in her doxastic formation typically, although not always, at an unconscious level⁸¹ The difference between the mechanisms of self-deception, wish-thinking and so on and the intellectual virtues is that the former lead to false beliefs while the latter lead to true beliefs

2.5 Intellectual Character and the Desire for True Belief

Through connecting literature on self-deception with virtue psychology literature a clear understanding of the transformative influence of intellectual character has emerged Such character transforms the agent in that it mitigates the influence of desires, motivations and background beliefs that can lead to self-deception and ultimately false belief With this understanding in mind Sosa’s criticisms of *care* can now be addressed Recall that he offered three criticisms First, that non-intellectual preferences may not always exert their influence, and therefore one does not always require *care* in order to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs Second, even if non-intellectual preferences do exert influence this influence can be overcome via belief specific motivations and no general desire for true belief, such as *care*, is

⁸⁰ Sherman and White, (2003), p 43 Hookway, (2003), p 184 Christopher Hookway, (2000), *Regulating Inquiry: Virtue, Doubt and Sentiment. Knowledge, Belief and Character. Readings in Virtue Epistemology* edited by Guy Axtell (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.), pp 152-153, 155-156

⁸¹ Hookway, (2000), p 150, 152, 155-156 Robert Audi (2001), *Epistemic Virtue and Justified Belief. Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p 83

required. And, finally, any general desire for true belief will ultimately be subject to a devastating *reductio*. We will begin by responding to Sosa's second criticism.

Sosa claims that in order to overcome non-intellectual preferences agents merely require belief specific motivations, and therefore a general desire for true belief, or intellectual conscientiousness, is not required to mitigate the influence of such preferences. For example, in order for an agent to overcome an aversion to the belief that his parents do not love him all an agent requires is a desire to believe the truth in regard to this specific belief and not a general desire for true belief. The agent's desire for truth in this situation does not have to be a general desire for the truth, but rather a specific desire to believe that his parents loved him if they did in fact love him or to believe that his parents did not love him if it is a fact that they did not love him. Consequently, no general desire for true belief is required to come to a true belief in such situations, but rather only a belief specific desire, or motivation, that is focused on the content of the belief in question.⁸²

Sosa may be correct in proposing that belief specific desires are sometimes sufficient to overcome nonintellectual preferences in various situations, but this is not the picture that emerges from the explanation of self-deception considered previously. What the previous consideration of self-deception tells us is that agents do not typically consider beliefs in isolation. Rather, agents are guided in their belief formation via comprehensive narratives and dispositions that influence how specific beliefs are formed. For example, in his explanation of self-deception Herbert Fingarette proposes that agents are motivated to maintain a specific 'cover-story,' and it is the maintenance of this 'cover-story' that then leads to specific instances of self-deception. The agent bends facts and skillfully interprets aspects of his engagement in the world in order to maintain the plausibility of the cover story and make it as natural and internally consistent as possible.⁸³ It is therefore the maintenance of a comprehensive narrative, according to Fingarette, that is the impetus of isolated occurrences of self-deception.

⁸² Sosa, (2001a), pp 53-54, 60-61

⁸³ Fingarette, (2000), pp 34, 37, 40, 46, 48-49, 52, 61, 63, 69, 71. Taylor, (1989), p 11, 13, 14

Fingarette is not alone in advocating such an explanation of self-deception, for psychologists who conduct research on self-deception offer a similar explanation. For example, Shelly Taylor proposes that the belief formation of agents is often influenced by the attempt to maintain a self-schema. That is, agents possess organized sets of beliefs about their personal traits and role in the world, and these organized sets of beliefs influence how specific beliefs are formed. Agents attempt to maintain beliefs associated with their self-schemas, for example that they are witty or kind, and this in turn causes them to form false beliefs in specific situations. The self-schema therefore acts as a filter through which specific information is interpreted. If incoming evidence does not conform with the self-schema, then it is either modified or ignored.⁸⁴ Again, then, the explanation of self-deception relies on the notion of a comprehensive, or general, story which then influences how specific beliefs are formed, but, as mentioned, general motivations and dispositions also exert an influence. Specifically, as set out in the section of self-deception, it is a general self-serving motivation, or disposition, that is the impetus for specific acts of self-deception. Agents desire to see themselves, as well as loved ones and cherished beliefs, in a positive light, and attempt to avoid the anxiety that could arise if they were confronted with a belief they either want, or do not want, to be true. It is therefore a general desire, in this case the desire to maintain what is favoured or cherished, that is the impetus for specific acts of self-deception and also the impetus for the maintenance of the self-schema or cover-story.⁸⁵

What the literature of self-deception thus indicates is that specific beliefs are often influenced by attempts to maintain a general and comprehensive narrative which is itself maintained by a general self-serving motivation or disposition. This explanation of belief formation, or self-deception, consequently indicates, first, that it is tenable to propose that

⁸⁴ Taylor, (1989), pp 13-15, 154-155

⁸⁵ Johnston, (1988), p 66, 73, 86. Audi, (1988), p 97, 101-102, 105, 107-108. Taylor, (1989), 8-45. Deutsch, (1996), p 316. Sanford, (1988), pp 157-159. van Fraassen, (1988), p 145. Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 77. Baier, (1996), p 55. Asendorpf and Ostendorf, (1998), pp 961-962. Fingarette, (2000), pp 65, 69, 86, 139, 142, 145. de Sousa, (1988), p 327. Paul, (2000), p 172. Anderson, et al, (2006) pp 1095

general motivations and dispositions can influence the formation of specific beliefs. By advocating a general desire for true belief the virtue responsibilist is therefore not advocating an implausible psychology. What it also indicates, though, is that a general motivation, or disposition, for true belief is likely the best means to overcome specific instances of self-deception. It is the best means to overcome specific instances of self-deception, since self-deception itself is typically the result of general motivations and dispositions. Agents who engage in self-deception are motivated to maintain a specific cover-story, or self-schema, for self-serving reasons. Consequently, self-deception could be mitigated if the general self-serving motivation that leads to specific instances of false believing were replaced with a general motivation toward true belief. That is, if the motivational structure of the agent were altered so that instead of possessing a general self-serving motivation to maintain either a cover-story, or a self-scheme, the agent possessed a general desire for true belief.

Of course, one question that may arise is whether agents would require solely a desire for true belief or whether they would require a corresponding desire to avoid false beliefs as is the case with *care*. Recall that *care* involves a twofold desire: first, that if p the agent believe that p , and, second, that if not- p the agent will believe that not- p . What must be determined is whether an agent requires the twofold desire to mitigate the influence of the desires, motivations and dispositions that lead to self-deception, or whether a desire solely for true belief would be sufficient to mitigate the possibility of self-deception. Recall that when the position of James was outlined it was noted that by simply pursuing, or being concerned with having, true belief an agent can avoid possessing false beliefs. This is because such a focus can lead the agent to accumulate true beliefs and likely overturn certain false beliefs. Nonetheless, if an agent desires to obtain and sustain true beliefs a corresponding desire to avoid false beliefs would also seem to be required. This is simply because such a desire would help to satisfy the agent's desire for true belief by significantly contributing to her stock of true beliefs. As explained earlier, the desire to avoid false beliefs entails exercising doubt toward

the beliefs one has or could have. Exercising such doubt would mitigate the possibility of self-deception because the agent would be open to the possibility that the beliefs she has, and the reasons offered to buttress those beliefs, could be false. For example, a mother may believe falsely that her son is an individual of upstanding character, even though there is plenty of evidence against this fact. In order to overcome this false belief, and mechanisms of self-deception such as rationalization that could buttress it, she must desire to avoid false beliefs. Through such a desire she would be willing to question the belief she has concerning her son, and the reasons she offers for this belief. In this situation, then, such a desire would be conducive to obtaining true beliefs and therefore be part of the motivational structure of an agent who actually desired to have true beliefs due to its truth conduciveness. For, in order to ensure, and not merely facilitate, the acquisition of true beliefs the agent must have a corresponding desire to avoid having false beliefs. That is, the agent must be conscientiously aware of the fact that she could be duped by her own reasoning processes, and therefore must take a critical stance toward her own reasoning and beliefs. The agent must not simply be open to disconfirming evidence, but must actively seek such evidence to ensure that the beliefs possessed, and those to be acquired, are true. *Care* could ensure that the agent obtains true beliefs because it would influence the agent not only to be open to disconfirming evidence, but also to actively seek such evidence. The agent would actively seek such evidence because she would be concerned to avoid having false beliefs and not simply to believe something only if it is true.

Another criticism of Sosa's that must be addressed is the fact that agents are not always influenced by nonintellectual preferences and therefore *care* is not always required to obtain and sustain true beliefs. Evidential adherence in some instances is sufficient. It must be granted that true beliefs can be obtained without *care*,⁸⁶ but nonetheless I want to argue that the

⁸⁶ Care is not always required to obtain true beliefs not simply because non-intellectual preferences may not always exert their influence, but also because agents can acquire true beliefs by accident—for example via a lucky guess or via an incorrect inference from false premises to a true conclusion. Consequently, intellectual character is

development of intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true. The reason for this claim is due to the nature of self-deception. Any agent who suffers from self-deception takes her beliefs to be true just as the agent who does not suffer from self-deception. Both can even cite reasons for their respective beliefs, even though one agent's set of reasons are false, or insufficient, while the other's are true. This is because, as touched on earlier, those agents who suffer from self-deception often rationalize the false beliefs they have. The problem that arises is that through mere introspection the agent can be duped by her own assessments and the reasons offered for her beliefs. There is always the possibility that when an agent says to herself 'My belief is true because I can see that it is so, and because I can offer reasons for this claim,' that she is in fact self-deceived. This results because introspectively things seem the same to both the self-deceived agent and the non-self-deceived agent.⁸⁷ The self-deceived agent is as convinced as the intellectually virtuous agent that her assessments of her beliefs are accurate and, ultimately, her beliefs are true. Consider the example, proposed by Hillary Kornblith, of Jack who is self-deceived in regard to his own mental states and how they influence his beliefs. Jack is paranoid and insecure, which often causes him to react with anger toward others. Upon introspection, though, Jack is unaware of his own anger, and how his insecurity and paranoia influence him to obtain and sustain false beliefs concerning what others think of him. If Jack engaged in introspective assessment of the mechanisms which influence his beliefs, and whether his beliefs concerning others are true or not, he would not be able to discern that his beliefs are false or that they were formed through misleading mechanisms. This is because Jack would continue to be influenced by self-deceptive mechanisms that lead him to believe that his beliefs concerning both others and his own mental states are true while they are not. Jack would continue to believe that he is not paranoid, insecure and angry, and

not always causally necessary to obtain and sustain true beliefs. This is why it is proposed that intellectual character is necessary to assure the agent – or provide some guarantee – that her beliefs are true. This point will be developed with Sosa's criticism in mind and not with the 'accidentally true' criticism in mind, although in chapter seven when an argument for the value of intellectual character is formulated the possibility of accidentally coming to have true beliefs concerning the good will be addressed

⁸⁷ van Fraassen, (1988), pp 123-135

that others speak negatively about him even though they do not. He would be just as convinced, upon introspective assessment, of the truth of his beliefs as the intellectually virtuous agent even though his beliefs are false and the mechanisms that lead to them are misleading.⁸⁸

Since it is the case that from the introspective point of view the phenomenal experience of the self-deceived agent is indistinguishable from the phenomenal experience of the agent with true beliefs intellectual character becomes indispensable to assure agents that their beliefs are true. Through mere introspection an agent can be duped by her own assessments, as well as the reasons offered for her beliefs, and not be able to detect that her beliefs are false and that she is self-deceived. Hence, she cannot rely solely on introspective assessment in order to determine whether her beliefs are true or not. Rather, she must rely on psychological dispositions that have been identified as truth-conducive. This is especially the case since self-deception occurs unconsciously. That is, not only is self-deception undetectable from an introspective point of view, but the mechanisms which lead to self-deception operate without the agent being aware of them. In fact, as previously pointed out, self-deceptive mechanisms have to be unconscious in order to be effective for if the agent is aware of them she will ultimately not be duped.⁸⁹ It is due to these two reasons, then, that intellectual character is necessary to assure the agent that her beliefs are true. For if it is the case that agents can never distinguish between instances where they are self-deceived and instances where they are not then the only assurance they can have that their beliefs are true is that they have attempted to secure true beliefs, and avoid false beliefs, and avoid, as well, the mechanisms which lead to self-deception. As pointed out in the previous section, how agents can attempt to avoid the cognitive mechanisms which lead to self-deception is through developing their intellectual

⁸⁸ Hillary Kornblith, (1998), 'What is it Like to be Me?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, volume 76, number 1 March, pp 48-60. This example is found on pp 50-52, although the whole article is focused on problems of introspective assessment. van Fraassen, (1988), pp 123-135, 140, 144-145.

⁸⁹ Johnston, (1988), p 65-66, 70-76, 78, 87. Audi, (1988), p 94, 102-105, 109. Baier, (1996), pp 54-55. Deutsch, (1996), p 317. Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-49, 60-61, 65-66, 78, 98-99.

character. The motivations and dispositions identified as intellectual virtues not only compel agents to be careful and thorough when forming beliefs, they also replace those motivations and dispositions that lead to instances of self-deception. It is therefore only through developing one's intellectual character that one can assure herself that her beliefs are not the result of self-deceptive mechanisms. The virtues of intellectual character therefore offer the best protection against the imperceptible mechanisms that lead to self-deception, which entails that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true. Intellectual character is not always causally necessary to obtain and sustain true beliefs - although it often will be required to obtain and sustain true beliefs - because non-intellectual preferences do not always exert their influence. This will become even more apparent with the next paragraph. Nonetheless, intellectual character still fulfills a necessary role in the attempt to acquire true beliefs since it provides a guarantee for the agent that her beliefs have not been the result self-deceptive mechanisms.

By claiming that the intellectual virtues are necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are not the result of self-deceptive mechanisms it must be made clear that the claim is not that the intellectual virtues ensure, or make certain, that the agent's beliefs are true. The intellectual virtues do not infallibly produce true beliefs, but instead only reliably produce true beliefs. It is always possible that an agent could be completely intellectually virtuous and still not obtain true beliefs. The agent could be immersed in a misleading environment which could then make the acquisition of true beliefs impossible even if the agent is completely intellectually virtuous. For example, an agent could be open-minded, which in many instances would facilitate true beliefs, but then be unfortunate enough to find herself on an island of idiots. In such an environment if she is open to the ideas of others then she will likely accumulate false, as opposed to true, beliefs. Hence, the intellectual virtues cannot ensure, or make certain, that the agent's beliefs are true. What is meant, then, by proposing that the intellectual virtues provide a guarantee for the agent that her beliefs are true is that they guarantee that the agent's beliefs

are not the result of self-deceptive mechanisms that could lead to false belief. Hence, they help to assure the agent that her beliefs are true since they provide a guarantee that her beliefs are not the result of self-deceptive mechanisms. The guarantee that intellectual character provides is therefore not infallible. Nonetheless, it is a guarantee and it is a guarantee that intellectual character is necessary for since self-deception is undetectable from the introspective point of view. The agent cannot discern whether she is self-deceived via introspection, and therefore must be intellectually virtuous to assure herself that her beliefs are true.

Of course, Sosa does appear to be correct in claiming that nonintellectual preferences do not always exercise their influence on agents, and therefore intellectual character is not always necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true. For example, when an agent forms the belief 'There is a cat on the mat' based on immediate perceptions it does not seem that self-deception is a valid concern because misleading desires, motivations, dispositions or beliefs will likely not exercise their influence. Assuredly, it has been argued that even the perceptions of agents can be shaped by the latter, but it is not difficult to imagine cases where they would not fulfill a significant role in belief formation. Consequently, the claim that intellectual character is necessary to obtain and sustain true beliefs must be limited to situations where self-deception is a valid concern. Fortunately, given what has been claimed concerning self-deception, such situations are easy to identify. Self-deception is a valid concern whenever it is possible for desires, motivations, dispositions and background beliefs to influence belief formation, since the former are the impetuses of self-deception. When it comes to beliefs such as 'A cat is on the mat' it is highly unlikely that an agent could be misled by her own desires, motivations, dispositions, or beliefs and therefore self-deception is not a valid concern and intellectual character is not required to overcome it. Nonetheless, the misleading influence of desires, motivations, dispositions and beliefs is a valid concern in many situations, and intellectual character would be necessary in such situations to assure agents that their beliefs are true due to the imperceptible influence of such mechanisms. No attempt will be made to

demarcate the possible situations where desires, motivations and beliefs can influence the belief formation of agents, since such demarcation is not required. Rather, it can simply be proposed that intellectual character is necessary to assure agent that their beliefs are true in all situations where it is possible for desires, motivations, dispositions and beliefs to mislead agents. By offering such a claim all possible situations where the misleading mechanisms of self-deception can exercise their influence are covered without having to engage in the task of identifying them specifically.

So one can acknowledge that nonintellectual preferences may not always exert an influence on belief formation, but since instances where they do not exert their influence are indistinguishable from instances where they do exert their influence, at least from the introspective point of view, intellectual character is always required to assure the agent that her beliefs are true. Acknowledging the introspection problem just mentioned generates its own problems, since one could propose that such a problem can never be overcome, and therefore that we have no assurance of the truth-conduciveness of any character traits. This is a significant problem, and one that Sosa also touches on, and will be addressed in the next chapter. Before we get to the next set of problems, though, we must briefly consider the *reductio* criticism of the desire for true belief offered by Sosa.

Recall that Sosa proposed that *care* is subject to a rather devastating *reductio*. This is because if an agent was guided by a general desire for true belief, such as *care*, then she would desire to have true beliefs regardless of their particular content. Such an agent would desire to obtain beliefs concerning the phone numbers of various persons or the relative positions of pieces of sand in the desert, since these would satiate the desire for true beliefs. Thus we cannot advocate a general desire for true belief, since it would initiate such absurd behaviour. Based on the previous explanation of self-deception, and intellectual character as a means to overcome it, it is reasonable to assume that *care* would not compel an agent to desire trivial truths. This is because the picture that emerges from combining these two sets of literature is

that intellectual character would be primarily a means of mitigating the psychological mechanisms that lead to self-deception and does not entail a desire for trivial truths. The development of one's intellectual character entails an attempt to overcome natural shortcomings via the habituation of certain character traits. The natural shortcomings entail self-serving motivations and dispositions that lead to instances of self-deception. Through such habituation, then, the virtues of intellectual character alter the agent's concerns, so that she is concerned with obtaining true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs instead of maintaining a specific cover story, but it is an open question whether the agent would desire the types of trivial truths mentioned by Sosa. That is, it would seem to depend upon the specific concerns, desires or interests of the agent in question and therefore could vary from agent to agent. For example, the development of one's intellectual character is meant to be a possibility for any agent, and it should help any agent overcome the psychological mechanisms that could lead to self-deception. But it seems unreasonable to expect that the development of one's intellectual character would then compel every agent to become an academic of some sort. That is, it seems unreasonable to expect that the development of one's intellectual character would entail a compulsion for what some would call non-trivial truths. The desire for non-trivial truths, or academic truths, would instead seem to depend on other factors of the agent's psychology and personal history, and not the mere development of her intellectual character. Intellectual character is not meant to alter all of the agent's concerns so that she is compelled to live only one kind of life, i.e. an academic life. Rather, the agent will still maintain a variety of concerns, based on other factors of her personal history and psychology, while intellectual character only entails a change in a concern from maintaining a specific cover-story to a concern for obtaining of true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs. A similar explanation seems reasonable in regard to the trivial truths mentioned by Sosa. That is, a desire for such trivial truths would result from the agents' own personal history and psychology and not from the development of her intellectual character. Intellectual character simply mitigates the

psychological mechanisms which lead to self-deception and does not compel the agent to accumulate specific types of truths of any kind, whether trivial or non-trivial. If the agent is a trivia buff, or is simply interested in seemingly useless truths, then his intellectual character would help him to secure such truths, but it would not compel him to collect such truths. A desire for the types of trivial truths mentioned by Sosa therefore would be agent specific and not an inevitable outcome of the development of one's intellectual character. If the desire for trivial truths is not an inevitable outcome of the development of one's intellectual character, then *care* is not subject to the devastating *reductio* offered by Sosa.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the focus has been on the transformative influence of intellectual character. An explanation of the transformative influence of intellectual character was developed by combining literature from virtue psychology and literature on self-deception. It was proposed that intellectual character facilitates the obtaining of true beliefs, as well as the avoidance of false beliefs, by mitigating the motivations and dispositions that lead to self-deception. Specifically, by adopting *care*, or intellectual conscientiousness, agents replace self-serving motivations and dispositions that can lead to instances of self-deception in order to reliably obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. Sceptical challenges from Ernest Sosa were also addressed. In reaction to Sosa it was proposed that a general desire for true belief mitigates the influence of self-deceptive mechanisms which lead to false belief. Specific instances of self-deception themselves result from a general motivation, or disposition, to maintain a specific cover story or self-schema, and therefore a general motivation, or disposition, toward true belief appears to be the appropriate means to overcome the mechanisms which lead to self-deception. Even further, intellectual character is always required to assure agents that their beliefs are true since from the introspective point of view instances of self-deception are

indistinguishable from instances where the agent is not self-deceived. Consequently, the only protection the agent has against the undetectable mechanisms of self-deception is to develop her intellectual character. Acknowledging that self-deception is undetectable from the introspective point of view, and advocating intellectual character as a means to mitigate self-deception, generates its own difficulties that must be addressed in order to offer a tenable theory of the constitutive value of intellectual character. Explaining and addressing this particular issue is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Doxastic Community and Scheme Determinism

In the previous chapter it was proposed that intellectual character can mitigate the influence of the mechanisms which lead to self-deception, and that due to the nature of self-deception intellectual character is always required to assure agents that their beliefs are true. This latter claim generates its own difficulties that are addressed in this chapter. Specifically, Sosa has argued that relying on intellectual character as a means of obtaining true beliefs leads to a vicious regress. In order to respond to Sosa, and avoid a vicious regress, a position offered by Martha Nussbaum is consulted and developed. Consulting Nussbaum's position, though, generates its own problems; specifically, problems concerning the influence of conceptual schemes. Through addressing Sosa's vicious regress criticism, and developing the position offered by Nussbaum, the role ascribed to intellectual character in the previous chapter is not only defended but further clarified. Specifically to be developed in this chapter is the idea of mapping the doxastic sphere in order to identify the constituents of intellectual character. The development of this idea is indispensable for addressing criticisms offered by Stephen P. Stich, to be considered in chapter five.

3.1 Vicious Regress and the Problem of Introspection

In the previous chapter a detailed account was offered concerning how intellectual character is truth-conducive. The constituents of intellectual character dispose agents to acquire and sustain true beliefs, as well as avoid false beliefs, by replacing self-serving motivations and dispositions. Even further, intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true due to the nature of self-deception. It is always possible that when an agent passes judgment on either his motivations or beliefs he could be misled by his own introspective assessments into either believing that his motivations are appropriate or that his beliefs are true.

when neither is the case. This is because the introspective quality of both the self-deceived agent and the intellectually virtuous agent are the same. Both experience their motivations as appropriate and their beliefs as true. The possibility of introspective fallibility also presents a significant problem for identifying the constituents of intellectual character. A robust argument developing this point is offered by Sosa. Through it Sosa concludes that any attempt to identify truth-conducive character traits inevitably results in a vicious regress. Sosa's argument demands a response. For if it is impossible to identify the constituents of intellectual character, due to a vicious regress, then it would also be impossible to say that such character is constitutively valuable since it would be an empty notion. There would be no aspects of intellectual character that we could identify that we could then ascribe such value to. We shall now consider Sosa's argument.

Even though Sosa is critical of the virtue responsibilist approach to knowledge and true belief he is not averse to agents possessing truth-conducive properties or to notions of intellectual virtue. Sosa is a virtue reliabilist, and therefore has developed a notion of intellectual virtue and identifies such virtues based on their reliability in producing true beliefs. The intellectual virtues, as identified by Sosa, include sight, hearing, memory, introspection, deductive and inductive reasoning, and rational intuition.¹ According to Sosa such intellectual virtues are part of the agent's first nature, such that they are not acquired but instead are part of the agent's inherited constitution. They result not from an attempt to habituate character traits deemed to be truth-conducive, but instead are the result of natural processes such as evolution.² Aspects of first nature are contrasted with aspects of second nature, which are features that agents can acquire through socialization, education and habituation. Examples of such aspects include skills and the character traits the virtue responsibilist identifies as intellectual virtues.³ It is Sosa's position that we must ultimately have recourse to aspects of first-nature in order to

¹ Sosa, (1980) pp 15-16. Sosa (1985) p 227

² Sosa (2001a), pp 55-59

³ Reader, (2000), pp 343, 346

explain how agents can obtain and sustain true beliefs. He proposes that if we relied on aspects of second-nature, such as character traits, the attempt to identify truth-conducive aspects of agents would result in a vicious regress. It would result in a vicious regress because we would have to identify the aspects of second-nature which are truth-conducive, and this would entail certain beliefs that themselves could be either true or false. For example, intellectual courage is held to be an intellectually virtuous character trait due to its ability to facilitate true believing. To hold that the former is truth-conducive is itself a belief, but how is it possible to claim that our belief concerning its truth-conduciveness is true? If we are to maintain the character based notion of intellectual virtue it would seem that we would have to propose that we can claim that intellectual courage is truth-conducive because we have judged it as such through the influence of our intellectual character. This intellectual character, though, will be composed of other aspects of our second-nature that we have also identified as truth-conducive based on certain beliefs we have about them. The question that immediately arises is how can we be assured that our beliefs about the truth-conduciveness of these other character traits are also true? If we answer again that our beliefs concerning the truth-conduciveness of these other character traits are true because we have arrived at them via our intellectual character, then a vicious regress emerges. This is because we will have to say again that we have identified these other aspects of intellectual character as truth-conducive through the influence of our intellectual character which then simply causes the question of their truth-conduciveness to arise again. What thus results is an infinite regress, and this regress turns vicious because we have to be able, at the time of identifying some character trait as truth-conducive, to traverse an infinite series. We cannot, of course, traverse an infinite series at the moment of identifying some character trait as truth-conducive, and consequently this infinite regress becomes vicious. In order to avoid such a regress, according to Sosa, we have to have recourse to a reliable foundation for our beliefs, and this reliable foundation itself cannot be a belief, or a set of beliefs, or the vicious regress

threatens to emerge again. Consequently, according to Sosa, this reliable foundation must be our first-nature or inherited constitution.⁴

Of course, Sosa's claim that aspects of our first-nature can provide a reliable foundation which will allow us to avoid a vicious regress may itself be problematic, for holding that eyesight, memory and so on are reliably truth-conducive entail beliefs that themselves could also be true or false. Nonetheless, we will not focus on the possible problems that may arise for Sosa's own position given his vicious regress argument, but instead focus on the problems it engenders for the notion of intellectual virtue advocated in this thesis. For it does seem to be an effective criticism of the position offered in this thesis, especially if we consider the problem of introspection introduced in the previous chapter. Recall that in the last chapter it was proposed that introspective assessments are not a reliable means for coming to true beliefs, for the self-deceived agent is as convinced as the intellectually virtuous agent that his assessments of his beliefs are accurate and, ultimately, his beliefs are true.⁵ The difference between self-deceptive mechanisms and truth-conducive mechanisms from the introspective point of view of the agent is undetectable. This very possibility was relied on in the previous chapter to claim that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true, since it is the only means agents have to assure themselves that their beliefs are not the result of self-deceptive mechanisms. We cannot rely on introspective assessments, for this does not allow us to distinguish between true and false beliefs, and therefore we must rely on truth-conducive dispositions. How this possibility now, though, generates difficulties for the virtue responsibilist position is that it readily facilitates the possibility of the vicious regress identified by Sosa. If the empirical method of introspective assessment is relied on to identify aspects of intellectual character as truth-conducive, and the introspective experience of self-deceptive processes is the same as truth-conducive processes, it is always a valid question whether, at the time of such assessment, the assessment is accurate or not. This question is also applicable to

⁴ Sosa, (2001a) pp 54-56

⁵ van Fraassen, (1988), pp 123 135, 140 144 145 Kornblith, (1998), pp 48-60

how the belief was formed, such that it is always a valid question to ask whether the processes that lead to the belief were truth-conducive. Consequently, if the agent relies on introspective assessment in the identification of some character-trait as truth-conducive the question of whether the agent's belief concerning the truth-conduciveness of that character trait is true is always a valid question. The agent may claim that his belief concerning the truth-conduciveness of some character trait is true, but since there is no phenomenal difference between an assessment based on self-deceptive mechanisms and truth-conducive mechanisms there is always the possibility that such assessment is inaccurate and the agent cannot discern that this is the case. A vicious regress then results, as outlined previously.⁶

In order to avoid this vicious regress it would seem that the virtue responsibilist must allow that the aspects of first-nature identified by Sosa as intellectual virtues are reliably truth-conducive, and that introspection is not a problem. This is especially the case since virtue responsibilists tend to claim that we determine what character traits are intellectual virtues via empirical investigation. That is, the various aspects of intellectual character are identified as such through the inductive process of observation of how such traits influence agents in the

⁶ Keith Lehrer appears to offer an introspective and empirical response to the vicious regress problem. Consider, for example, the following quote from him "the exercise of intellectual virtue will lead me to accept that I am virtuous in what I accept and, moreover, in accepting that I am virtuous in accepting that I am virtuous in what I accept. My disposition of intellectual virtue will explain why I am intellectually virtuous in accepting what I do, including the target acceptance of my intellectual virtue." Lehrer refers to this as a virtuous loop as opposed to a vicious regress. These claims made by Lehrer can be interpreted as the result of introspective assessment arrived at through an intellectually virtuous disposition which can then, he proposes, confirm the truth-conduciveness of one's intellectual character. If this is what Lehrer is proposing, then his position is susceptible to the above criticism. This is because it is a valid question, as proposed, whether the agent's belief concerning the truth-conduciveness of his intellectual disposition, judged as such through his character, is actually truth-conducive. Agents can believe that their assessments are accurate, and the beliefs formed true, even though this is not the case, as is displayed by the assessments of the self-deceived agent. I hesitate, though, to ascribe the introspective position to Lehrer completely, even though the above quotation attests to his holding such a position, since he seems to also offer non-introspective means of identifying aspects of intellectual character. Consider the following two quotations taken from the same paper: 'I appeal [] to the ways of intellectual virtue and trustworthiness [] and propose that they are reliably successful. The answer is [] based on experience that has confirmed that the way of virtue matches the way of truth' and 'We do not become intellectually virtuous by accepting that we are. Virtue is the result of works, in this case of what we accept and what we reject, which confirms that we have the disposition of intellectual virtue and trustworthiness.' In these quotations Lehrer affirms his position that the connection between intellectual character and true belief is arrived at through experience, and is therefore empirical, but it is unclear whether this experience, especially of the way of virtue, is based on observing how such character traits work in society generally, especially in other agents engaged in investigative activities. Due to such possible ambiguities in Lehrer's position I have refrained from ascribing the introspective position to him. Nonetheless, if it is his position it would be subject to the vicious regress criticism as I have outlined it. Lehrer (2001) pp 204-207.

formation of their beliefs.⁷ For example, through observation we can conclude that open-mindedness facilitates true belief since an open-minded person will be receptive to new evidence, and/or arguments, that could demonstrate that one, or many, of her beliefs are false, and enable false beliefs to be replaced with true beliefs.⁸ If the virtue responsibilist relies on empirical methods to identify the intellectual virtues, then it would seem that such a theorist must rely on, at least some, of the aspects of first-nature identified by Sosa. To understand why this is the case we must briefly recall some of the aspects of first-nature Sosa identifies as intellectual virtues. Pertinent examples include sight, hearing, memory, as well as deductive and inductive reasoning.⁹ So, for example, if observation is a source of the identification of aspects of intellectual character as truth-conducive, then it must be the case that the capacity for sight, which facilitates such observation, is reliable in this process of identification. A claim that observation facilitated by our capacity for sight is not reliable would appear to effectively undermine the ability to identify aspects of second-nature as truth-conducive through observation. The same can also be said concerning our capacity for inductive reasoning. The virtue responsibilist claims that we can rely on our inductive reasoning to generalize from particular observations that certain aspects of second-nature are truth-conducive. If she then proposes that the capacity for inductive reasoning is unreliable when it comes to forming true beliefs, then she will again undermine the warrant of any of the claims based on such reasoning. This same line of argument can be applied to the other aspects of first-nature identified by Sosa to the extent that the virtue responsibilist relies on such aspects to make claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of intellectually virtuous character traits. The virtue responsibilist consequently must rely on many, if not all, of the aspects of first-nature identified

⁷ Montmarquet, (1987), p488, 498. Montmarquet, (1993), pp 27-28, 30. Zagzebski, (1996), pp 173-177, 181-186, 188-190. Axtell, (1996), p 191. Zagzebski, (2003), p 139. Keith Lehrer, (2001), 'The Virtue of Knowledge, *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 207-208, 212-213. Roberts and Wood, (2003), p 257, 271-272. Zagzebski, (2000b), p 209.

⁸ Montmarquet, (1987), p 488. Zagzebski, (1996), pp 185-186. Lehrer, (2001), pp 207-209, 212-213.

⁹ Sosa (1980), pp 15-16. Sosa, (1985), p 227.

by Sosa to establish claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of aspects of second-nature. If the virtue responsibilist must rely on aspects of first nature to identify aspects of second-nature that are truth-conducive, the question that then emerges is why do we need aspects of second-nature to secure true beliefs? If the virtue responsibilist must admit that aspects of first-nature are reliably truth-conducive when it comes to identifying aspects of second-nature that are truth-conducive, then it seems she has admitted that these aspects of first-nature are sufficient to secure true beliefs. If aspects of first-nature are sufficient to secure true beliefs, then it seems that we do not need various character traits, or aspects of second-nature, to secure true beliefs.

In order to respond to Sosa, then, one must acknowledge the reliability of aspects of first nature. Also, one must establish the merit of an empirical method for determining that certain character traits are truth-conducive while avoiding the possibility of the vicious regress that arises through introspective assessment. We will now address these concerns.

3.2 Communal Understanding and the Mapping of the Doxastic Sphere

To overcome the possibility of a vicious regress we will consult a position developed by Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum has extracted this position from Aristotle, suggesting that it was his method for determining what is objectively good. She admits that there are problems with the possibility of this position providing an objective account of what is good, and we will consider this in the next section. Nonetheless, it will provide a means to overcome the problem of a vicious regress as formulated by Sosa.

Nussbaum proposes that Aristotle did not limit himself to simply offering an account of what is good for a human life on the whole, but also offered an account of what is good in regard to specific spheres of human experience. What this method entails is identifying some sphere of human experience which all human agents typically encounter, and then setting out

the proper way to be motivated and act within that sphere. Examples of such spheres include “Fear of important damages esp. death,” “Management of one’s personal property, where others are concerned,” and “Distribution of limited resources.”¹⁰ Nussbaum refers to these spheres of human activity as “grounding experiences,” since they set out a specific range of activity within which a decision concerning what is ethically appropriate can be discussed. Faced with the “grounding experience” one can then discern what would be the best way to respond, and, according to Aristotle, this entailed adopting some virtue to influence agent behaviour. The above examples would entail courage, generosity and justice respectively.¹¹ Through the mapping of different spheres of human experience the virtues are identified not by consulting the desires of agents involved in such situations, or the cultural practices of various agents. Instead it is the sphere of experience, or the grounding experience, which fixes the range of evaluation. It limits the choices one can make, and through analysis and observation of the sphere one can determine the best way to be motivated and act. Nussbaum proposes that when faced with a ‘sphere of experience’ one first offers a ‘thin,’ or ‘nominal,’ definition of what is appropriate to a situation and then, through a ‘perspicuous mapping’ of the grounding experience, one can move on to give a thick, or precise, indication of what would be ethically required. In this way, Nussbaum proposes, progress in our ethical understanding is analogous to progress in our scientific understanding, since through our perspicuous mapping of grounding experiences we come to formulate a more accurate and fuller specification of the types of problems human agents encounter and the appropriate, or virtuous, ways to respond to such problems.¹² The focus is on actual human experiences, and through the perspicuous mapping of such experiences the virtues then emerge as the objectively good motivations for agents to possess to guide their behaviour.¹³

¹⁰ Nussbaum (1998), pp 261-262

¹¹ Nussbaum, (1998), pp 261-263

¹² Nussbaum, (1998), pp 263-264

¹³ Nussbaum, (1998), p 265, 269

Guided by this method in the identification of the aspects of intellectual character we would first isolate the appropriate sphere, or spheres, of human experience, which in this case would be the doxastic, or belief, sphere. After the doxastic sphere is isolated an attempt can be made to perspicuously map this sphere, or offer a detailed description of it, so that specific psychological dispositions which are conducive to acting appropriately in this sphere can be identified. At this point we will assume, although it will be a matter of investigation in later chapters, that the appropriate way to act within the doxastic sphere involves the attempt to achieve true beliefs. The goal would thus be to perspicuously map the doxastic sphere in order to isolate those virtues, or psychological dispositions, that could facilitate true believing. Those psychological dispositions that can be identified as truth-conducive would then be deemed intellectual virtues, or aspects of intellectual character. Hence, the various aspects of intellectual character would be identified as such through the observation of actual human agents and their belief forming habits.

This approach to identifying an empirical connection between intellectual character and true belief can remove the threat of a vicious regress because the ground for claims concerning the intellectual virtues would not be the virtues themselves, but rather a community of agents attempting to map the doxastic sphere. Even further, the means of establishing an empirical connection between specific character traits and true belief would not be introspection, but instead various epistemological practices employed by the community. We will look at each of the claims in some detail to apprehend how they remove the possibility of a vicious regress in identifying truth-conducive psychological dispositions.

Essential to Sosa's argument concerning the threat of a vicious regress in the identification of the virtues of intellectual character is that it is these virtues themselves that provide the foundation for claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of various character traits. If one relies on intellectual character in order to make claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of aspects of intellectual character, the question that immediately arises is how

do we know that the aspects of intellectual character we rely on to establish the truth-conduciveness of other character traits are themselves truth-conducive? If we respond that we know they are truth-conducive because we arrived at such a belief via our intellectual character, then the question of their truth-conduciveness arises again and a vicious regress ensues. In order to avoid this vicious regress, then, one cannot rely on intellectual character itself to make claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of various character traits. The perspicuous mapping approach to identifying the virtues facilitates such avoidance, for it is not the virtues themselves that provide the foundation for claims concerning the virtues. Instead, it is a community of agents engaged in the process of mapping the doxastic sphere. Hence, the form of justification here is linear and not circular. That is, it is various valid epistemological practices of the community that justifies claims concerning the virtues, or provides the foundation for claims concerning the virtues. We can doubt the merit of what the community claims, or its methods of inquiry, but a vicious regress does not emerge simply because to question the claims of a particular community, and its methods of inquiry, entails a completely different set of questions from whether specific character traits are truth-conducive. The vicious regress is therefore cut-off, for one does not rely on intellectual character itself to offer claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of various character traits but instead the community and its diverse methods of inquiry.¹⁴ It is true that self-deception could still be prevalent amongst the agents who employ various methods to identify the intellectual virtues, but this does not lead to the conclusion that such methods are unreliable in the same way that self-deception threatens the reliability of introspectively identifying intellectual virtues. It is an inferential leap from the claim that self-deception is prevalent to the claim that none of the

¹⁴ It should be noted that nothing more will be offered in regard to the specifics of the perspicuous mapping approach. That is, nothing more will be claimed concerning which methods are to be employed by the community, or which methods are legitimate and which are not. This is simply because the goal of this subsection to address Sosa's vicious regress problem in a way that still allocates an important role for intellectual character in the obtaining of true beliefs, and not to defend the legitimacy of various epistemological practices of the community. Examples of some the practices that would be employed by the community have been offered, but nothing more substantial will be offered since the attempt to justify various epistemological practices is an unnecessary distraction specifically because the goal of this chapter is to merely address Sosa's vicious regress criticism.

epistemological practices of the community are therefore reliable. For example, just because one particular researcher may suffer from self-deception this does not mean that the self-report scales employed by some psychologists are therefore unreliable. They may be unreliable for other reasons, but it is not obvious that they are unreliable due to the threat of self-deception in the same way that self-deception threatens the reliability of identifying the intellectual virtues via introspection.

By proposing that the means of identifying various character traits as truth-conducive is a community collectively engaging in the process of mapping the doxastic sphere the problem of introspection is also removed. This is because the connection between specific character traits and true belief is established not through one particular agent engaging in introspective assessment, but instead through various agents employing divergent methods of inquiry and pooling their collective observations and judgments. Since introspection is not the means by which one identifies the intellectual virtues it is no longer the case that the difference between true beliefs and false beliefs concerning the intellectual virtues are undetectable. Recall that the difference between true and false beliefs is undetectable, because from the introspective point of view the phenomenal experience of the self-deceived agent is the same as the phenomenal experience of the intellectually virtuous agent. Both hold their beliefs to be true, and this includes the reasons for which they accept a particular belief, and do not perceive the influence of any misleading dispositions. When the means of identifying the intellectual virtues is a community of agents perspicuously mapping the doxastic sphere possible mistakes made by one agent can be checked by consulting the observations and judgments of other agents. Also, mistakes can be removed by relying on various other warranted methods of investigation sanctioned by the community besides introspection. The warrant of one particular agent's own observations and judgments therefore can be assessed by comparing them with the observation

and judgments of others as well as relying on methods besides introspective assessment.¹⁵ This does not mean that the process of identifying the intellectual virtues would be infallible, but simply that one would be employing methods that could allow for demarcating true from false beliefs. Introspection could still fulfill a role in this process, since agents can monitor their own motivations and dispositions and make claims concerning their relative truth-conduciveness, but such experiences and assessments would be nonetheless confirmed through communal interaction with other agents and various warranted methods of inquiry. Hence, it would still be the latter that would be the foundation for claims concerning the intellectual virtues.

This method of identifying the intellectual virtues also has the advantage that it appears to be an accurate description of how such virtues are currently identified. That is, there currently exists a particular community of agents that are engaged in the process of perspicuously mapping the doxastic sphere in order to establish the specific excellences of that sphere. Various theorists, primarily virtue responsibilists, have isolated this particular sphere, or grounding experience, and have offered both thin and thick accounts of the most excellent ways for agents to be disposed when forming beliefs. Through the observation and analysis of the doxastic sphere certain facts about human cognition, as well as facts concerning human inquiry, are held to ground explanations of why specific psychological dispositions, or character traits, are intellectual virtues.¹⁶ The result is that character traits such as intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual conscientious, and so on have been deemed to achieve excellence in the doxastic sphere due to their relationship to the goal of true belief.¹⁷ It is true that most of the work in mapping the doxastic sphere so far, in order to confirm a role

¹⁵ Theorists working on the virtues that have confirmed this 'communal' basis for claims generally, and claims about the virtues specifically, include. Code, (1984), p 34 Cooper, (1994), p 465 Zagzebski, (1996), p 176 Goldman, (1986), p 3 Christine McKinnon, (2003), "Knowing Cognitive Selves," *Intellectual Virtues Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, edited by Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Clarendon Press), pp 244, 246-248

¹⁶ Montmarquet, (1993), pp 27-28 Axtell, (1996), p 191 Cooper, (1994), pp 459-469 Zagzebski, (2000b), p 209 Roberts and Wood, (2003), p 257, 271-272 Hookway, (2000), pp 152-153

¹⁷ Montmarquet, (1993), p 23-25, 27-28 Cooper, (1994), p 464 Zagzebski, (1996), pp 155, 179-180, 185 Roberts and Wood, (2003), pp 257-279 Paul, (2000), pp 166, 168-169

for the various traits of intellectual character, has been limited to the extrapolations offered by virtue responsibilists, but there has been some scientific confirmation for them as well. For example, Paul Churchland, relying on the results of cognitive science, has offered a neurobiological model of human cognition that affirms the descriptive psychology of the moral virtues and draws connections between moral reasoning and scientific reasoning. His two major claims, relevant for our purposes, are that the virtue perspective on moral character is confirmed by cognitive science, and that moral and scientific cognition are similar in terms of how they are acquired and the neural mechanisms which manifest them.¹⁸ Also, various psychologists have affirmed the existence of enduring psychological dispositions, and rely on them to explain human behaviour and belief formation. Specifically, psychological literature on self-deception, consulted in the previous chapter and the focus of chapter six, proposes that agents are disposed to maintain specific self-schemas and to overestimate their own possession of positive traits, and these dispositions then lead to false beliefs in specific instances.¹⁹ And further mapping of the doxastic sphere, for the purposes of establishing a role for intellectual character in facilitating true belief, has been accomplished in this thesis by connecting literature on self-deception with literature on the intellectual virtues and virtues psychology in the previous chapter.²⁰

We can now move onto the final problem that Sosa's vicious regress argument generates for the advocate of intellectual character. This final problem, recall, is that it appears that one has to rely on aspects of first-nature in order to establish a connection between

¹⁸ Paul Churchland, (1998), "Toward a Cognitive Neurobiology of the Moral Virtues," *Topoi*, volume 17, pp 84-85, 89, 93, 95

¹⁹ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200, 204 Taylor, (1989), pp 13-15, 154-155 Brown and Dutton, (1995), p 1291

²⁰ Of course, as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, a significant issue that is currently debated by philosophers concerns the accuracy of the virtue explanation of human psychology presented in the previous chapter. The specific matter of dispute is whether agents actually possess the type of stable dispositions which virtue theorists rely on to explain human behaviour, and, for our purposes, belief formation. As also mentioned in the first chapter we will not focus on the debate of the accuracy of virtue psychology, since this issue would entail a thesis itself, or possibly more, to resolve. The accuracy of virtue psychology is therefore assumed in order to consider the issue of the value of intellectual character. Doris, (1998), pp 504-530 Merritt, (2000), pp 365-383 Gopal Sreenivasan, (2002), "Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution," *Mind*, volume 111, January, pp 47-68

intellectual character and true belief. The merit of such a claim was acknowledged, for if such a connection is established through empirical means then it seems that one has to hold that various aspects of first-nature are typically reliable in facilitating the acquisition of true beliefs. The capacities of sight and inductive reasoning were discussed to establish this point. The conclusion that emerged was that the virtue responsibilist must hold not only that the aspects of first-nature are reliable in facilitating true beliefs, but sufficient to facilitate true beliefs. If aspects of first-nature are not sufficient to facilitate true beliefs, then it seems that any claims about the truth-conduciveness of specific character traits are undermined. For example, if one held that the capacity for inductive reasoning was not sufficient to facilitate true beliefs then any claims based on such reasoning would themselves be questionable. The truth of such beliefs would not be assured, and in turn one could not rely on such reasoning to establish claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of specific character traits. The virtue responsibilist must therefore acknowledge the reliability of aspects of first-nature in order to rely on them to establish claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of specific character traits. If the aspects of first-nature must be held sufficient to facilitate true beliefs it is then difficult to claim that one also requires intellectual character to facilitate true beliefs.

In order to make room for intellectual character in the acquisition of true beliefs the consideration of self-deception offered in the previous chapter must be revisited. For the consideration of self-deception displayed that various aspects of first-nature are not sufficient to facilitate true beliefs. They are not sufficient since the reasoning and perception of agents can be influenced by various motivations, dispositions and background beliefs so that false beliefs are obtained and sustained. Hence, in order to facilitate true beliefs agents also must be motivated, or disposed, appropriately. The question that then emerges is whether the virtue responsibilist can admit that aspects of first-nature are not sufficient to secure true beliefs while also relying on them to establish claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of various character traits? Such admittance does not entail an obstacle to the virtue responsibilist.

position, for all she requires is that the aspects of first-nature are reliable in facilitating true beliefs. She does not require that they are sufficient. Relying on aspects of first-nature in the acquisition of true beliefs is the same as relying on various other skills, methods and technologies that the community employs to secure true beliefs. It has been proposed in this section that the foundation for claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of the intellectual virtues are various epistemological methods employed by the community. The claim of the previous chapter was that the intellectual virtues fulfill a valuable role in the acquisition of true beliefs, and are necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true. It was not claimed that the intellectual virtues are sufficient to secure true beliefs. Other epistemological methods, skills and technologies also have to be reliable in order for the aspects of intellectual character to enable agents to obtain true beliefs, and this includes the aspects of first-nature cited by Sosa. So the virtue responsibilist can claim that in order to obtain true beliefs aspects of first-nature must be reliably truth-conducive, but they are not sufficient to secure true beliefs due to the misleading influence of dispositions, motivations and background beliefs. This is also the case when it comes to the identification of character traits that are truth-conducive. That is, in order to identify various character traits as truth-conducive faculties such as sight and inductive reasoning must be reliably truth-conducive even though they are not sufficient to secure true beliefs. Of course, it may seem that by claiming that aspects of intellectual character are necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true we have fallen back into Sosa's vicious regress criticism, since intellectual character would have to fulfill a role in the identification of truth-conducive character traits. The vicious regress does not threaten to emerge again because the claim, to reiterate, is not that intellectual character is sufficient to secure true beliefs. Intellectual character is not relied on alone to identify aspects of second-nature that are truth-conducive, but rather various epistemological methods, skills and technologies employed by the community are also relied on. This would also include the aspects of first-nature Sosa identifies as intellectual virtues. Intellectual character is simply one element that must be in

place to obtain true beliefs, and does not provide the foundation for claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of various character traits. Consequently, the advocate of intellectual character can acknowledge the relevance of aspects of first-nature to obtain and sustain true beliefs while also holding that intellectual character is necessary to overcome any possible doxastic contaminants and assure agents that their beliefs are true²¹

The threat of a vicious regress has been abated through the perspicuous mapping approach to identifying the truth-conducive aspects of intellectual character. We can avoid the vicious regress by proposing that we discern which character traits are truth-conducive through the community and its various methods of determining which claims are true and false. By relying on the community in this way we avoid the problems of introspective assessment and the postulation that intellectual character can attest to its own truth-conduciveness, both of which lead to the possibility of a vicious regress. We also ascribe a role to aspects of first-nature in the identification of intellectually virtuous character traits without eliminating a role for the latter in the obtaining and sustaining of true beliefs. Addressing the possibility of a vicious regress, though, does not remove completely all of the possible problems with the 'perspicuous mapping' approach outlined here. Another problem, recognized by Nussbaum, concerns the possibility that we do not have unmediated contact with various spheres of human experience, and this would include the doxastic sphere. Rather, we always approach the world from within specific conceptual schemes, given to us by our communities, which shape our experiences of various spheres²². Consequently, there are no objective, or non-relative, grounding experiences we can appeal to in order to derive our list of intellectual virtues. We will now turn to an exposition and consideration of this problem.

²¹ Various virtue responsibilists have acknowledged the importance of trusting some of the aspects of first nature, for example memory, inductive reasoning and our senses, identified as virtues by Sosa, but also propose that intellectual character is required to obtain true beliefs. Zagzebski, (1996), p 160. Hookway, (2003), pp 187-188.

²² Goodman, (1978), pp 2-4, 6-7, 96-97. Putnam, (1981), pp 41-45, 52-54. Nussbaum, (1998), pp 266, 270.

3.3 The Problem of Scheme Determinism

Recall that Nussbaum proposed we come to identify particular virtues as the excellences of specific spheres through a perspicuous mapping of those spheres. Such perspicuous mapping is supposed to provide an objective account of what the virtues are since claims are based on the observation of grounding experiences and their perspicuous mapping. A problem with the attempt to map the virtues to particular spheres, recognized by Nussbaum, is that our perceptions, reasoning and claims generally are influenced by the conceptual schemes employed by various communities. For ease of presentation we will refer to such a position as scheme determinism. As advocates of the latter position, although all of them differ in the details of their respective positions, Nussbaum cites philosophers such as Michael Foucault, Nelson Goodman, Hillary Putman, and Donald Davidson²³. As Nussbaum notes, scheme determinism generates various problems for the perspicuously mapping approach to identifying the virtues. We will briefly note the problems Nussbaum identifies and then reconcile scheme determinism with the position advocated in this thesis. This reconciliation will be achieved by consulting the positions of Goodman and Putnam as well as previous claims made in the thesis.

As indicated in the previous paragraph, it has been recognized by various philosophers that agents do not have unmediated contact with the world. That is, as Nussbaum explains, agents are not confronted with an uninterpreted “given” that acts as a neutral ground for claims concerning the virtues. Rather, the various grounding experiences that the virtue theorist relies on to identify the virtues are significantly shaped by the language, teaching and other social features of various communities. They are shaped by the conceptual schemes that various communities employ. This cultural shaping via the conceptual schemes of various communities even extends to the sense-perceptions of various agents, as Nussbaum proposes there “is very a real sense in which members of different societies do not see the same sun and

²³ Nussbaum (1998) pp 266-267, 270

stars, encounter the same plants and animals, [or] hear the same thunder.”²⁴ Such differences in experience based on differences in the conceptual schemes employed by various communities would therefore extend to the doxastic sphere, which has been identified in this chapter as the grounding experience for identifying the intellectual virtues. That is, the experience of this sphere will be shaped by the conceptual schemes employed by various communities which then makes it difficult to claim that the doxastic sphere can provide a neutral ground to establish claims concerning the intellectual virtues. Different communities will not only identify different dispositions as intellectual virtues, but may also identify different ends as the appropriate goal of belief formation - for example group cohesion as opposed to truth - or have different conceptions concerning how beliefs are formed. For example, in the previous chapter a motivational account of self-deception was offered in order to explain the role of intellectual character in belief formation. This account of self-deception, though, is not the only one that has been offered by contemporary philosophers. Some theorists rely on a homuncular subsystems accounts to explain self-deception where self-deception is the result of one aspect of the agent deceiving another aspect of the agent. Self-deception is hence conceived as a form of intrapersonal deception, which is modeled on interpersonal deception. One aspect of the agent fulfills the role of deceiver while another aspect fulfills the role of deceived and motivations fulfill no role within this account.²⁵ If the latter explanation of self-deception is favoured, along with its related notions of belief formation, then our list of intellectual virtues would look quite different. It would not include the various character traits

²⁴ Nussbaum, (1998), p 266

²⁵ For a consideration of the homuncular explanation of self-deception, as well as comparisons between the former explanation and explanations that are congruent with virtue psychology as well as others see, for example, Mark Johnston (1988), “Self-Deception and the Nature of the Mind,” *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, edited by Brian P McLaughlin and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, (Los Angeles University of California Press), pp 65-67, 71-75, Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), “The Deceptive Self Liars, Layers, and Lairs,” *Perspectives on Self-Deception*, edited by Brian P McLaughlin and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, (Los Angeles University of California Press), pp 19-22 Christopher Hookway, (2001), “Epistemic *Akrasia* and Epistemic Virtue,” *Virtue Epistemology Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Oxford University Press), pp 191-192 Joel J Kupperman, (1996), *Self and Deception a cross-cultural philosophical enquiry*, edited by R T Ames and W Dissanayake, (New York State University Press), pp 161-176 Stephen L White, (1991), *The Unity of the Self*, (Cambridge, MA MIT Press)

advocated as intellectual virtues in this thesis, but possibly the faculty based intellectual virtues favoured by virtue reliabilists. So as our conceptual schemes change so too does the nature of the grounding experiences upon which claims concerning the virtues are meant to be based, and, in turn, our list of intellectual virtues. If various conceptual schemes can have such an effect on the way that various spheres are experienced, then it is difficult to suggest that such spheres could provide a neutral ground for claims concerning the virtues. Various spheres could not be neutral ground for various communities to deliberate over to identify the intellectual virtues, since these spheres themselves are shaped by the conceptual schemes employed by various communities.

Nussbaum's main concern in considering the role of conceptual schemes in the shaping of human experience is to deal with the problem of relativism. Specifically, her goal in offering the perspicuous mapping approach to identifying the virtues was to offer a non-relativistic method of identifying the virtues. Acknowledging the role of conceptual schemes in the shaping of grounding experiences therefore presents a significant problem for her position.²⁶ Our concern in this section is not relativism. Rather, our concern is to reconcile the role of conceptual schemes in shaping human experience with other claims made in this thesis. Relativism in the attempt to identify the intellectual virtues will be the concern of chapter five when we consider in detail an argument offered by Stephen Stich. There are at least two reasons why reconciliation of scheme determinism with the claims of this thesis is required. First, we have already accepted the role that background beliefs – now referred to as conceptual schemes – can fulfill in shaping the beliefs of agents in the previous chapter, specifically as an impetus for self-deception. The goal now is to display that acknowledging such a role for conceptual schemes does not present a problem for also ascribing a role to intellectual character in belief formation. Second, reliance on the notion of conceptual schemes will increase in upcoming chapters. More specifically, in the next chapter the notion of conceptual schemes

²⁶ Nussbaum (1998) pp 259 260 266 267

will be relied on to expand our understanding of the role of intellectual character in human life and to deal with problems concerning the truth-conduciveness of intellectual character. In the final chapter of this thesis the notion of conceptual schemes will fulfill a significant role in understanding claims concerning the good and the value of intellectual character. For these two reasons, then, scheme determinism must be reconciled with claims made in this thesis concerning intellectual character. We will now turn to this reconciliation.

3.4 Reconciliation with Scheme Determinism

We will now turn to the positions of Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam in order to reconcile the influence of conceptual schemes with claims made in this thesis concerning intellectual character. Although both Goodman and Putnam advocate the position that our experience of the world is significantly influenced by specific conceptual schemes they nonetheless ascribe a role to empirical input, evaluative norms and truth when it comes to our epistemic practices. It is through relying on their remarks concerning the former that reconciliation between scheme determinism and intellectual character can be achieved.

In offering their respective positions on scheme determinism neither Goodman nor Putnam claim that there are no restrictions on our conceptual schemes,²⁷ nor do they dismiss the relevance of empirical input. Goodman proposes that any conceptual scheme is developed out of pre-existing conceptual schemes, and thus our claims concerning the world are constrained by what we have claimed in the past. That is, communities begin with some specific conceptual scheme, and if new claims emerge then they are the result of modifications to previous systems of conceptual understanding.²⁸ We therefore begin with specific conceptual schemes accepted by specific communities and then build upon them. In this process new conceptualizations are deemed acceptable through a combination of fit, both with

²⁷ Goodman, (1978), p 94. Putnam, (1981), p 54.

²⁸ Goodman, (1978), pp 6-7, 97.

past conceptualizations and empirical input. For example, Goodman proposes that the truth of a statement is determined through its fit with previous modes of organization and description. A statement or version is true when “it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts”²⁹. Putnam holds a similar position, since he proposes that a statement, theory or conceptual scheme is deemed rationally acceptable due to its coherence, or fit, with other theoretical and experiential beliefs. So, for a particular theoretical belief to be considered rationally acceptable it must fit with other theoretical beliefs already accepted by a community as well as with experiential beliefs. Experiential beliefs themselves must fit not only with other experiential beliefs to be considered rationally acceptable, but also with theoretical beliefs.³⁰ Thus, non-empirical theoretical beliefs held by a community constrain the acceptance of new beliefs, but so too do empirical claims, i.e. the experiential beliefs of agents given to them by the empirical world. Putnam is therefore willing to ascribe a role to empirical input and empirical assumptions.³¹ Empirical inputs and assumptions constrain claims that are made, but they are nonetheless influenced by the various concepts we employ. This includes personal sensations.³² Goodman echoes this position, since he holds that our conceptual schemes would be empty if they did not contain any perceptual input and that a segment of the unyielding beliefs that constrain theorizing are those based on observational inputs.³³

Besides holding that conceptual schemes are constrained by the theoretical claims held by a community, alongside empirical inputs, both thinkers, as mentioned, ascribe roles to standards of evaluation and truth. For example, Goodman proposes that there exist multiple conceptual schemes that can all be deemed acceptable, but this does not entail that all versions are equally acceptable or that we lack standards that enable us to distinguish right from wrong conceptual schemes. Some of the standards he cites as constraining right from wrong

²⁹ Goodman, (1978) p 17, 138

³⁰ Putnam, (1981) pp 54-55

³¹ Putnam, (1981), p 16

³² Putnam, (1981), p 39-40, 42, 54-77

³³ Goodman, (1978), pp 6-7, 17

conceptual schemes include credibility, coherence, validity, utility and truth. The role of truth in his position, though, is significantly attenuated, since truth considerations can be overridden by other standards of evaluation when determining the rightness or wrongness of conceptual schemes. That is, the truth-value of a particular conceptual scheme may not be as significant as its coherence, relevance, serviceability, cogency, comprehensiveness, and so on when we are considering whether to employ a particular conceptual scheme in our understanding of the world.³⁴ According to Putnam we rely on certain ‘operational’ plus ‘theoretical’ constraints in order to determine, at least partly, whether certain sentences are true or false.³⁵ An example of an operational constraint, offered by Putnam, is the following “an admissible interpretation is such that *most of the time* the sentence *S* is true when the experimental condition *E* is fulfilled.”³⁶ Putnam also offers the following as an example of a theoretical constraint “an admissible interpretation is such that it turns out to be true that different effects always have different causes.”³⁷ In regard to truth, Putnam advocates a pragmatist position where a proposition is true when it is rationally acceptable under ideal epistemic conditions. Propositions therefore are not true because they correspond to a mind-independent reality, but nonetheless truth still fulfills a role within his position alongside empirical stimuli as well as theoretical and operational norms.³⁸

Following the lead of Goodman and Putnam, it can be proposed that scheme determinism is compatible with the construal of intellectual character offered so far since truth, standards of evaluation, and empirical input still fulfill a role in shaping our various claims concerning the world. All three of these notions are not rejected, but instead are simply held to be influenced by the conceptual schemes employed by various communities. Accepting scheme determinism, then, simply entails accepting the influence of the community, and its

³⁴ Goodman, (1978) pp 18-21 94 107 109 110 120 128

³⁵ Putnam, (1981), p 45

³⁶ Putnam, (1981), p 30

³⁷ Putnam, (1981) p 31

³⁸ Putnam, (1981), pp 49-50 55 72-73

conceptual schemes, while maintaining adherence to truth, standards of evaluation and the relevance of empirical input. If we have to reformulate the notion of intellectual character outlined in this thesis in order to accommodate this position, then we can easily do so. We simply have to propose, again, that the community has identified the intellectual virtues as appropriate standards of belief formation, and therefore as a certain set of evaluative standards. The community has identified them as such through a combination of communal understanding and empirical input, and they have been identified specifically as truth-conducive. This role for the community fits with what Goodman and Putnam have said concerning the contribution of the community. Such philosophers have proposed that the community plays a significant role in determining how we demarcate the world into objects, properties and so on, while also holding that empirical input fulfills a role in such demarcation. This role of the community in determining the content of intellectual character was not only accepted within this chapter, but endorsed as a means of overcoming the possibility of a vicious regress. It therefore does not present a problem for the position of this thesis. The aspects of intellectual character then can be construed as socially identified norms of belief formation as much as any of the other socially identified norms Goodman and Putnam are willing to accept. With such a position we maintain the significant role ascribed to the community within the perspicuous mapping approach for determining the aspects of intellectual character, and also maintain notions of truth, standards of evaluation and empirical input.

Of course, accepting scheme determinism would appear to remove some of the merit of the perspicuous mapping position, since we would not be assured that intellectual character *in fact* fulfills the role that has been ascribed to it. That is, it would appear difficult to hold that we objectively apprehend that the virtues of intellectual character are truth-conducive, since such a claim would appear to be at least in part the result of a particular conceptual scheme and not due to the actual functioning of such dispositions in the world. This, of course, was Nussbaum's concern and why she raised the issue of scheme determinism. Two responses can

be offered to this possible criticism. First, if scheme determinism is true, then claims concerning intellectual character would be in no worse a position than any other claims we make. All claims, and this obviously would include claims made by Goodman, Putman, and others, are the same in that they result, at least in part, from some conceptual scheme. So, it would not be a problem specifically for the virtue perspective, but rather for all perspectives. Thus claims made concerning intellectual character would be as warranted as any other claims, and tested by the same standards employed by the community that other claims are subject to. This also has the consequence that we could rely on the aspects of intellectual character to test the merit of various empirical and theoretical claims, since this is the role that has been ascribed to them by the community. Claims made concerning intellectual character would therefore be no worse off than any other claims given scheme determinism, and could only be dismissed through specific criticisms directed at the former notion. Second, if scheme determinism is true it would not be the case that the aspects of intellectual character are not truth-conducive, rather it would simply be the case that we would have to restrict the type of 'truth' they are purported to be conducive to. This is simply because, as already noted, we could construe the aspects of intellectual character as representative of a certain set of standards of evaluation which are construed as such due to their truth-conduciveness. Truth-conduciveness here could not be understood simply as mirroring the world as it is due to the role that has been ascribed to conceptual schemes in shaping our experiences of the world. Consequently, we would have to understand this truth-conduciveness in some other way. This issue will be touched on in the next chapter.

Our perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere would therefore be influenced by specific conceptual schemes, since our perceptions and reasoning is influenced by such schemes, but nonetheless intellectual character would still be able to fulfill the role ascribed to it in the previous chapter. Recall that this role was to replace the pernicious influence of motivations, dispositions and background beliefs so that agents could better ensure the

obtaining and sustaining true beliefs. This role would not be attenuated, even if our experiences of the world are influenced by conceptual schemes, for this is the role that has been ascribed to intellectual character on the basis of empirical input and communal understanding. Scheme determinism simply offers a thesis concerning the source of such descriptions and norms, and does not exclude standards of evaluation, empirical input or notions of truth. Also, it can still be maintained that such standards, i.e. the various aspects of intellectual character, are truth-conducive, although our notion of truth would have to be altered. As mentioned, we will consider this in the next chapter. Hence, notions of intellectual character are not excluded by such a position. We can still maintain the perspicuous mapping approach and hold that we come to identify the evaluative standards associated with intellectual character through the activity of community members. We would simply have to hold that such identification is the result of a combination of communal understanding and empirical input.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

The intent of this chapter was to focus on difficulties in the attempt to identify the various aspects of intellectual character. Two specific difficulties were addressed: the possibility of a vicious regress and scheme determinism. The possibility of a vicious regress was dealt with by proposing that instead of relying on introspective assessment mediated through intellectual character to identify the aspects of intellectual character we can instead rely on the community and its various epistemological practices. Scheme determinism was dealt with by displaying its compatibility with the notion of intellectual character offered in this thesis. Thus, neither position leads to the claim that identifying various psychological dispositions as intellectual virtues is impossible. Consequently, two significant obstacles have been overcome that would have led to scepticism concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character. More than this, though, the claims that have been offered in this chapter concerning the perspicuous

mapping approach and the compatibility of notions of intellectual character with scheme determinism will have implications in the following chapters concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character. This will become apparent as the thesis progresses. With the next chapter we will consider the specific end, or *telos*, of intellectual character. So far it has been assumed that the *telos* of intellectual character is true belief, but there are arguments offered by various philosophers that propose that true belief cannot be the specific *telos* of intellectual character. Other specific ends are suggested to replace true belief. Consequently, in order to maintain the position of this thesis that the specific *telos* of intellectual character is true belief, and eventually rely on this relationship to explain the constitutive value of such character, these criticisms must be addressed. Such considerations will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Intellectual Character and Truth-Conduciveness

So far in this thesis the transformative influence of intellectual character has been tied to its truth-conduciveness, and its constitutive value will also be tied to its truth-conduciveness. In order to maintain the connection between intellectual character and true belief two sceptical challenges must be addressed: one based on a conceptual problem and the other based on an empirical problem. Also, given the role ascribed to conceptual schemes in the previous chapter some remarks concerning the type of ‘true belief’ intellectual character is conducive to are warranted. By addressing such concerns not only will the claims of previous chapters be solidified, but our understanding of intellectual character also will be enhanced. In turn, by defending the connection between intellectual character and true belief we will be in a better position to determine its constitutive value.

4.1 A Working Notion of True Belief

The goal of this chapter is to address arguments that attempt to sever the connection between intellectual character and true belief, but it is also important to give a clear indication of what is meant by ‘true belief’. This is due to the role ascribed to conceptual schemes in the previous chapter, but also because such clarity is required to determine how intellectual character is constitutively valuable. It is therefore the goal of this section to indicate what is meant by true belief in the context of this thesis. There is an assortment of theories of truth offered by various philosophers, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider the merits and shortcomings of these various theories in order to clarify what is meant by ‘true belief’. For example, even if we settled on the claim that truth is correspondence, i.e. that a belief is true when it corresponds to some state of affairs, much would have to be said about this correspondence relation. Choices would have to be made between divergent explanations of this correspondence

relation, for example between Russell's notion of correspondence as a 'structural isomorphism' between a belief and a fact and Field's notion of correspondence as a causal relation between the components of a sentence and objects in the world.¹ Such options are further complicated since there are not only other explanations of this correspondence relation, but also other theories of truth. There are coherentist theories, pragmatist theories, primitivist theories, pluralist theories, deflationist theories and so on. Within each of these theories there is disagreement, and consequently nuanced divergent positions on truth. There is even disagreement amongst virtue epistemologists concerning truth. For example, Sosa advocates a primitivist theory of truth and Goldman a correspondence theory, while Zagzebski construes true belief as "correct cognitive contact with reality,"² and Simon Blackburn has developed a deflationary account of truth through the use of notions of intellectual virtue.³ To sort through these various theories would entail a thesis in itself and therefore cannot be accomplished here.

Instead of offering a theory of truth, then, the goal will be to set out explicitly what intellectual character is conducive to given other claims that have already been accepted in this thesis as well as other claims concerning 'belief.' Developing what is meant by 'true belief' by explicating previous claims concerning what intellectual character is conducive to, as well as other claims concerning 'belief,' will display the defensibility of the notion of true belief to be advocated in this thesis. The plausibility of the notion of true belief to be settled upon also will be displayed in two ways. First, the notion of true belief to be developed will reflect specific theories of truth, and consequently entail claims other philosophers have made concerning the

¹ Bertrand Russell, (2001), "Truth and Falsehood," *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), pp 17-24. Harry Field, (2001), "Tarski's Theory of Truth," *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), pp 365-396.

² When Zagzebski first offered this construal of true belief it seems that she held such 'correct cognitive contact' to be non-propositional contact with reality, but she has changed her mind on this issue. In a later article she proposes that it is only propositions that can be true or false and to have a true belief means to believe a true proposition. Zagzebski, (1996), pp 167-168, 185, Zagzebski, (2003), p 135. Ernest Sosa, (2001b), "Epistemology and Primitive Truth," *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press) pp 641-662.

³ Simon Blackburn (2001), "Reason, Virtue and Knowledge," *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 15-29.

nature of truth. By advocating a particular notion of true belief the position to be developed will implicitly align itself with particular theories of truth. These implicit alignments unfortunately cannot be defended by delving into the nature of truth, since the topic is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, when criticisms concerning the value of intellectual character are based on certain theories of truth, as in the next chapter, then this notion will be defended with explicit arguments. The plausibility of the notion of true belief to be developed also will be displayed on the grounds that it appears to be the specific target of philosophers who propose that intellectual character cannot be understood as truth-conducive. Finally, it must be remarked that this approach to true belief is appropriate, at least from the perspective of this thesis, since our concern is with the constitutive value of intellectual character and not with the axiology of truth. If the concern was to explain the value of truth, then it is undeniable that issues surrounding the nature of truth would have to be settled. Since our concern is with the constitutive value of intellectual character we must instead settle issues surrounding what it provides. So, by deriving a notion of true belief from previous claims made in this thesis about what intellectual character provides, as well as claims concerning ‘belief,’ we remain focused on intellectual character. We will then label the specific *telos* to which intellectual character is conducive to as true belief. This label will be appropriate, for, as stated, the specific notion to be developed will reflect certain claims various philosophers have made concerning truth and the notion appears to be what other philosophers criticize when they argue that intellectual character is not conducive to true belief.

4.1.1 True Belief as Accurate Representation the Agent Acquiesces In

The notion of true belief advocated is that it entails accurate representation the agent acquiesces in. The idea that beliefs are representational is a common claim held by philosophers who rely

on notions such as beliefs, desires and hopes to explain human psychology and behaviour.⁴ To say that a belief is representational is simply to say that when an agent has a belief he represents aspects of the world in a certain way. The representational stance taken by an agent when he has a belief is different than the representational stance taken when the agent, for example, desires, hopes, and imagines. With none of the latter does the agent assert that something is the case, but with beliefs the agent does assert that something is the case. So beliefs are generally held to be assertions, although, as Bernard Williams has pointed out, to assert is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for having a belief. Nonetheless, to assert seems to be a significant aspect of believing such that when an agent expresses a belief he explicitly asserts something.⁵ Holding beliefs to involve assertions when they are expressed is a claim that is commonly accepted and therefore will not be derived specifically from previous content in the thesis. What will be established in this subsection, through consideration of previous chapters, is that true belief is accurate representation and false belief is inaccurate representation. More specifically, that true beliefs are accurate representations the agent acquiesces in and asserts if the belief is expressed

⁴ Stephen P. Stich, (1996), *Deconstructing the Mind*, (New York: Oxford University Press), p 15. It should also be noted that at least one virtue epistemologist, Alvin Goldman, identifies true belief as accurate representation, although we will not be relying on any of his arguments to establish this claim. Goldman, (1986), p 139. Of course the claim that belief is representational, and true belief is therefore accurate representation, has its critics. Most notably, Davidson criticizes this position, but his criticisms cannot be considered in this thesis. To engage in the debate concerning whether belief is representational or not, and true belief is accurate representation or not, is simply beyond the scope of this thesis. It represents a relevant but distinct debate concerning a specific controversial entity within a particular psychological theory, i.e. the notion of belief as a propositional attitude within folk psychology. Ultimately, to strengthen the case for the notion of true belief to be offered in this chapter Davidson's concerns would have to be addressed or capitulated to, if the latter then the notion of true belief as accurate representation would have to be dropped. Unfortunately, since this issue cannot be addressed the tenability of the position to be offered will be attenuated. Nonetheless, its tenability will be displayed, at least in part, in this chapter by deriving this notion from previous claims and by offering further examples and arguments that will lend the notion some credence. Donald Davidson, (1990), 'The Structure and Content of Truth,' *The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 87, number 6, June, pp 303-304. Donald Davidson, (1991), "What Is Present to the Mind?" *Philosophical Issues*, volume 1, Consciousness, pp 197-213.

⁵ Assertion is not necessary for having a belief, according to Williams, because agents can have beliefs that they do not express and therefore have not asserted. Assertion is not sufficient for having a belief, since an agent may be duplicitous when asserting some claim and therefore not believe it. Nonetheless, Williams adds that beliefs are what the agent is disposed or prepared to assert, and that assertions are typically expressions of belief. Bernard Williams, (1973), *Deciding to Believe, Problems of the Self*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp 136-140. Bernard Williams, (2002) *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp 81-82.

We will begin with chapter two. The goal of this chapter was to clarify the role of intellectual character in doxastic formation. The specific role outlined was that the various aspects of intellectual character act as correctives to certain doxastic contaminants. It was proposed that motivations, desires, dispositions and background beliefs cause agents to form false beliefs in two distinct ways. First, specific explanations are favoured due to the influence of such mechanisms, and this causes the agent to gather evidence in a way that will either confirm, or conform to, a favoured explanation.⁶ Agents therefore have false beliefs, since their beliefs do not reflect what the evidence dictates but instead what their motivations, desires, dispositions and background beliefs dictate. The second way in which such mechanisms were proposed to influence agents so as to produce false beliefs is by simply causing agents to miss evidence in the first place. In these situations agents either evade an issue altogether or they engage in selective attention and evidence gathering. No misinterpretation occurs, as with the first type of situations, since the evidence is never even acknowledged. Again, agents who engage in evasion and selective attention are described as possessing false beliefs because their beliefs do not reflect what the evidence dictates. Only evidence that confirms, and conforms to, motivations, dispositions and background beliefs appear salient and evidence that could overturn the agent's beliefs is ignored.⁷

From this consideration of self-deceptive mechanisms a few claims can be made concerning true and false belief. First, as already touched on, beliefs are representational. That is, through their beliefs agents represent to themselves both the evidence that can lend support to, or overturn, their beliefs, as well as specific aspects of the world which we typically refer to as states of affairs. Second, representations of evidence and states of affairs can be accurate or inaccurate. Beliefs are accurate to the extent that they represent what the evidence or states of

⁶ Sanford, (1988), p 161-162, 169 Johnston, (1988), p 75 McLaughlin, (1988), p 39, 52-53 Audi, (1988), p 97-99, 101-105, 107-108 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 79-80 Baier, (1996), p 58 Mele, (2001), p 29-30 McLaughlin, (1996), p 38

⁷ McLaughlin, (1988), pp 42-43 Johnston, (1988), pp 67-68, 75, 87 Audi, (1988), p105 Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), p 11, 18 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 77-79 Baier, (1996), p53-55 McLaughlin, (1996), p 38 Fingarette, (2000), pp 38-40, 46, 167-169 Mele, (2001), pp 26-27, 51-52

affairs dictate. Beliefs are inaccurate when they do not represent what the evidence or states of affairs dictate, but instead reflect what the agent is motivated to believe or what fits with some favoured set of background beliefs. So, the picture of true belief that emerges from such considerations is that it entails accurate representations, or beliefs that accurately represent evidence and states of affairs. The picture of false beliefs that emerges is that it entails inaccurate beliefs, or beliefs that do not accurately represent evidence or states of affairs.

It must be acknowledged, though, that the claim that a belief is true when it accurately represents some state of affairs is problematic. This is because such a claim could be said to align itself too much with the correspondence theory of truth, or the theory of truth which proposes that a belief is true when it corresponds to some state of affairs or with a fact. There are, of course, problems with the correspondence theory of truth. For example, it is difficult to say what it means for a belief to ‘correspond’ with some fact,⁸ and it is also difficult to isolate ‘facts’ which can then make beliefs true or false.⁹ In response it must be acknowledged that to say a belief is true when it accurately represents some aspect of the world is not tied exclusively to the correspondence theory of truth. For example, deflationary theories of truth typically propose that what makes a belief true is that some aspect of the world is the way the belief says it is.¹⁰ As Quine states, with the deflationist position the phrase ‘it is a fact that’ is dropped, so instead of saying ‘a belief *p* is true if and only if it is a fact that *p*’ the deflationist simply proposes that ‘a belief *p* is true if and only if *p*’.¹¹ The intention of this subsection, as stated, is not to develop, or advocate, any particular theory of truth, but rather to offer a description of true belief given previous claims made in the thesis. Also, that the plausibility of this description is attested to due to the fact that it reflects certain claims concerning true and

⁸ Michael P. Lynch, (2001), *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), pp 1-2, 9-13

⁹ Davidson, (1990), pp 303-304

¹⁰ Lynch, (2001), pp 421-422. Paul Horwich, (2001) ‘A Defence of Minimalism’, *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press) pp 561-562

¹¹ W. V. O. Quine, (2001), ‘Truth’, *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), p 475

false belief offered by various theories of truth. To say, then, that a belief is true when it accurately represents some aspect of the world, and false when it inaccurately represents some aspect of the world, reflects claims made about truth offered at least by correspondence theories and deflationist theories. Its plausibility is therefore buttressed. Nonetheless, in order to offer a description of true beliefs that is based on previous claims, but avoids problems that cannot be addressed in the context of this thesis, our description of true and false belief will be altered slightly. Specifically, talk of facts, or states of affairs, will be dropped. With this in mind, the claim will be that a belief is true when it accurately represents what is the case, what was the case or what will be the case. The goal of this alteration is to maintain neutrality between different theories of truth because it is beyond the scope of this thesis to settle such issues, and because the focus of the thesis is not to explain the value of truth. Of course, this position still aligns itself with certain theories of truth while being inconsistent with other theories. Most notably it is inconsistent with epistemic or pragmatist theories of truth.¹² Unfortunately, such alignment cannot be justified by delving into debates concerning the nature of truth, but rather is justified on the grounds that it is derived from previous claims made specifically in chapter two. It should also be noted that pragmatist concerns about truth will be considered in the next chapter, as such concerns will be directly relevant for the value of intellectual character.

Reliance on the notions of accurate and inaccurate representation to explain true and false belief also occurs with the psychological literature that focuses on the value of self-deception which will be considered in chapter six. That is, these psychologists propose that agents who engage in self-deception possess inaccurate representations as opposed to the accurate representations of agents who do not engage in self-deception.¹³ Since the role

¹² Of course, there are a variety of nuanced positions which fall within the category of epistemic and pragmatist theories of truth. But the point of contention alluded to here is that epistemic and pragmatist theories of truth reject the claim that what makes some belief true is some aspect of the world. Rather, according to the former, a belief is true if it is justified or affects our practice. Lynch, (2001), pp 185-190.

¹³ Shelly E. Taylor and Jonathan Brown, (1988), *Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health*. *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 103 number 2 pp 194-197. Shelly E. Taylor, (1989) *Positive Illusions: Creative Self-Deception and the Healthy Mind*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers), p 20.

ascribed to intellectual character in this thesis is that of mitigating the influence of mechanisms which lead to self-deception, and we are deriving our notion of true belief from what intellectual character provides, this psychological literature is relevant for our understanding of true and false belief. It therefore further buttresses the claim that true belief entails accurate representation while false belief entails inaccurate representation, since the empirical studies of such psychologists attests to the claim that agents who do not engage in self-deception represent the world accurately whereas agents who engage in self-deception do not. Hence, construing true belief as accurate representation and false belief as inaccurate representation is plausible not simply because it is consistent with certain theories of truth, but also because it is consistent with the empirical literature on self-deception.

Of course, those psychologists who study self-deception acknowledge that it is difficult to determine when some agent's beliefs are accurate or inaccurate, since it is difficult to determine what is objectively the case.¹⁴ Two methods are relied on to measure whether the beliefs of agents are accurate or inaccurate. One method entails focusing on the self-reports of subject's and then measuring them against what is statistically possible. With this method subjects are asked to report whether they are above average in regard to the possession of desirable traits.¹⁵ Consistently, between 85% to 95% of those subjects surveyed report that

Jennifer D. Campbell and Beverly Fehr, (1990), "Self-Esteem and Perceptions of Conveyed Impressions: Is Negative Affectivity Associated With Greater Realism?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 58, number 1, pp 122-123, 127-129. Shelly E. Taylor and Jonathan D. Brown, (1994a), "Positive Illusions and Well-Being Revisited: Separating Fact From Fiction," *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 116, number 1, pp 21-22. O. P. John and R. W. Robins, (1994), "Accuracy and Bias in Self-Perception: Individual Differences in Self-Enhancement and the Role of Narcissism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 66, number 1, pp 215-216. C. Randall Colvin, Jack Block, and David C. Funder, (1995), "Overly Positive Self-Evaluation and Personality: Negative Implications for Mental Health," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 68, number 6, p 1153. Shelly E. Taylor and Peter M. Gollwitzer, (1995), "Effects of Mindset on Positive Illusions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 69, number 2, pp 213-214. Jonathan D. Brown and Keith A. Dutton, (1995), "Truth and Consequences: The Costs and Benefits of Accurate Self-Knowledge," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, volume 21, number 12, (December), pp 1288-1289. Shelley E. Taylor, Margaret E. Kemeny, Geoffrey M. Reed, Julianne E. Bower and Tara L. Gruenewald, (2000), "Psychological Resources, Positive Illusions and Health," *American Psychologist*, volume 55, number 1, p 100. Cameron Anderson, Sanjay Srivastava, Jennifer S. Beer, Sandra E. Spataro, Jennifer A. Chatman, (2006), "Knowing Your Place: Self-Perceptions of Status in Face-to-Face groups," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 91, number 6, pp 1094-1096.

¹⁴ Taylor and Brown, (1994a), p 22.

¹⁵ Colvin et al, (1995), p 1152.

they are above average in terms of desirable traits such as charisma and sincerity.¹⁶ Such beliefs are deemed inaccurate since it is statistically impossible for a large majority of subjects to be above average in regard to such traits.¹⁷ The second method entails measuring the self-reports of agents against the judgments of others. Again, subjects report on their possession of desirable traits and their beliefs are measured for accuracy by comparing it to the judgments of clinical observers, friends and family as well as objective criteria such as academic performance.¹⁸ With each of these methods, as is acknowledged by the psychologists who conduct this research, it is difficult to say that the beliefs of subjects are deemed accurate or inaccurate due to how well they correspond with objective reality.¹⁹ Consequently, talk of the accuracy and inaccuracy of subjects' beliefs cannot be understood as meaning how these beliefs measure against some objective reality which is readily discernable. Nonetheless, these beliefs are measured against something that is distinct from the agent and are deemed accurate or inaccurate representations based on this comparison. The subjects of these experiments believe something to be the case, for example that they are more compassionate than others, but such beliefs are deemed inaccurate due to statistical impossibilities or disconfirmation from knowledgeable others. That it is not objective reality that determines whether an agent's beliefs are accurate or inaccurate is compatible with the position advocated in this thesis, for in the previous chapter it was acknowledged that conceptual schemes fulfill a significant role in shaping human experience. Of course, we will want to incorporate the remarks on conceptual schemes offered in the previous chapter into our explanation of true belief as accurate

¹⁶ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 193 Shelly E Taylor and Jonathan D Brown, (1994b), "“Illusions” of Mental Health Does Not Explain Positive Illusions,” *American Psychologist*, November, p 973 F1X

¹⁷ Taylor and Brown, (1994a), p 22

¹⁸ Jonathan Shedler, Martin Mayman and Melvin Manis, (1993), “The Illusion of Mental Health,” *American Psychologist*, volume 48, number 11, November, pp 1117-1118, 1120 Jens B Asendorpf and Fritz Ostendorf, (1998), “Is Self-Enhancement Healthy? Conceptual, Psychometric and Empirical Analysis,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 74, number 4, pp 957-958, 961 Delroy L Paulhus (1998), “Interpersonal and Intrapyschic Adaptiveness of Trait Self-Enhancement,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 74, number 5, pp 1197, 1199 Richard W Robins and Jennifer S Beer, (2001), “Positive Illusions About the Self Short-Term Benefits and Long-Term Costs,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 80, number 2, pp 340-341, 343 John and Robins, (1994), p 215 Colvin et al, (1995), pp 1152-1154, 1159-1160 Anderson et al, (2006), pp 1094-1095

¹⁹ Taylor and Brown, (1994a), p 22 Shedler et al, (1993), pp 1117-1118 John and Robins, (1994), p 215 Asendorpf and Ostendorf, (1998), p 957-958, 961

representation the agent acquiesces in and we will now turn to that task. In order to do so such we will quickly revisit the positions of Goodman and Putnam.

Recall that according to Goodman, our conceptual schemes are developed out of pre-existing conceptual schemes, and thus our claims concerning the world are constrained at least by what we have claimed in the past. Communities begin with specific conceptual schemes, and if new claims emerge they are the result of modifications to previous systems of conceptual understanding.²⁰ In this process new conceptualizations are deemed acceptable through their ability to fit with both past conceptualizations and empirical input. A statement or version is true when “it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts.”²¹ Putnam holds a similar position, since he proposes that a statement, theory or conceptual scheme is deemed rationally acceptable due to its coherence, or fit, with other theoretical and experiential beliefs. So, for a particular theoretical belief to be considered rationally acceptable it must fit with other theoretical beliefs already accepted by a community as well as experiential beliefs. Experiential beliefs themselves must fit not only with other experiential beliefs to be considered rationally acceptable, but also with theoretical beliefs.²² Thus, non-empirical theoretical beliefs held by a community also constrain the acceptance of new beliefs.²³

Through this brief reconsideration of both Goodman’s and Putnam’s positions we can see that ‘fit,’ or ‘coherence,’ is an indispensable aspect of determining whether some claim should be believed or not. Coherence is significant not only for the acceptance of theoretical claims but also empirical claims, and this is due directly to the influence of conceptual schemes. If we are always operating within some conceptual scheme, or even within various competing conceptual schemes, and these influence both our empirical theories and empirical experience, we cannot determine whether some claim should be believed due to how accurately

²⁰ Goodman, (1978) pp 6-7-97

²¹ Goodman, (1978) p 17-138

²² Putnam, (1981) pp 54-55

²³ Putnam, (1981) p 16

it depicts the empirical world. Instead, we must deem it worth believing on the basis of its coherence with already established beliefs. Of course, it must be noted that neither Goodman nor Putnam advocates a coherence theory of truth. As outlined in the previous chapter, Goodman holds that coherence is something distinct from truth²⁴ and Putnam advocates a pragmatist theory of truth.²⁵ It is not the goal here either to advocate a coherence theory of truth, but rather to connect the notion of coherence with accurate representation, and, in turn, propose that intellectual character is conducive to coherent belief due to such a connection. These connections, though, are not difficult to make. For intellectual character will enable agents to have accurate representations of coherence, or to perceive accurately whether some claim coheres with claims already believed.

To see that this is the case we can again briefly revisit some of the key points we have already derived from chapter two. It has already been proposed that intellectual character will enable agents to possess accurate representations. Agents who possess intellectual character are not affected by self-serving cognitive mechanisms that can cause inaccurate representations, since they are motivated by a desire for true belief. Fulfilling this role under the influence of conceptual schemes will mean that intellectual character will mitigate the influence of desires, motivations and dispositions that could cause an agent to unwarrantedly dismiss evidence in order to maintain some conceptual scheme. It does such though mitigating the possibility of inaccurately representing either empirical inputs or conceptual schemes. Through the mitigating influence of intellectual character agents are concerned to obtain true beliefs and therefore accept a claim only if it actually coheres with their accepted conceptual scheme or reassess their conceptual scheme if some indisputable claim, or empirical input, does not cohere with it. Intellectual character can therefore enable agents to assess both their conceptual schemes and empirical inputs to determine how well they fit together. Basically,

²⁴ Goodman, (1978), pp 18-21, 94, 107, 109-110, 120-128

²⁵ Putnam, (1981), pp 49-56

since intellectual character enables agents to obtain accurate representations such character enables agents to determine whether some claim actually coheres with claims already believed. In this way such character will facilitate interaction with, and within, conceptual schemes in order to achieve true beliefs, or accurate representations. Moreover this does not entail simply obtaining accurate representations, but rather coming to believe on the basis of such representations. It is imperative to recognize this added consequence of intellectual character, since if such character is meant to influence belief formation it must not simply allow agents to have accurate representations but also alter what they are willing to assert. That is, since beliefs entail assertions, intellectual character will facilitate not only accurate representations but also lead agents to alter or maintain what they are willing to assert on the basis of such representations. So if agents can be influenced by inappropriate motivations when interacting with a conceptual scheme, then the various aspects of intellectual character will be required to overcome this influence to provide accurate representation and alter what the agent is willing to assert. To see that this is the case, and draw together the various strands of thought offered in the previous paragraphs, we will visit an actual historical case.

The historical case we will consider is the well-documented case of disagreement over quantum theory between Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg. As Heisenberg relates, he, Einstein and Niels Bohr had a few occasions to discuss the new quantum theory that was being developed by himself, Bohr and others. One contentious point of this theory for Einstein was the statistical interpretation of quantum phenomena which entailed that at the subatomic level events do not occur with certainty at specific times, nor does matter exist with certainty at specific places, but rather there are only ‘tendencies to occur’ and ‘tendencies to exist.’ Thus the nature of such phenomena is uncertain and statistical. Einstein appears to have felt that this construal of subatomic phenomena was unpalatable and he challenged both Heisenberg and Bohr in person at two Solvay Congresses in Brussels concerning the tenability of the uncertainty relations through the use of several counter-examples. As Heisenberg relates, he

and Bohr were able to address Einstein's concerns, and display that his counter-examples were consistent with the statistical interpretation of subatomic phenomena and therefore did not refute it. This pattern continued with Heisenberg and others repeatedly being able to address Einstein's concerns through displaying the consistency of his counter-examples with the uncertainty relations, and they even relied on Einstein's general theory of relativity in their proofs of the tenability of the statistical interpretation. Nonetheless, they could not secure Einstein's agreement, and when all arguments had been exhausted Einstein would simply respond with the phrase "God does not play at dice."²⁶ Even twenty-five years later when Heisenberg once again had the opportunity to discuss quantum theory with Einstein the latter often reproached the former with the phrase "But you cannot believe, surely, that God plays at dice" even though Einstein was quite willing to admit that the statistical interpretation was at the time the most tenable account of subatomic phenomena.²⁷

What we can extract from this historical case is that certain abstract and deductive capacities are not sufficient on their own to enable agents to obtain true beliefs when interacting with conceptual schemes. Heisenberg and others were able to display the consistency of their theory of quantum phenomena with Einstein's counter-examples, and even with his general theory of relativity, but nonetheless Einstein was reluctant to believe the theory. This reluctance does not appear to be the result of a failure on Einstein's part to understand the theory, but rather the result of Einstein's reluctance to accept the uncertainty of the statistical interpretation of such phenomena. Einstein appears to have wanted to maintain a deterministic view of the universe, which is attested to by his consistently uttering the phrase "God does not play at dice" whenever his criticisms were addressed. Relying on the language of intellectual character, we can describe this situation as one where Einstein was being dogmatic, or close-minded, since he appears to want to maintain some cherished claim, in this

²⁶ Werner Heisenberg, (1983), *Encounters with Einstein And Other Essays on People Places and Particles*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press) pp 113-117

²⁷ Heisenberg, (1983), pp 121-122

case the deterministic view of natural phenomena, which then prevented him from obtaining a true belief. That is, it prevented him from acquiescing in an accurate representation that he was willing to assert.

Of course, whether Einstein was being closed-minded here is a matter of contention, for Arthur Fine has argued that Einstein had substantive problems with the quantum theory being advocated by Bohr, Heisenberg and others and was not simply dismissing the theory for dogmatic reasons. Fine even goes so far to say that it was Bohr, Heisenberg and others that were being conservative, or close-minded, in their theorizing, for such thinkers wanted to maintain traditional concepts from Newtonian mechanics whereas Einstein thought it was best to jettison such concepts.²⁸ To enter into such a debate with Fine is something that is beyond the scope of this thesis, but nonetheless a few remarks are in order. The first is simply that Einstein's reluctance to accept the new theory, and his insistence that 'God does not play dice' is well documented, as Fine himself recognizes,²⁹ and therefore there was likely some amount of closed-mindedness that was motivating Einstein's reluctance to believe the new theory even if he had substantive problems with it. As stated, Heisenberg and others were able to address any problems that Einstein proposed to them, and those who interacted with Einstein personally could see that the uncertainty relations that were an indispensable aspect of the theory were simply unacceptable for him. This is undeniable. Also, there is the elephant in the room that cannot be ignored. This is that the quantum theory advocated by Bohr, Heisenberg and others has proven to be the accepted theory of quantum phenomena. Thus, Einstein has not been vindicated in his reluctance to believe the new theory, and, in turn, his criticisms have been displayed to be unwarranted. Einstein was therefore simply wrong, or had false beliefs concerning the tenability of the quantum theory being advocated by Bohr, Heisenberg and others, and we can reasonably speculate that if he did not attempt to maintain his deterministic

²⁸ Arthur Fine, (1986), *The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism and the Quantum Theory*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp.12-24.

²⁹ Fine, (1986), pp.12-13.

view of physical phenomena, which was well documented by those who discussed such matters with him, he may have seen the error of his ways. Finally, the mere disputability of Einstein's dogmatism displays that the motivations of even brilliant thinkers can play a role in the beliefs they form. If such motivations did not appear to play a role in influencing the beliefs arrived at, someone like Fine would not have had to argue that they were not the mitigating factor that lead Einstein to dismiss an ultimately well-established theory. In fact, Fine's insistence that it was Bohr and Heisenberg that were being dogmatic, by wanting to hold onto traditional notions from Newtonian mechanics, further displays the significance of the motivational structure of agents in the formation of beliefs. For by making such a claim Fine recognizes that the motivations of agents can fulfill a role, as he argued that it was Bohr and Heisenberg that ultimately were ill-motivated and not Einstein.

The debate concerning Einstein's dogmatism aside, we can apply what has been gleaned from this case to our definition of true belief and the specific contribution of intellectual character. Recall that before we consulted this example it was proposed that intellectual character facilitates successful interaction with conceptual schemes since such character mitigates the influence of cognitive mechanisms that can hinder agents from forming accurate representations they are willing to assert. Specifically, in regard to conceptual schemes, intellectual character facilitates the ability to apprehend whether some novel claim coheres with an already accepted conceptual scheme or whether the conceptual scheme itself must be adjusted to fit the new claim. We can see this with the Einstein case, since if the former were less dogmatic and more open-minded we would expect that he not only would see that the new quantum theory was consistent with the conceptual scheme he accepted as Heisenberg, Bohr and others attempted to show him, but that he would adjust his conceptual scheme accordingly. Thus, this specific historical case displays two relevant claims. First, that intellectual character does fulfill a role in the formation of true beliefs, and second that we should construe true belief not only as accurate representation, but more specifically as

accurate representation the agent is willing to assert or acquiesce in. We have dwelt on the first claim and therefore should focus on the second in order to fill out of the notion of true belief being advocated.

Regarding the second claim, what the Einstein case displays is that intellectual character not only facilitates accurate representations, but also the ability to acquiesce in these accurate representations so that they are asserted by the agent. For, we can imagine that Einstein had little difficulty in perceiving the claims of the new quantum theory accurately, and therefore he had accurate representations of the theory, but he was unwilling to acquiesce in such representations and ultimately assert them. Thus, we can distinguish between ‘accurate representations’ construed as ‘accurate perceptions,’ and ‘accurate representations’ construed as ‘accurate beliefs.’ For what Einstein appears to have failed to accomplish, because of his deterministic motivations, was to acquiesce in the perceived coherence of the new quantum theory. If, on the other hand, he was more intellectually virtuous in this matter, then the motivation to obtain and sustain true beliefs, as well as the motivation to avoid false beliefs, would have compelled him to acquiesce in the coherence of the new quantum theory and ultimately assert it. Thus, what we can conclude from consideration of this case concerning true belief is that true belief should be understood as accurate representations the agent acquiesces in and is willing to assert. Intellectual character can provide accurate representations, since it mitigates the influence of cognitive mechanisms that lead to inaccurate representations, but more than this, since we are focused on belief and not perception, intellectual character facilitates acquiescence in such accurate representations. That is, intellectual character not only leads agents to perceive accurately but to believe, or assert, accurately.

We can now pull the various strands of this subsection together to settle on our notion of true belief, keeping in mind that this notion is derived from what intellectual character

provides and not from consideration of the nature of truth. What intellectual character thus seems to provide is accurate representations the agent acquiesces in and is therefore willing to assert. We came to this notion of true belief, since intellectual character mitigates the influence of cognitive mechanisms that can lead agents to possess inaccurate representations. Instead of forming representations that confirm, or conform, to what the agent desires, already believes, or is motivated or disposed to believe, the agent forms accurate representations, since he has an overarching motivation for true belief as well as various fine-grained motivations. These motivations compel the agent to believe only what is true, which in turn is dictated by the empirical inputs and conceptual schemes the agent is exposed to. Not only, though, does intellectual character facilitate accurate representations of empirical inputs and conceptual schemes, but it also facilitates acquiescence in such accurate representations. Such acquiescence is the result of the motivational structure of intellectual character. When the agent is constituted by the set of motivations and dispositions associated with intellectual character he is not only compelled to act in certain ways, for example to be open-minded, but also to believe in certain ways. This influence of intellectual character simply mirrors the influence of cognitive mechanisms that lead the agent astray. Instead of being compelled to obtain and maintain beliefs that fit with a favoured conceptual scheme the agent is compelled to obtain and maintain beliefs that reflect what empirical inputs and conceptual schemes dictate. Thus, the agent will acquiesce in those representations arrived at through the influence of his intellectual character in the same way that agents acquiesce in representations that fit with their cherished beliefs.

This notion of true belief is therefore defensible, since it has been derived from previous claims accepted in the thesis as well as elaboration on the Einstein case. It is also a plausible definition, since it reflects some platitudes concerning true belief, specifically in its focus on accuracy, and, in turn appears to be the target that other philosophers writing in virtue epistemology have been attacking. When such philosophers offer arguments that attempt to

sever the connection between intellectual character and true belief what they are dismissing is that intellectual character can facilitate accurate representation. This will become clear as the chapter progresses. It is this notion of true belief, then, that will be defended in the rest of this chapter against both conceptual and empirical arguments that attempt to display that intellectual character is not conducive to true belief³⁰. It will also be this notion of true belief as accurate representation the agent acquiesces in that will be relevant for further determining the constitutive value of intellectual character in upcoming chapters.

4.2 Cartesian Demons, Epistemic Desires and Subjective Justification

The first sceptical challenge to be addressed concerning the connection between intellectual character and true belief is the possibility of being systematically misled by a Cartesian Demon. It could be the case, as some have proposed, that the community and its various agents are

³⁰ It should be noted that two issues concerning 'true belief,' which are closely related, will not be addressed in this thesis. The first issue concerns whether there is a distinction within the intellectual virtues based on their objects. For Aristotle there was a distinction amongst the intellectual virtues based on whether they were aimed at necessary truths or contingent truths. Those intellectual virtues aimed at necessary truths are guided by theoretical wisdom whereas those virtues aimed at contingent truths are guided by practical wisdom. It should be apparent from the content of the thesis so far that no demarcation is being offered within the set of intellectual virtues based on the kind of true beliefs they are conducive to, since it has been claimed that intellectual character can facilitate true beliefs concerning empirical matters and conceptual schemes. Thus, they can be relevant for both scientific inquiry and practical inquiry as long as true beliefs are relevant for either. This is not to say that there are differences between theoretical and practical wisdom, but rather that such a distinction is not relevant for how the intellectual virtues are understood. This stance reflects the positions of contemporary virtue responsibilists, such as Montmarquet and Zagzebski, since they do not demarcate the intellectual virtues in this way. Aristotle, *NE*, VI, Code, (1984), pp 41-42. Montmarquet, (1993), pp 19-20, Zagzebski, (1996), pp 213-215, Richardson-Lear, (2004), pp 93-97. This leads to the second issue, since some contemporary theorists have proposed that scientists do not actually believe the theories they employ, and that this is preferable. It is preferable, for it is better for scientists to perceive such theories as simply empirically adequate in that they have explanatory value but may not be true. This position could be possibly devastating to assigning a significant role to intellectual character, for it would mean that the virtues of such character only fulfill a role in practical matters and not in theoretical contexts. Such a position is not as devastating as it first appears, since even if it is true it does not entail that the intellectual virtues fulfill no role when interacting with the conceptual schemes of science. For if scientists hold scientific theories only to be empirically adequate, and do not in fact believe them, intellectual character can still play a role in this process by leading scientists, as well as other theorists, to having certain beliefs when they interact with conceptual schemes. Specifically, it can lead them to believe accurately that such theories are not true, but empirically adequate, acceptable for explanatory reasons, for reasons of coherence and so on. Also it is questionable whether scientists do not in fact believe the theories they employ. Assuredly, this could only be established through empirical surveys of scientists and not through some a priori means. Bas van Fraassen, (1980), *The Scientific Image*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), Goldman, (2001), p 39, Kvanvig (2003), pp 33-35.

systematically mislead by a Cartesian Demon and therefore claims concerning the truth-conduciveness of specific character traits are false. This possibility has caused some virtue epistemologists to propose that we cannot construe the aspects of intellectual character as truth-conducive. In what follows this Cartesian Demon argument will be explicated, as well as responses to such a possibility offered by various authors. An attempt will then be made to reestablish the connection between intellectual character and true belief.

4.2.1 The Possibility of a Cartesian Demon

So far in this thesis it has been proposed that the various aspects of intellectual character are truth-conducive. In fact it has been proposed that the defining property of an intellectually virtuous character trait is its ability to enable agents to reliably obtain and sustain true beliefs.³¹ In terms of the previous section, we reformulate this claim by proposing that we discern whether some character trait is an intellectual virtue based on whether it is conducive to accurate representations the agent acquiesces in. The possibility of a Cartesian Demon is supposed to thwart the criterion of truth-conduciveness as the defining characteristic of the intellectual virtues. Various philosophers have proposed that it could be the case that our world is a demon world, such that we hold certain character traits to be truth-conducive while in fact we are deceived by a malicious Cartesian Demon and therefore such beliefs are false. Even further, some authors have proposed that the Demon's influence could be so conclusive that the character traits deemed truth-conducive could be conducive to false beliefs, while those character traits deemed intellectual vices could be conducive to true beliefs. The very possibility of a Cartesian Demon is meant to undercut our ability to make empirical claims,

³¹Zagzebski, (1996), pp 168, 176-180. Zagzebski, (2001b), p 209, 217. Another virtue epistemologist, although a virtue reliabilist that proposes truth-conduciveness as a defining characteristic of the intellectual virtues is Alvin Goldman. Goldman, (2001) pp 31.

since the demon has manipulated the world in such a way that many, if not all, of our empirical beliefs are false. Our beliefs are therefore representationally inaccurate, and in this case the inaccuracies pertain to the truth-conduciveness of certain character traits.³² Also, such deception is undetectable, for no matter how conclusive our evidence seems to be concerning the truth-conduciveness of certain character traits it is always possible that the evidence, and our beliefs concerning it, have been manipulated by the demon. Therefore, the influence of the demon is ubiquitous and there appears to be no way to overcome it.³³

If it were the case that such a demon existed, then the constitutive value of intellectual character would either have to be explained by some other means than its truth-conduciveness or it may simply lose its value completely. In the following subsection we look at two possible alternative ways of construing the aspects of intellectual character that have been formulated in response to the possibility of a Cartesian Demon. If the demon possibility cannot be overcome, then the value of intellectual character would have to be formulated with such accounts in mind. So far in this thesis, though, the value of intellectual character has been connected to its ability to obtain and sustain true beliefs. An attempt is therefore made to maintain this position by arguing that the Cartesian Demon possibility does not actually sever the connection between intellectual character and true belief. Thus, the connection between intellectual character and true belief will be maintained and, in turn, one does not have to indulge in the alternatives offered to deal with such a demon.

At this point, another possible response to explaining the value of intellectual character with the Cartesian Demon in mind deserves mentioning. Casey Swank accepts the possibility of a Cartesian Demon on the grounds that our world could be a demon world. He proposes that

³² Goldman, (1986), p 108 Montmarquet, (1987), p 482 Montmarquet, (1993), p 20 Jonathan Kvanvig, (1992), *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: On the Place of the Virtues in Epistemology*, (Savage, Maryland Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc), pp 131-133 Casey Swank, (2000), "Epistemic Vice," *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Guy Axtell, (New York Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc), p 198

³³ Lehrer, (2001), pp 203-204 Axtell, (2001), p 168

we have to account for why certain traits are considered virtues and others vices based on the qualities such traits possess in the actual world. The actual world might be a demon world, and therefore we cannot designate intellectual virtues to be such on the grounds that they are truth-conducive. Even though we cannot rely on this criterion for individuating the intellectual virtues we nonetheless can identify the various aspects of intellectual character. We simply know, Swank suggests, that character traits such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage and reasonableness are intellectual virtues while being dogmatic, unreasonable and intolerant of others' beliefs are intellectual vices regardless of any malicious influence of a Cartesian Demon. We know this because we value the former virtues, and would want to possess them, regardless of their connection to truth, and it is the same for the intellectual vices. Even if we found out that being unreasonable and dogmatic were both conducive to true beliefs we would still reject them as vicious and therefore undesirable. Our designation of them as intellectual vices would be based solely on the fact that they are just plain bad character traits to have. They simply represent defects in character and for this reason are considered vicious. Intellectual virtues, on the other hand, represent character traits we deem desirable and are therefore considered virtuous solely on that basis. Our identification of intellectual virtues as such, and intellectual vices as such, has nothing to do with their connection to truth and falsity, but instead occurs simply due to perceiving them as good and bad character traits. Their respective values are therefore not explained due to their connections to truth and falsity³⁴

Swank's proposal has the advantage of designating the intellectual virtues as intrinsically good and intellectual vices as intrinsically bad, since their respective values are not explained through their relations to truth and falsity. There are at least two problems, though, with his position. First, the claim that we would value those character traits typically designated intellectual virtues regardless of their connection to truth seems presumptuous. Swank's argument relies on an appeal to what his audience values. He proposes that even if

³⁴ Swank (2000) pp 198-204

the demon let us in on his secret by telling us that what we have identified as intellectual virtues are in fact conducive to false beliefs, while intellectual vices are conducive to true beliefs, we would still want to possess those character traits deemed intellectual virtues and discard all concern for true belief due our aversion to the standard list of intellectual vices.³⁵ Such a claim assumes that Swank's audience shares either his intuitions or value set. There is no guarantee, though, that any agent who was confronted with the situation as Swank presents it would judge it as he does. When confronted with the possibility that what we typically think of as intellectual virtues are not truth-conducive, but in fact conducive to false beliefs, there is no guarantee that one would discard all concern for the truth; specifically that its value is easily overridden by the value of those intellectual virtues on the standard list. One can easily imagine someone responding that the value of truth outweighs the value of those character traits typically deemed intellectual virtues, and therefore it is the former that must be valued as opposed to the latter. Second, Swank also assumes that the demon's influence is limited to beliefs concerning whether the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive, and that we are not deceived in regard to our value judgments concerning those virtues. If our world is one where we could be deceived by a Cartesian Demon concerning the truth-conduciveness of certain character traits, then it could also be a world where such a Demon deceives us concerning what is valuable. Swank therefore cannot rely on our beliefs concerning the value of certain traditionally understood intellectual virtues, and the disvalue of certain traditionally understood intellectual vices, for our beliefs in these respects could also be wrong due to the influence of a malicious demon. Consequently, by not dealing with the demon directly Swank has not been able to display the value of the intellectual virtues, since the demon could be deceiving us in this regard also. To display the value of intellectual character the Demon must be exorcised.

³⁵ Swank, (2000), pp.200-201.

4.2.2 Epistemic Desires and Subjective Justification

To reestablish the connection between intellectual character and true belief while acknowledging the possibility of a Cartesian Demon is the goal of the next subsection. Before an attempt is made to reestablish such a connection two other positions, offered by James Montmarquet and Jonathan Kvanvig, deserve mentioning. Neither of these philosophers attempts to reestablish the connection between intellectual character and truth-conduciveness, but instead each holds that due to the possibility of a Cartesian Demon this connection is severed. Consequently they each propose that we have to reformulate the means by which we individuate the aspects of intellectual character due to this severed connection. The strategy to be offered for exorcising the influence of the Cartesian Demon entails proposing that one does not have to make the revisions suggested by Montmarquet and Kvanvig, since the possibility of a Cartesian Demon does not entail that the connection between intellectual character and truth-conduciveness is severed. Rather, another sceptical conclusion follows. If the possibility of a Cartesian Demon does not sever the connection between intellectual character and truth-conduciveness, then one does not have to offer positions built upon such a claim.

In response to the possibility of a Cartesian Demon, Montmarquet proposes that we have to reformulate the individuating characteristic of the intellectual virtues. Since it is possible that the Cartesian Demon exists, and deceives us into believing that certain traits are truth-conducive while in fact such traits are conducive to false beliefs, we cannot hold 'truth-conduciveness' to be the defining characteristic of the intellectual virtues. Instead, he suggests, the definitive characteristic of the intellectual virtues is that they are *desired* by the epistemically responsible agent. That is, the intellectual virtues are character traits that any agent who desires the truth would *want* to have. They are desired by the epistemically responsible agent, since such an agent is epistemically conscientious and therefore tries her best

to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. Such a desire therefore leads the epistemically responsible agent to habituate those character traits typically deemed intellectual virtues. Their desirability is therefore premised on the fact that they *appear to be* truth-conducive, but since their truth-conduciveness cannot be assured, due to the possibility of systematic deception by a Cartesian Demon, the most that we can say is that they are epistemically desirable. Hence, it is acknowledged that intellectually virtuous character traits appear to be truth-conducive, but since our beliefs concerning such traits are possibly influenced by a malevolent demon we cannot assert that the intellectual virtues are in fact truth-conducive. At most, we can only say that they are desirable for any agent concerned with epistemic ends.³⁶

Kvanvig offers an alternative approach to construing the intellectual virtues given the possibility of a Cartesian Demon. He proposes that since it is possible that we are systematically deceived by such a demon into believing that the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive, when in fact they are not, we must instead construe the intellectual virtues as being justification-conducive. He proposes that if it were the case that a demon was powerful enough to ensure that some agent's beliefs always came out false, despite that agent's best efforts and intellectual character, we could not hold that such an agent possessed any dispositions toward true beliefs in that world. This agent could not be held to have any dispositions toward true beliefs, since nothing that the agent attempts, or is disposed to do, could ever lead him to have true beliefs. The possibility of true belief is cut off by the malevolent activity of a Cartesian Demon, and therefore we cannot construe any of actions, and psychological dispositions, as being conducive to this end. The end is simply unattainable, and consequently we cannot understand the intellectual virtues in regard to such an end.³⁷ Kvanvig admits that it is unlikely that the Cartesian Demon exists, and that there are decisive philosophical objections to its very

³⁶ Montmarquet (1987) pp 482-487, 489. Montmarquet, (1993), pp 21-24, 27-28, 30. James Montmarquet, (2000), *An Internalist Conception of Epistemic Virtue*, *Knowledge, Belief and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Guy Axtell, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.) pp 139-140.

³⁷ Kvanvig (1992) pp 131-132.

possibility, but nonetheless he holds that it is a useful heuristic device that demonstrates a significant point. The significant point is that to obtain and sustain true beliefs agents require a cooperative environment. An agent could be completely intellectually virtuous, but if her environment is not cooperative in enabling her to obtain and sustain true belief, as is the case with the demon world, then her virtuous character will not facilitate this end. It is possible, then, that our world is like the demon world, such that it is uncooperative in enabling agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs no matter their personal level of virtue. Many beliefs of the agent may therefore turn out to be false, or inaccurate, even when she is completely virtuous, and for this reason we cannot construe the intellectual virtues as truth-conducive. The virtues of intellectual character simply would not engender a sufficient number of true beliefs to warrant the claim that ‘truth-conduciveness’ is the distinctive feature of such virtues.³⁸

Due to the impact of the possibility of uncooperative environments on the truth-conducive construal of the intellectual virtues Kvanvig suggests that we instead understand such virtues as justification-conducive. His first step towards this conclusion is to propose that even though we cannot construe the intellectually virtuous agent as disposed to the truth we can construe such an agent as being disposed to *trying* to obtain truths. The agent is unsuccessful, given the environment she lives in, but nonetheless she attempts to obtain and sustain true beliefs through the influence of her virtuous character. She employs means that *appear to her* to be truth-conducive, by becoming intellectually virtuous, and therefore can be described as trying her best to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. Kvanvig then suggests that a natural way to construe the possession of justified beliefs is to hold that such possession occurs when the agent tries her best to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. That is, if an agent wants to obtain only true beliefs, and this leads her to adopt the best methods to this end, and, in turn, to be careful in regard to the reasons for which she accepts a belief, then we can describe the belief she settles on to be justified even if it is not true. The intellectually virtuous

³⁸ Kvanvig (1992) pp 135–136

agent is intellectually conscientious, and adopts various other dispositions for the purpose of obtaining and sustaining true beliefs. She can therefore be described as trying her best to get at the truth. Since the agent tries her best to obtain and sustain true beliefs she can be considered justified in holding the beliefs she has even though these beliefs are not true. The intellectual virtues would therefore be understood as justification-conducive as opposed to truth-conducive. Kvanvig proposes that the agent would only be subjectively justified in holding the beliefs she has, since from an objective point of view her beliefs are false and therefore unjustified, but nonetheless the agent tries her best from her own perspective and is therefore justified in believing as she does.³⁹

4.2.3 Exorcising the Demon

Both Montmarquet and Kvanvig thus rely on the possibility of a Cartesian Demon to alter how the aspects of intellectual character are construed, but in slightly different ways. Montmarquet suggests that the demon could be misleading us into believing that certain character traits are intellectual virtues when, in fact, they are intellectual vices, while Kvanvig suggests that the demon interferes with our environment in such a way that no character traits can be truth-conducive. In either case, our beliefs concerning intellectual virtues or the environment would be inaccurate, since the Demon leads us to form inaccurate beliefs. Due to these slight differences in their respective positions each must be addressed in somewhat different ways. Nonetheless the same general response is offered to their respective positions. This general response entails proposing that what the possibility of a Cartesian Demon causes us to be sceptical about is not the relationship between intellectual character and true belief, but rather those aspects of character on the standard list of intellectual virtues. With this approach the

³⁹ Kvanvig (1992), pp 137-139

truth-conducive criterion for determining which traits are intellectual virtues is maintained, and what is instead doubted is whether those traits we have identified as intellectual virtues are actually intellectual virtues. In this subsection the intention will be to demonstrate how this is a more warranted conclusion to advocate given the possibility of a Cartesian Demon than either of the positions offered by Montmarquet or Kvanvig.

The proposal that what is brought into to doubt by the possibility of a Cartesian Demon are those character traits on the standard list of intellectual virtues, as opposed to the connection between intellectual character and true belief, was first suggested by Zagzebski. When confronted with sceptical arguments, such as the former, Zagzebski proposes that the connection between intellectual character and true belief can be maintained. Assuredly, the possibility of systematic deception by a Cartesian Demon will generate scepticism, but it need not be scepticism concerning whether an intellectual virtue must be truth-conducive to be considered an intellectual virtue. The latter claim need not follow, since one could simply *insist* that for a character trait to be considered an intellectual virtue it *must be* truth-conducive. If one insists that 'truth-conduciveness' is the definitive characteristic of an intellectual virtue, then when faced with the possibility of a Cartesian Demon one can propose that we are simply wrong concerning what we have identified as intellectual virtues because no character traits are in fact truth-conducive. The Cartesian Demon misleads us because we believe that we are intellectually virtuous, and are therefore acquiring accurate representations through our virtuous dispositions, while in fact this is not the case. Either the demon implants false beliefs in us concerning which dispositions are truth-conducive or he manipulates the environment in such a way that none of our dispositions facilitate the obtaining and sustaining of true beliefs. In such a world, then, no traits are truth-conducive. This position mirrors the positions of Montmarquet and Kvanvig, for it agrees that no traits would be truth-conducive in such a world, but instead concludes from this that such a world would be devoid of intellectual virtue. We would therefore not have to re-conceptualize those character traits that were identified as

intellectual virtues, along the lines suggested by Montmarquet and Kvanvig, but instead maintain the 'truth-conducive' conceptualization and simply exercise doubt in regard to our present list.⁴⁰

Thus, Zagzebski offers an alternative object for doubt in response to the possibility of a Cartesian Demon. When faced with such a demon we could maintain our standard list of intellectual virtues, and doubt the criterion of truth-conduciveness, or we can maintain the criterion of truth-conduciveness and doubt those character traits on the standard list. The key point of contention that must be resolved in order to choose between these two alternatives is whether to insist on maintaining the standard list and then alter our criterion of intellectual virtue, or to insist on the criterion of intellectual virtue and then alter our standard list. In what follows it is argued that it is more warranted to insist on the criterion of truth-conduciveness, and then alter our standard list than to insist on the standard list and alter the criterion of intellectual virtue.

To insist on the truth-conducive criterion appears to be the more warranted position that follows from the Cartesian Demon possibility, first, because both Montmarquet and Kvanvig still rely on the notion of truth-conduciveness in the reformulations of their respective positions. Beginning with Montmarquet's position recall that he suggests that the definitive characteristic of the intellectual virtues is that they are desired by any agent who desires the truth. When confronted with this criterion it seems reasonable to ask why the various aspects of intellectual character are considered desirable by such an agent. Montmarquet's answer is to propose that they are desired by the agent who desires truth because such an agent is epistemically conscientious and therefore tries her best to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. The various aspects of intellectual character are deemed truth-conducive by such an agent, and are therefore habituated due the agent's general desire to obtain truths and avoid

⁴⁰ Zagzebski, (1996), pp.185. Zagzebski, (2000b), p.209. The same approach is suggested by Driver (2000), pp.128-129.

falsehoods. The desirability of the various aspects of intellectual character is therefore premised on the fact that they *appear to be* truth-conducive. The criterion of truth-conduciveness is therefore still maintained within Montmarquet's position, for it is through this criterion that the truth desiring agent identifies the various aspects of intellectual character, deems them desirable, and, in turn, habituates them. A similar conclusion emerges from Kvanvig's position. Recall that he proposes we can construe the various aspects of intellectual character to be justification-conducive, since agents habituate such character traits in order to *try* to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. The agent is thus subjectively justified in holding the beliefs she does because she has done her best to aim at the truth, and avoid the false, by adopting various traits that *appear to her* to be conducive to these ends. Consequently, the ascription of 'subjective justification' arises only because the agent has employed mechanisms for belief formation that *appear to her* to be truth-conducive.

Thus, with each position the 'truth-conducive' criterion is maintained, although in an attenuated form. This gives us a legitimate reason for maintaining the truth-conducive criterion, and, in turn, holding that what the Cartesian Demon brings into doubt are those traits on the standard list. This is because we are all in the same position as the agents in the demon world thought experiment. The judgments of agents in the demon world are made from the *oblique position*. That is, such agents exist in an unprivileged position where they are unaware that they are systematically deceived by a Cartesian Demon. Montmarquet's and Kvanvig's reformulated positions suggest that it is appropriate for *these* agents to identify the intellectual virtues on the basis of their being truth-conducive, because these agents exist in this oblique position. We too, though, are in the same oblique position, so if it is reasonable for the agents in the examples to still judge intellectual virtues to be such on the basis of their being truth-conducive, because they exist in the oblique position, then it would be reasonable for us to do the same. Neither Montmarquet nor Kvanvig, nor anyone else, claim that it is true that there is such a demon, that we can be certain that such a demon exists or that we have discovered such

a demon. Instead, such a demon is only a *possibility*. The demon represents, as Kvanvig puts it, a useful heuristic device to convey the point that the world *might be* other than how it appears to us and is not always cooperative in helping us obtain and sustain true beliefs.⁴¹ Since we do not know whether such a demon exists, and it represents only a possibility, we are in the same oblique position as the agents in the thought experiments upon which Montmarquet and Kvanvig build their reformulated positions. That is, we all exist in the unprivileged position of not being able to determine whether the demon exists or not. Since we all exist in this oblique position we should make judgments based on how things appear, as do the agents in both Montmarquet's and Kvanvig's reformulated positions. Consequently, we must formulate our criterion from the oblique position which causes us to identify intellectual virtues on the basis of their truth-conduciveness.⁴²

The conclusion that emerges from this response to Montmarquet's and Kvanvig's respective positions is that it is best to maintain the truth-conducive criterion for the intellectual virtues, and to propose that if the demon exists we are simply wrong concerning those traits on the list. This does not entail that we can never identify specific character traits as intellectual virtues, since certain traits will always appear to us to be truth-conducive, but simply that there is always a possibility that we could be wrong concerning those virtues currently on the list. The possibility of a Cartesian Demon causes us to formulate our claims concerning the intellectual virtues cautiously. Kvanvig and Montmarquet offer cautious formulations, and the cautious formulation offered here, following Zagzebski, is to hold that we could be wrong concerning those virtues on the standard list.

Montmarquet and Kvanvig consider the response that we are simply wrong concerning those traits on the standard list, and both reject it. Both positions are unconvincing. Montmarquet rejects the response that we are simply wrong concerning those traits on the

⁴¹ Kvanvig, (1992), pp 132-133, 135-136

⁴² Montmarquet, (2000), pp 139-140 Kvanvig, (1992), pp 135-136.

standard list on the grounds that it would sever connections between being virtuous and being praised and being vicious and being blamed. That is, he proposes that if we took the approach that we were simply wrong concerning those virtues on the standard list, and the roles of virtues and vices were reversed, then we would have to, in turn, reverse our judgments of praise and blame: blaming agents for possessing virtues now deemed vices, and praising agents for vices now deemed virtues. Montmarquet proposes that it would be inappropriate to reverse our judgments of agents in this way, but this is what would occur if we attempted to maintain the position that we were simply wrong concerning those virtues on the list.⁴³

In response it seems reasonable to suggest that even if we reversed our judgments concerning what are vices and virtues we would not reverse our judgments concerning praise and blame. That we would not reverse such judgments is what we would expect given other aspects of the virtue perspective. Judgments concerning praise and blame within the virtue perspective are dependent upon the impetuses for action, i.e. the virtues. Consequently, virtue ethics has been often described as input driven as opposed to output driven.⁴⁴ There is no reference to consequences, or a particular output, in the assessment of actions within virtue ethics, but instead only to particular inputs; or the virtuous character traits of the relevant actors.⁴⁵ This is why for the virtue ethicist character is essential for determining what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, and the appraisal of action is derived from the appraisal of character.⁴⁶ Thus, agents in the demon world still would be praised for their virtuous effort; or

⁴³ Montmarquet, (2000), pp 139-140

⁴⁴ Garcia, (2003), pp 86-88

⁴⁵ Oakley proposes that there are 'consequentialist' and 'non-consequentialist' forms of virtue ethics. Consequentialist forms hold that one must 'promote' the occurrence the virtues both in oneself and in others. Non-consequentialist theories instead hold that one should merely 'exemplify' the virtues, and not be concerned with promoting them in others. This distinction and whether it means that virtue ethics can be described as consequentialist will not be considered in this thesis simply because it is not the goal of the thesis to set out the necessary and sufficient conditions required to be a virtue ethical theory. Nonetheless, it can be conjectured that quite generally virtue ethics is not consequentialist, since as Oakley states of the three types of consequentialist virtue theories he identifies only one them possess enough key features to actually be considered a form of virtue ethics. Thus, one form of consequentialist virtue ethics identified by Oakley is simply a form of utilitarianism. This is 'character-utilitarianism'. Oakley also points out that the non-consequentialist form is the dominant form of virtue ethics. Oakley, (1996), pp 144-149

⁴⁶ Oakley, (1996), p 137

the attempt to adopt motivations they perceived to be truth-conducive. We would therefore not alter our judgments concerning praise and blame in regard to such agents, since they were attempting to be virtuous and, according to their best judgments, acting through the influence of virtuous dispositions.

Turning to Kvanvig, he objects to the claim that what the Cartesian Demon brings into doubt are the virtues on the standard list by proposing, first, that this position would entail that the inhabitants of the demon world possess no intellectual virtues. This cannot be the case, he suggests, since those characteristics identified as intellectual virtues by demon-world residents still would be considered admirable, and therefore they must still be virtues.⁴⁷ The second premise in this argument is very similar to the claim made by Swank that regardless of their truth-conduciveness the virtues are, or would be, still considered valuable. Like Swank, Kvanvig assumes that the demon's influence is limited to judgments concerning whether the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive, and that such a malicious agent would not deceive us concerning our value judgments. But, as it was pointed out previously, if our world is a demon-world where we could be deceived concerning the truth-conduciveness of certain character traits, then it could also be a world where we could be deceived concerning what is admirable. If this is the case, then the criterion of being admirable is just as susceptible to doubt, and is equally unhelpful, for identifying the intellectual virtues as is the criterion of truth-conduciveness. Consequently, we cannot rely on the criterion of being admirable to claim that there are still intellectual virtues in the demon-world in order to then reject the possibility that we are simply wrong considering those traits on the standard list.

What is more threatening to the position advocated in this subsection is Kvanvig's first premise, i.e. that claiming the standard list is wrong would entail that inhabitants of the demon-world possess no intellectual virtues. Since it has been proposed that the demon possibility leads to doubt concerning those traits on the standard list it would seem that one must also

⁴⁷ Kvanvig, (1992), p 136

concede that no intellectual virtues exist in such a world; i.e. our world. That is, since the possibility of a Cartesian Demon leads us to doubt the intellectual virtues on the standard list it would seem that one would have to concede that in our world there are no intellectual virtues. This latter claim, though, does not have to be conceded, for, as previously argued, we do not *know* whether such a demon exists. We are in the oblique position, and perceive certain character-traits to be truth-conducive, and thus, as far as we can tell, there are intellectual virtues; i.e. character traits that are identified as truth-conducive. If we discovered that a demon was deceiving us, then we would have to concede either that there are no intellectual virtues in our world or that we have not correctly identified any such virtues yet. Since we are in the oblique position, and have not made any such discovery, we can conclude that our world does contain intellectual virtues for we have been able to identify various character traits as truth-conducive. Consequently, Kvanvig's claim that doubting the standard list, due to the possibility of systematic deception, would lead to the conclusion that there are no intellectual virtues in our world is unwarranted.

4.2.4 Conclusion

With this section the main concern was whether the possibility of a Cartesian Demon would sever the connection between intellectual character and truth-conduciveness. We considered arguments, offered by Montmarquet and Kvanvig, that proposed that the demon possibility would sever such a connection, and therefore that we have to construe the intellectual virtues by some other means: as epistemically desirable, according to Montmarquet, and as conducive to subjective justification, according to Kvanvig. It was argued that the demon possibility does not entail that the connection between intellectual character and truth-conduciveness is severed. First, because this is not *the* inevitable conclusion that follows from such a possibility, rather,

one could hold that we are simply wrong concerning those traits on the standard list while maintaining that truth-conduciveness is the means by which we individuate the intellectual virtues. It was then proposed that this latter claim is the most warranted, since both Montmarquet and Kvanvig admit that agents in the oblique position would still identify the intellectual virtues on the basis of their truth-conduciveness. Since we also are in the oblique position when it comes to the possibility of the Cartesian Demon, it is also appropriate for us to identify the intellectual virtues as such based on the criterion of truth-conduciveness. Consequently, the demon possibility does not threaten the connection between intellectual character and true belief. Even though the demon possibility does not sever the connection between intellectual character and true belief there may be empirical reasons for holding that such a connection is severed. If so, then we may have to revert to re-construing the intellectual virtues along the lines suggested by Montmarquet or Kvanvig, or even another possibility as suggested by Wayne Riggs. We now turn to these empirical considerations with the intention of defending the connection between intellectual character and true belief.

4.3 The Possibility of Empirical Disconfirmation

That there is empirical disconfirmation concerning the connection between intellectual character and true belief was first suggested by James Montmarquet. Wayne Riggs has also focused on this empirical disconfirmation, and combined it with other considerations in order to dismiss true belief as the specific *telos* of intellectual virtue. Riggs attempts to replace true belief with wisdom as the appropriate end of such virtue. In what follows we will first concentrate on the empirical disconfirmation cited by both Montmarquet and Riggs. We will then briefly consider how this induces Riggs to suggest that the specific *telos* intellectual character should be altered. A response to the empirical disconfirmation cited by both Montmarquet and Riggs is then formulated. It will be concluded that such empirical

disconfirmation does not sever the connection between intellectual character and true belief. Even though such empirical evidence may be impotent when it comes to severing this connection, Riggs' suggestion that wisdom is the proper *telos* of intellectual virtue still may be tenable. Thus, we will consider this possibility as well.

4.3.1 Empirical Disconfirmation, Wisdom and Teleology

Montmarquet proposes that if we identify the various aspects of intellectual character on the basis of each disposition's reliability in enabling agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs, then we will not be able to "accommodate the approximate *equality* of epistemic virtue we find in such diverse agents as Aristotle, Albertus Magnus, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein."⁴⁸ We are able to recognize, he suggests, that these thinkers differ greatly in terms of the truth of their respective beliefs, as well as the "truth-conduciveness of their leading ideas and methodological postulates," and yet we also hold them to be roughly equal in terms of their intellectual character.⁴⁹ One would think that if the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive, and each of these agents are roughly equal in terms of their respective intellectual characters, then they also would be roughly equal in terms of the truth of their respective beliefs. Since they are not roughly equal in terms of the truth of their respective beliefs, and yet equal in terms of their intellectual character, intellectual character itself cannot be truth-conducive. Montmarquet's suggestion, of course, is not to identify the various aspects of intellectual character on the basis of being truth-conducive, but rather as those character traits an epistemically responsible agent would deem desirable.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Montmarquet, (1993) pp 20-21

⁴⁹ Montmarquet (1993), p 21

⁵⁰ Montmarquet, (1993) pp 21-22

Riggs slightly modifies Montmarquet's argument. Riggs suggests that we should use such figures, and their rough equality in terms of intellectual character, as a "criterion of adequacy for a theory of intellectual virtue"⁵¹ That is, any adequate theory of intellectual virtue must be able to account for the rough equality of intellectual character of these various historical figures. Riggs holds that any theory of intellectual character that does not "*clearly and definitely*" identify diverse figures such as Aristotle, Galileo and Newton as "intellectually virtuous does not capture what we mean by 'intellectual virtue'."⁵² He proposes that we unhesitatingly identify these individuals, as well as others, as intellectually virtuous while recognizing that many of the beliefs they professed are false. If we relied on the 'truth-conducive' criterion to assess their respective intellectual characters we would then have to conclude that none of them were intellectually virtuous. Truth-conduciveness therefore must be dismissed as an inadequate criterion for individuating the intellectual virtues, since relying on this criterion does not enable us to account for the rough equality of various intellectually virtuous exemplars and would even lead us to conclude that they were not intellectually virtuous. The rough equality of these intellectually virtuous exemplars, combined with the falsity of many of their beliefs, then acts as a *reductio* for any theory of intellectual character that holds reliability in obtaining and sustaining truth beliefs as the appropriate criterion for individuating the intellectual virtues. Such a criterion would entail that such figures were not intellectually virtuous and therefore must be wrong.⁵³

Before a response is formulated we should consider what epistemic good Riggs replaces truth with, and what relationship he holds the intellectual virtues to have to this good. Riggs proposes two fundamental changes to how the intellectual virtues should be understood that, in turn, have axiological implications that he advocates explicitly. One fundamental change is the specific *telos* of intellectual virtue, as Riggs holds that the end of such virtue should be wisdom

⁵¹ Riggs, (2003), p 211

⁵² Riggs (2003) p 211

⁵³ Riggs (2003) pp 210-212

as opposed to true belief. He proposes that collecting ‘truths,’ especially trivial truths, does not exhaust what is important concerning our epistemological pursuits. Rather, a significant aspect of intellectual satisfaction, and why we put in the effort to pursue intellectual ends, is to achieve understanding. To achieve an ideal epistemic situation one must not simply accumulate true beliefs, but also apprehend how these various true beliefs cohere. The agent must be able to perceive connections between various beliefs, which entails the ability to grasp the order of things, perceive patterns and apprehend how things ‘hang together.’ To be able to achieve such perception the agent must achieve understanding. Understanding itself, though, is not necessarily achieved through obtaining accurate propositional attitudes, i.e. true beliefs, and hence, if we focus solely on true belief as the *telos* of intellectual virtue the valuable end of understanding is lost. Wisdom, according to Riggs, can incorporate both true belief and understanding, and therefore should be construed as the “highest epistemic good for humans.”⁵⁴ As the highest epistemic good, wisdom can then be stipulated as the proper end of intellectual virtue.⁵⁵

The other fundamental change suggested by Riggs is that the relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom should be understood not as an instrumental relationship but instead as a teleological relationship. That is, the intellectual virtues should not be understood as reliably conducive to wisdom, but instead as merely aiming at wisdom. Riggs proposes that this relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom is preferable to an instrumental relationship since it can better capture the value of such traits. This is because, he suggests, we must be able to explain the value of such virtues even when they are unsuccessful in achieving the ends to which they are directed. It can often be the case that agents will exhibit valuable dispositions, such as courage or open-mindedness, while these dispositions themselves do not enable agents to achieve the ends to which they are directed. For example, a firefighter may be

⁴ Riggs, (2003), pp 214-215, 217-218, 220-221

⁵⁵ Lorraine Code also suggests that wisdom is the ultimate goal of the intellectually virtuous agent but she does not offer any arguments for this claim except to distinguish wisdom itself from intellectual virtue. Code, (1984) p 42

extremely brave, and be disposed to act in courageous ways, but be very unsuccessful in achieving courageous ends. Nonetheless, Riggs suggests, there is something of value in merely aiming at some good even if one does not achieve it. Specifically this value is derived from the value of the end aimed at. The intellectual virtues would therefore derive value for themselves by simply aiming at valuable ends, and this value is independent of the ability to bring such ends about. If we construe the relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom as teleological, as opposed to instrumental, we can then account for the value of the intellectual virtues even when they are unsuccessful, since the intellectual virtues would not have to be successful in achieving some specific good in order to be considered valuable. Instead, they would simply have to aim at such a good to be considered valuable.⁵⁶

4.3.2 Epistemic Luck and Intellectual Character

What we want to accomplish in the next two subsections, then, is to reconcile the empirical evidence cited by both Montmarquet and Riggs with the claim that intellectual character is truth-conducive. Specifically, we must be able to account for the rough equality of intellectual character of various great thinkers from the past and their seemingly many false beliefs while maintaining that intellectual character's distinctive feature is its ability to enable agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs. And we must do such in a way that "*clearly and definitely*" identifies such agents as roughly equal in terms of their intellectual virtue.⁵⁷ We can accomplish this task if we focus on epistemic luck, and its role in the formation of beliefs, while also drawing on other claims made earlier concerning true belief. We will begin with epistemic luck.

⁵⁶ Riggs, (2003), pp.221-222.

⁵⁷ Riggs, (2003), p.211.

Epistemic luck has been focused on recently by epistemologists and entails the recognition that the epistemic status of an agent's beliefs depends in part on factors not within the agent's control⁵⁸ If we give a veridical interpretation to this notion of epistemic luck, then one can propose that the veridical status of the agent's beliefs will depend in part on factors outside the agent's control⁵⁹ Daniel Statman offers a taxonomy of the different types of epistemic luck, only one of which is relevant for our purposes⁶⁰ The relevant type of luck he refers to as circumstantial luck Circumstantial luck refers to luck "in the kind of problems and situations one faces"⁶¹ This kind of luck is broken down by Statman into two further ways An agent can be lucky, or unlucky, in regard to the concepts and ways of understanding she is born into, such that her view of the world is largely shaped her community's beliefs as well as its epistemic and non-epistemic practices So, if an agent is born into a community where the epistemic practices are not well developed and there is a prevalence of false beliefs, then the

⁵⁸ Lehrer, (2001), p 208 Daniel Statman, (1991), "Moral and Epistemic Luck," *Ratio*, volume IV, number 2, (December), p 147 Guy Axtell, (2001), "Epistemic Luck in Light of the Virtues," *Virtue Epistemology Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, edited by Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, (Oxford Oxford University Press), pp 158-159

⁵⁹ It should be noted that various contemporary philosophers distinguish different types of epistemic luck, and do so for the purpose of focusing on epistemological notions such as justification For example, Guy Axtell contrasts internalist and externalist epistemological theories, and, borrowing a distinction made by Mylan Engel, displays the type of luck that each type of theory is subject to and how it causes problems for their respective notions of justification See, for example Axtell, (2001), p 168 and Guy Axtell, (2003), "*Felix Culpa* Luck in Ethics and Epistemology," *Metaphilosophy*, volume 34, number 3, (April), pp 331-352 Duncan Pritchard, on the other hand, focuses on clarifying what it means to say that some agent was lucky in obtaining a true belief, and he does such by offering a possible worlds semantics construal of such situations Duncan Pritchard, (2004), "Epistemic Luck," *Journal of Philosophical Research*, volume 29, pp 194-197 Our concern here is not with epistemological claims, and therefore not with whether the ascription of justification to some agent is affected the vicissitudes of luck Rather, the focus is on the role of luck for agents in getting things right, which in this case means obtaining and sustaining true beliefs

⁶⁰ Statman proposes that agents must be epistemically lucky in two ways in terms of the causes and circumstances that play a role in the agent coming to have a belief, and in terms of the beliefs being true or false Luck in regard to the latter entails, according to Statman, that it is beyond an agent's control whether some belief is true or false That is, beliefs are true or false on their own, given their content and the way the world is In regard to the first form of luck Statman distinguishes three aspects of it The first is causal luck This form of luck entails that the agent must be lucky in regard to the causes that influence what she believes Examples of such causes, cited by Statman, include physical and chemical laws, which may cause the agent to believe in certain ways if we take beliefs to be reducible to a type of bodily, or physical, activity Agents supposedly have no control over such causes, so their influence on whether the agent comes to have a true or false belief is a matter of luck The second aspect is referred to by Statman as constitutive luck Constitutive luck refers to luck in regard to the temperament, capacities and inclinations that are constitutive of the agent For example, an agent may not possess a capacity for abstract thought, and therefore will have difficulty obtaining true beliefs when it comes to abstract claims What we are concerned with, though, are those aspects of such luck where the intellectual virtues would appear to be impotent Such impotence appears to be most prevalent with the third aspect, which is circumstantial luck Statman, (1991), pp 148-151

⁶¹ Statman, (1991), p 149

agent will not have much to work with and will likely form many false beliefs no matter how virtuous she is. Second, the agent can be circumstantially lucky, or unlucky, in regard to particular situations that can be misleading. That is, the agent can be confronted with evidence that is misleading, for example an optical illusion, and therefore will form a false belief on that basis.⁶²

These two aspects of circumstantial luck appear to be most applicable to the situations of the 'great thinkers' mentioned by Montmarquet and Riggs, and, in turn, can help to explain why such agents had many false beliefs but were roughly equal in terms of virtuous character. Thinkers such as Aristotle, Galileo, and Newton have earned our admiration, at least in part, due to the fact that they went beyond the beliefs of their respective communities. Nonetheless, they were all constrained, as we are, by the specific level of epistemic development of their communities. Their means of testing their beliefs were limited by the methods and technical devices developed and employed by their communities, and the beliefs they formed, even through careful reflection and intellectual earnestness, were ultimately influenced by the specific doxastic milieu they found themselves in. Thus, since they were born into communities where epistemic methods and devices were not highly developed, and there was a prevalence of false beliefs, this ultimately influenced the beliefs they came to form and led them to have false beliefs. They were therefore simply unlucky because of the circumstances they were faced with, and it would not matter how intellectually virtuous they were since intellectual character, as admitted at various points in this thesis, is not sufficient on its own to secure true beliefs. So we can explain their false beliefs as the result of simply being unlucky, and we do not have to conclude that intellectual character is not truth conducive. It is not intellectual character that has failed the agent, but instead the surrounding conditions over which the agent has no control. Thus, we can account for the rough equality of intellectual virtue of the various thinkers mentioned by Montmarquet and Riggs while also explaining the

⁶² Statman (1991), p 149

diversity in what they believed. Although such agents can be considered equal in terms of intellectual virtue they were not equal in terms of their epistemic luck, and it is this luck that can explain both the falsity and diversity of their respective beliefs.

Riggs acknowledges the role that such luck can play in the formation of beliefs, but concludes nonetheless that intellectual character is not truth-conducive. He proposes that by advocating a 'success condition,' where the various aspects of intellectual character are identified as such due to their instrumental ability to reliably obtain and sustain true beliefs, one gives too much of a role to luck and will ultimately have to conclude that there are no intellectual virtues. Since luck can intervene in the way outlined above it will be the case that no character trait can be identified as reliably and instrumentally truth-conducive. Factors that are outside the agent's control will always intervene and ultimately thwart the supposed reliability of any character trait to produce true belief. Consequently, we cannot identify any character traits as intellectual virtues since no character trait reliably obtains and sustains true beliefs. The only recourse available to the theorist who wants to maintain true belief as the specific *telos* of intellectual character will be to drop the instrumental construal of them and adopt the teleological construal.⁶³

This conclusion seems warranted given other claims that have already been made in the thesis. For recall that in the previous chapter it was proposed that it is an empirical matter whether any character traits are in fact reliably truth-conducive, and that judgments concerning the truth-conduciveness of any particular character trait will be mediated through the community's conceptual schemes. It is always possible that a community's conceptual schemes could be false, or misleading, and thus it is always possible that luck can thwart the ability of specific character traits to reliably produce true beliefs. Thus it is always possible that any character trait perceived as reliably truth-conducive is actually not such. They would therefore not be intellectual virtues if the instrumental construal of them is maintained.

⁶³ Riggs (2003) pp 212-213

Consequently, the teleological construal would become the default position for anyone who wanted to maintain that true belief is the specific *telos* of intellectual character

This objection is very similar to the Cartesian Demon objection considered in the previous section, and therefore a similar response is appropriate. This is because we are generally oblivious to the role that such luck plays in the formation of our beliefs in the same way that we are, or would be, oblivious to the malicious activities of a Cartesian Demon. In situations where luck is involved, as was the case for the great thinkers mentioned and is likely the case for us, the agent believes the evidence to be true, and the methods reliable, and this includes the reliability of certain virtuous character traits. That is, although agents such as Newton and Aristotle largely had false beliefs they did not perceive their situations in this way. Instead, they held that certain claims were true and that they were arrived at through the use of reliable means. Such agents were unaware that the methods they employed were unreliable, and this includes aspects of their intellectual character. Thus they were in the oblique position regarding the unreliability of their intellectual characters, but would nonetheless identify such traits as truth-conducive. The problem is, again like the Cartesian Demon situation, we are all in the oblique position concerning the reliability or unreliability of the truth-conduciveness of certain aspects of character. That is, even if we identify certain traits as truth-conducive, and on that basis deem them to be intellectual virtues, it could be the case that we are simply unlucky and have been misled. This is especially the case if we maintain the claim that the empirical world is interpreted through the mitigating influence of conceptual schemes. All it takes to get things wrong is to have a misleading conceptual scheme which causes the agent to identify certain claims as true even though they are false. The problem that emerges is that even though we are often in the oblique position concerning the possible misleading influence of conceptual schemes it seems that luck will always fulfill a role and, unlike the demon situation, we are well aware of its presence. That is, we are well aware that in order to obtain and sustain true beliefs we must not simply do our best but must also be lucky. Thus, the

presence and implications of epistemic luck appear to be distinct from the possibility of the Cartesian Demon. Specifically, since we are aware of the vicissitudes of luck it seems reasonable to conclude that intellectual character is not truth-conducive. Agents unlucky enough to be immersed in misleading conceptual schemes will derive false beliefs from those schemes no matter how virtuous they are, and therefore intellectual character does not reliably produce true beliefs in such situations. Consequently, it does not seem that we can conclude that intellectual character is truth-conducive.

This option, as well as the criticism relying on such empirical disconfirmation, depends upon a certain notion of true belief, specifically, a notion of true belief as accurate belief, or accurate representation. This is because we no longer hold the beliefs of such past thinkers to be true because we hold such beliefs to be inaccurate. For example, Aristotle's teleological conception of change in organic phenomena is held to be an inaccurate representation as compared to our contemporary Darwinian conception of the same phenomena. Thus we hold Aristotle's various beliefs on change in organic phenomena to be false even though we also hold him to be intellectually virtuous. Since the notion of true belief that has been developed and accepted at the beginning of this chapter is 'accurate representation' it seems that we cannot now construe the various aspects of intellectual character as conducive to true beliefs, for earlier great thinkers, such as Aristotle, did not possess accurate representations and therefore did not possess true beliefs. But is this really the case? Recall that a significant part of the notion of true belief offered earlier was accurate representations of coherence. That is, it was proposed that due to the influence of conceptual schemes the accurate representations that intellectual character is conducive to could not be construed as accurate representations of the world in-itself, but must also include accurate representations of coherence. We cannot hold that intellectual character is conducive to beliefs that mirror the world, since such mirroring is likely impossible given the mitigating influence of conceptual schemes. Thus we must assess

our beliefs based on their fit with both empirical input and our present conceptual schemes.⁶⁴ What this entails for proposing that intellectual character is truth-conducive, as outlined earlier, is that we must also hold that such character is conducive to accurate representations of coherence, or fit, the agent acquiesces in. Thus, beliefs are not solely subject to standards of empirical confirmation and disconfirmation, but also must be subject to standards of coherence. We have therefore expanded our notion of ‘accurate representation,’ and, in turn, true belief, to include such situations. Simply put, intellectual character enables the agent to have accurate representations of coherence relations.

So, it seems appropriate to expand our notion of accurate representation to include accurate representations of coherence, since coherence, or fit, seems to be an unavoidable aspect of belief formation given the role of conceptual schemes in shaping our experiences and beliefs. The question that emerges is whether the particular state to which intellectual character is conducive to should be referred to as ‘true belief’ or ‘understanding,’ as Riggs suggests. This question emerges because the specific end intellectual character has been argued is conducive to in this thesis – i.e. accurate representation the agent acquiesces in – is similar to the state Riggs refers to as understanding when we bring coherence relations into the account. In what follows, then, it will be argued that ‘true belief’ is the more suitable label for the particular output of intellectual character than ‘understanding.’ Establishing that ‘true belief’ is the more suitable label will get us closer to reestablishing that the former is the specific *telos* of intellectual character, as opposed to ‘wisdom,’ and that the relationship between the two is instrumental and not teleological. For a key component in Riggs’ argument suggesting that ‘wisdom’ is the specific end of intellectual virtue was due to its ability to incorporate not only true belief but also understanding. Thus, if it can be demonstrated that we can get what Riggs associates with understanding, i.e. the ability to perceive connections and how things ‘hang

⁶⁴ Although Goldman does hold true belief to be accurate representation, he nevertheless offers an example of an argument along these lines when considering scheme determinism and opts for a notion of ‘fit’ when talking about true belief. Goldman, (1986), pp.139, 152-152.

together,' by focusing on true belief, then we will have gone most of the way to reestablishing true belief as the specific *telos* on intellectual character as opposed to wisdom.

4.3.3 True Belief Versus Understanding

According to Riggs understanding is achieved through being able to apprehend non-propositional connections between various beliefs, or how various beliefs cohere with one another. If we focus solely on true belief as the *telos* of intellectual virtue, Riggs suggests, the valuable end of understanding is lost since true belief is propositional⁶⁵ Since we are attempting to maintain that the specific end of intellectual character is true belief we are implicitly advocating the propositional account, since beliefs are typically construed as propositional attitudes; i.e. as attitudes toward semantic entities that can be considered true or false⁶⁶ If we briefly reconsider the Einstein case we can see that it is not problematic to construe these perceptions of coherence as propositional, and, further, that this appears to be the best way to construe what intellectual character provides or should provide.

Recall that Einstein was unwilling to believe the quantum theory advocated by Bohr, Heisenberg and others even though its coherence with various counter-examples and his general theory of relativity was displayed We can easily imagine that in this situation Einstein had little difficulty understanding that the new quantum theory did cohere with the counter-examples and his general theory of relativity What he failed to do was acquiesce in this

⁶⁵ Riggs, (2003), pp 214-215, 217-218, 220-221 Riggs is not alone in this assessment for Zagzebski offers a similar position and proposes that there is likely a set of intellectual virtues that are not aimed at true beliefs but understanding Linda Zagzebski, (2001), "Recovering Understanding," *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility and Virtue*, edited by Matthias Steup, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp 235-251

⁶⁶ Sosa, (1980), p 6 For a good summary of various philosophers' positions on 'propositional attitudes,' which displays the ubiquity of this notion and its relevance for discussions in both the philosophy of mind and action, see Timothy Schoeder, (2006), 'Propositional Attitudes,' *Philosophical Compass*, volume 1, number 1 pp 65-73 Philip L. Peterson, (1995), 'Are Some Propositions Empirically Necessary?' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LV, number 2, June, p 251-252

coherence relation and, in turn, failed to acquiesce in an accurate representation or true belief. Consequently, it is reasonable to propose that agents can have beliefs, or propositional attitudes, concerning coherence relations. With the Einstein case we can see that this is possible, for Einstein could have believed either accurately or inaccurately that the new quantum theory cohered with his counter-examples or his general theory of relativity. Even further, there was the possibility of forming other beliefs based on his beliefs concerning whether the counter-examples and his general theory of relativity cohered with the new quantum theory. That is, he could have believed, based on his beliefs concerning these coherence relations, that the quantum theory was true, or at least warranted. If Bohr and Heisenberg had not been able to demonstrate that their quantum theory cohered with Einstein's general theory of relativity, then it would have been false that it did cohere. For example, if Einstein had been able to demonstrate that the two sets of claims did not cohere with one another. So we can give a propositional account of the perception of such coherence relations as follows. Agent A holds that it is true that claim C coheres with claims C1 to Cn, or, similarly, Agent A holds that it is false that claim C coheres with claims C1 to Cn. Thus, we can give a propositional account of what intellectual character does in such a situation even when we focus on standards of coherence. This account is therefore descriptively tenable. What the notion of 'true belief' adds in such situations is that not only are coherence relations perceived, but also acquiesced in, and it is this acquiescence that demonstrates that true belief is prescriptively preferable to understanding. We will now consider this claim.

It is easy to imagine that Einstein was able to understand that the counter-examples and his general theory of relativity cohered with the new quantum theory. Thus, if we are going to construe Einstein's behaviour as a type of intellectual failing then we have to hold that intellectual character provides more than just understanding. For it is reasonable to suppose that Einstein possessed understanding, but an intellectual failing was still present. So if intellectual character simply provided the type of non-propositional understanding as suggested

by Riggs, it would seem that inappropriate intellectual behaviour still obtains. With the non-propositional account offered by Riggs agents would obtain 'accurate representations,' but would not acquiesce in them. If there is no acquiescence, then it seems that intellectual character is falling short of what it should do. For an agent who does not alter his beliefs, even when he sees the merits of counter-examples, criticisms, counter-evidence and so on is intellectually vicious. Such an agent is intellectually obstinate. Intellectual character would therefore seem to fall short of what it should do, and could only provide what is intellectually appropriate if the acquiescence condition is added. Consequently, to be intellectually virtuous the agent should not merely understand that some coherence relation obtains, but also form beliefs on that basis. By suggesting that intellectual character provides only understanding of coherence relations, and not beliefs, Riggs has not been able to capture what it means to be intellectually virtuous. Thus, to give an adequate account of the intellectually virtuous agent Riggs must hold that not only does understanding result from the agent's virtuous state but also belief. This entails an instrumental account of the activity of intellectual character, and not merely a teleological account, for the aspects of intellectual character must fulfill a causal role in producing belief. The account offered in this thesis proposes that intellectual character does fulfill such a causal role, for when the agent is constituted by the motivations and dispositions of intellectual character he is compelled to believe as either standards of evidence or coherence dictate. That intellectual character is conducive to true belief, and not merely understanding, is therefore descriptively tenable and prescriptively preferable.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Kvanvig also suggests that there is a difference between merely understanding something and taking it to be true. For example, he proposes that 'One can understand naive set theory in the sense of grasping the axioms and (some of) the theorems that follow from these axioms without endorsing any of the claims as being true' Kvanvig (2003) p. 201.

4.3.4 The Instrumental Connection Between Intellectual Character and True Belief

Since we have established that true belief is descriptively tenable, and prescriptively preferable, to understanding let's return to our main concern of this section, which is how intellectual character can still be considered conducive to true belief even though so many virtuous exemplars from the past had many false beliefs. This will be accomplished by drawing together what has been said about epistemic luck and the claim that the proper output of intellectual character when the agent interacts with some conceptual scheme is accurate representations of coherence the agent acquiesces in. For if we take the latter to be the proper output of such character then we can claim that the various great thinkers Montmarquet and Riggs mention actually had many true beliefs.

They had many true beliefs because it seems undeniable that such thinkers had many accurate representations of coherence they acquiesced in. For, as has been proposed in this chapter, the true belief gained by intellectual character cannot be limited to accurate representations that mirror the world, but must include accurate representations of coherence relations. That is, accurate representations of fit between some new claim with both empirical input and conceptual scheme. Fit may be the only means by which some claim is deemed acceptable, due to the mitigating influence of conceptual schemes, and since agents can represent such coherence relations either accurately or inaccurately, as has been displayed through consideration of the Einstein case, agents can have either true or false beliefs about such coherence relations. Since past great thinkers are exemplars of intellectual virtue, it is highly likely that they possessed many accurate representations of whether some claim either did, or did not, fit with the conceptual schemes they employed as well as empirical inputs. Or, given that many of our true beliefs have to be limited to coherence relations, due to the influence of conceptual schemes, we can say that such agents had many true beliefs because

they had many accurate representations of various coherence relations. Intellectual virtue only reliably produces such accurate representations, and not inevitably, and such agents were fallible, so we can expect that not every belief they formed or advocated fit with the inputs they were receiving, but it is likely that many of beliefs they formed did fit with the conceptual schemes and empirical inputs they were exposed to. Past great thinkers therefore had many true beliefs about the conceptual schemes they interacted with and employed, since they had many accurate representations of coherence relations they acquiesced in, and intellectual character contributed the accumulation of such beliefs. Of course, due to bad veridical, or epistemic, luck the conceptual schemes they relied on were simply false. Nonetheless, they had true beliefs about these conceptual schemes – i.e. concerning what other claims were consistent with them as well as what other claims would follow from claims already accepted – even though the conceptual schemes themselves were largely false. Thus, we can say that they had true beliefs concerning the conceptual schemes they interacted with, even though the conceptual schemes themselves were false. So, even though we are always subject to luck, and this is due in part to the conceptual schemes we are immersed in, this does not prevent us from having many true beliefs about such conceptual schemes. We can have such true beliefs for intellectual virtue enables us to overcome mitigating factors in order to possess accurate representations of whether various claims fit with our conceptual schemes and empirical inputs.

Hence, we can account for the diversity of past great thinker's beliefs and their rough equality of virtue as due to the conceptual schemes such agents interacted with, and we can propose that these agents had many true beliefs about their respective conceptual schemes since they possessed accurate representations of coherence relations concerning those conceptual schemes. And given the inevitability of epistemic luck and the influence of conceptual schemes this is likely the most we can ask of any intellectually virtuous agent. That is, the most we can ask of any such agent is that she have accurate representations of how conceptual claims fit together, and with empirical inputs. Consequently, the connection between

intellectual character and true belief has been reestablished. Nonetheless, Riggs may object and propose that wisdom is still the proper end of intellectual character teleologically speaking. He may agree that the specific output of such character is true belief but propose that we should still construe the specific end of intellectual character to be wisdom. We will consider this possibility in the next subsection, and, as well, make the case for true belief.

4.3.5 True Belief or Wisdom?

Recall that according to Riggs the *telos* of intellectual character is wisdom. One of his reasons for offering wisdom as the proper end of intellectual character was due to the fact that intellectually virtuous agents from the past appear to possess numerous false beliefs, so it did not seem that intellectual character could be construed as conducive to true belief. We have addressed this concern, and therefore it is no longer relevant for determining whether the proper *telos* of intellectual character is wisdom or true belief. Nonetheless, Riggs offers another reason for holding that the specific end of such character is wisdom. Wisdom, he proposes, should be considered the specific end of intellectual character simply because it is more desirable than mere true belief. It is more desirable because it can incorporate both true belief and understanding, and therefore should be construed as the “highest epistemic good for humans,” or “the ideal epistemic situation”⁶⁸. He argues that we desire not simply a high ratio of true to false beliefs but also desire to apprehend how such beliefs hang together. This position seems tenable, for any agent who simply possessed many truth beliefs, but did not see any connections between them, is not in as good an epistemic situation as the agent who possessed the same beliefs but did apprehend connections between them. So it is not merely the possession of true beliefs that is good, but also the ability to apprehend the connections

⁶⁸ Riggs (2003) pp 214-215 217-218 220-221

between them. If we hold wisdom to be the proper end of intellectual character we can fulfill both of these epistemic desires, for, as stated, the notion of wisdom incorporates both true belief and understanding. As the highest epistemic good, wisdom can then be stipulated as the proper *telos* of intellectual virtue because it can incorporate both true belief and understanding.⁶⁹

Since it has been argued that agents can have true beliefs concerning how various claims, or beliefs, cohere with one another, we have partly achieved this particular aspect Riggs associates with wisdom but not completely. For an agent who has many true beliefs concerning coherence relations may only be able to recite them like an agent reciting a grocery list, and in turn not understand how the various items connect. So for example, such an agent may be able to say A coheres with A1 to An, B coheres with B1 to Bn, and so on, but if he does not possess understanding something is lacking. And, assuredly, if the only role that has been ascribed to intellectual character in this thesis is to enable agents to obtain a type of grocery list of true beliefs this would not seem to be as good as possessing understanding of this list. Thus, Riggs' suggestion that wisdom is a higher epistemic good than mere true belief does have appeal. For the type of non-propositional understanding he advocates as highly valuable does appear to be such, as well as a different state than mere true belief, even if true belief can incorporate coherence relations. So, it seems from an epistemological point of view that possessing both true belief and understanding, i.e. wisdom, is better than merely possessing true belief. If the *telos* of intellectual character should be the highest epistemic good, then it seems that wisdom should be considered the *telos* of such character due to its value over mere true belief. Also, it is difficult to imagine that understanding would not result from the agent's intellectually virtuous behaviour. An agent who is intellectually courageous, open-minded, intellectually humble, and so on, will surely obtain and sustain true beliefs, but due to such conscientious behaviour it is also likely that such an agent will obtain understanding and

⁶⁹ Riggs, (2003), pp 215-216, 219, 220-221

therefore wisdom as well. It is difficult to imagine an agent who is concerned about the truth of his beliefs, and engages in checking these beliefs conscientiously, not obtaining understanding. Assuredly, it was proposed in chapter two that the intellectual virtues will often work at an unconscious level, but nonetheless the agent first habituates the intellectual virtues both consciously and conscientiously. Thus the agent would possess some understanding of why he has the beliefs he has as well as how they hang together. If this is the result of intellectually virtuous behaviour, and possessing understanding is more desirable than merely possessing a list of true beliefs, it is difficult to deny that wisdom is the proper end of intellectual character. Nonetheless, there are some reasons that can be offered for holding that true belief should still be considered the specific *telos* of intellectual character, which we will now consider.

The first reason why true belief should still be considered the specific *telos* of intellectual character is because in the majority of situations where the agent's intellectual character is operational it is specifically and solely truth that the agent is concerned with and true belief that is the outcome of such concern and not wisdom. For, as Richard Feldman has pointed out when writing on the slightly different topic of epistemic obligation, when an agent is striving to be epistemically responsible what that agent is solely concerned with is the truth of some isolated proposition *p* and not the long-term consequences of believing *p* or what other beliefs may follow from believing *p*.⁷⁰ For example, if some agent is deliberating as to whether her husband has been unfaithful she is not concerned with what other beliefs may follow from this belief or how this belief coheres with her other beliefs. Rather, she simply wants to discover whether this belief is true or not, she wants to discover whether *p* or $\sim p$, and is not concerned at all with wisdom or understanding. Many of the situations where intellectual character is operational will be like this. That is, in many situations the agent is solely concerned with the truth value of some isolated proposition and not with wisdom or understanding. Often the agent must rely on coherence relations to determine whether some

⁷⁰ Richard Feldman, (1988) *Epistemic Obligations Philosophical Perspectives 2 Epistemology*, pp 249-250

proposition should be believed or not, for the agent may have to consult other beliefs she has to determine the truth-value of a particular belief. Nonetheless, in such situations her concern is not with wisdom or understanding, but rather solely with the truth of some isolated proposition. This is not to say that other considerations will not come into play, for it is easy to imagine that in the above example the wife will be considering the consequences of accepting the belief that her husband has been unfaithful. Nonetheless, if she is intellectually virtuous her intellectual character will direct her toward focusing solely on the truth of the proposition that her husband is cheating and should mitigate the influence of non-veridical concerns. What will assuredly not enter in to her deliberations are concerns such as ‘How does believing p contribute to my wisdom?’ or ‘How does believing p contribute to my understanding?’ Hence, in such situations, contrary to what Riggs suggests, the agent does not aim at wisdom but true belief. So, one reason for maintaining true belief as the specific *telos* of intellectual character is because the intellectually virtuous agent is typically only concerned with isolated propositions within the context of some finite period of time. In such situations the agent is not concerned with wisdom or understanding, and the output of her intellectual character will not be wisdom or understanding. Instead, through the mitigating influence of her intellectual character, the output will be some true belief.

A second reason for favouring true belief over wisdom is because it allows appropriate ascriptions of intellectually virtuous behaviour, for it is not difficult to imagine that agents can be intellectually virtuous in the context of isolated events even if they are not wise. Consider a situation where some agent has not gathered enough true beliefs to be considered wise and yet that agent has been intellectually virtuous when it comes to forming some particular belief. An agent may be naive about many things in the world, but when confronted with some specific claim that calls into question some other beliefs he has, if he is open-minded, and this directs him toward accepting the truth of this claim, it seems appropriate to refer to his belief formation as intellectually virtuous. So, we can describe him as being intellectually virtuous,

since he has exercised some aspect of his intellectual character and come to a true belief as a result, but he has not become wise as a result. He is still naive, but nonetheless was intellectually virtuous in this isolated incident due to the exercise of his intellectual character in the formation of a true belief. Consequently, to make sense of such isolated occurrences of intellectually virtuous behaviour, and what results from these occurrences, i.e. true belief, it seems appropriate to maintain that the specific *telos* of intellectual character is true belief and not wisdom.

The third reason for advocating true belief instead of wisdom as the specific *telos* of intellectual character is derived from the necessary role of true belief in the possession of wisdom. Riggs, as stated, includes true belief in his account of wisdom, for wisdom entails not solely understanding but also true belief, and such inclusion seems warranted. For, even if an agent possessed numerous beliefs, and saw various connections between them, but the vast majority of his beliefs were false we would not ascribe wisdom to such an agent. For example, an agent may be an advocate of a rather outlandish conspiracy theory, and therefore possess several beliefs that cohere well with one another. He may also speak eloquently about this theory, exhibiting great understanding of how the various parts connect, but due to the falsity of the many coherent beliefs of the theory we would refer to such an agent as foolish and not wise. This indicates that wisdom is subject to a standard of truth. We will focus on this point shortly, but before we do we must revisit the conspiracy theory case. For analysis of how it differs from the situation of past great thinkers will contribute significantly to the claim that true belief is the specific *telos* of intellectual character.

The situation of the conspiracy theorist seems to be very similar to that of the past great thinkers we have been considering, for such an agent is embedded in a conceptual scheme of which he will have many true beliefs concerning coherence relations, i.e. accurate representations of coherence relations he acquiesces in. Of course, this is giving the conspiracy

theorist too much credit, for it is unlikely that the various claims of his theory will cohere as well as the various aspects of the theories of past great thinkers. Nonetheless, let us imagine that the various claims do cohere quite well so that the situation is analogous to the situation of past great thinkers, and, in turn, we can use this situation to demonstrate why true belief is the specific *telos* of intellectual character and not wisdom. For we must ask what distinguishes the past great thinkers, or the intellectually virtuous agent generally, from the agent immersed in a comprehensive conspiracy theory? The agent immersed in the conspiracy theory appears to be very similar to the self-deceived agent considered in chapter two. This is because such an agent is concerned primarily with maintaining a particular ‘cover story’ and not with true belief. What appears, then, to distinguish the past great thinkers, and the intellectually virtuous agent, is the desire for true belief. For the agent who is immersed in a conspiracy theory appears to be concerned more with the theory itself and not with true belief itself, since if he possessed the latter concern he could be pulled out of his conspiracy theory. This is because a general concern for true belief would compel the agent to not merely confirm, or maintain, the specific conspiracy theory, or cover story, he is immersed in but to engage in behaviour that should lead him to check his beliefs to determine if they are true. For example, guided by the motivation for true belief the agent would be compelled not simply to achieve internally coherent beliefs but also to check whether his particular theory is also externally coherent, i.e. to check whether his theory fits the data set. Since conspiracy theories are largely false, and have little to no evidential grounding the falsity of the conspiracy theory would be displayed to him if he was compelled by the desire for true belief to check for evidence for his theory. The general desire for true belief would also compel him to not engage in fallacious forms of reasoning, for a concern solely for the conspiracy theory would likely compel him to claim that if there is no evidence against his theory it must be true. To claim, though, that a theory is true if it is not falsified is the fallacy of *ad ignorantiam* and would not be employed by the truth conscientious agent due to its perceived inability to lead agents to true beliefs. On the other

hand, if the agent immersed in the conspiracy was devoid of the desire for true belief it is highly likely that he would consider himself to be quite wise. This is partly because of the various coherent connections he perceives amongst his various beliefs, but also because he would hold himself to have insight into the world that others lack. Thus he would deem others to be naïve and himself wise. Consequently, the desire for wisdom would not be sufficient to pull him out of his false conceptual scheme, but rather the agent would require a desire for true belief to accomplish this possibility.

So, to escape the dangers of misleading conceptual schemes, as is the case with the conspiracy theorist, the agent must desire not wisdom but true belief. That is, the agent must be truth conscientious, as set out in chapter two. Assuredly, he will likely become wise through his general desire for true belief, and through developing various aspects of his intellectual character, but the wise state only will be achieved through a focus on true belief. This is displayed in the previous paragraph. Consequently, it seems that the specific *telos* of intellectual character should be true belief and not wisdom, for it is only through desiring the truth that an agent can escape the grips of some misleading conceptual scheme which is, in this case, some elaborate conspiracy theory. Truth therefore must be first and foremost in the mind of the intellectually virtuous agent and not wisdom.

Finally, to end the case for true belief, we will quickly revisit the claim that wisdom is subject to the standard of true belief, for recall it was proposed that the wise state is not achieved without first achieving largely true beliefs. What this restriction on wisdom entails is that the wise agent, if such a label is warranted, has in fact merely achieved true belief; albeit true belief of a rather comprehensive kind. For if it is the case that an agent *must* achieve numerous, or largely, true beliefs to be considered wise, and these beliefs must cohere well with one another, what we are ultimately asking of such an agent is that he have a comprehensive accurate representation he acquiesces in. For he must have many isolated

accurate representations, as well we accurate representations of fit between these isolated representations. In the end, then, if wisdom is achievable, the agent will have a comprehensive representation of the world that he acquiesces in by achieving wisdom. Ultimately, due to the true belief restriction on the ascription of wisdom what the agent strives for, and achieves, through pursuing wisdom is true belief. True belief therefore would still be the specific end toward which the intellectually virtuous agent is striving, although it would be true belief, or accurate representations, of a rather comprehensive kind.

Even further, though, what these remarks display is that it is unlikely that the past great thinkers mentioned by Montmarquet and Riggs were wise, for they did not possess comprehensive accurate representations even though they acquiesced in them. That is, the comprehensive representations they possessed, through the conceptual schemes they employed, were false or inaccurate. Since these comprehensive representations were largely false the past great thinkers were not wise, given the true belief restriction on states of wisdom. Consequently, if Riggs maintains that wisdom is the specific *telos* of intellectual character he will not be able to account for the virtuous states of past great thinkers since such agents were virtuous but not wise. The account offered in this thesis concerning what intellectual character provides can accommodate the intellectual virtue of past great thinkers in a non-problematic way. For such thinkers did possess true beliefs through the exercise of their intellectual characters, although these true beliefs were limited to the conceptual schemes they employed and how they fit empirical inputs. The comprehensive representation each agent acquiesced in was false, but nonetheless such thinkers had many true beliefs, i.e. accurate representations they acquiesced in, concerning how the various parts of their conceptual schemes fit together. Consequently, it seems better to maintain true belief, as opposed to wisdom, as the specific *telos* of intellectual character in order to account for the rough equality of intellectual virtue of past great thinkers. For even though none of them were wise, given the above construal of wisdom, they did possess many accurate representations of coherence they acquiesced in.

Finally, it must be remarked that since we are also influenced by conceptual schemes it is also best, for our situation, to focus on true belief and not wisdom. For it is possible that our conceptual schemes are also inaccurate, as was the case for past great thinkers, but nonetheless we can have true or false beliefs concerning those conceptual schemes. If we focus on true belief, then, we can be intellectually virtuous when interacting with the conceptual schemes we employ. For such a focus will allow not only accurate representations of coherence relations that we acquiesce in concerning the conceptual schemes we employ, but it will also allow us to maneuver ourselves out of misleading conceptual schemes, as is the case with the conspiracy theorist. For we will be compelled to check these conceptual schemes for fit, or confirmation, with a data set that is external to the conceptual scheme and not simply seek internal coherence.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

The focus of this chapter was to address various problems concerning the connection between intellectual character and true belief with the goal of reestablishing this connection. To accomplish this goal we had to first offer a working notion of true belief. The working notion settled on was accurate representations the agent acquiesces in, and the tenability of this notion was displayed through its being derived from previous considerations in the thesis as well as further elaboration in this chapter. The connection between intellectual character and true belief thus construed was also defended against various criticisms. Specifically, it was defended against criticisms that focused on the possibility of a Cartesian Demon systematically misleading us and the seemingly many false beliefs of past virtuous exemplars. We do not have to doubt that intellectual virtue is truth-conducive, but rather can doubt whether those virtues on the standard list are in fact intellectual virtues. We are able to account for the diversity of belief yet equality of virtue of past virtuous exemplars through the notion of

epistemic luck. Epistemic luck results largely due to the mitigating influence of conceptual schemes, but this does not remove the possibility of intellectual character reliably producing true belief. True belief within such a situation simply has to be construed as accurate representations of coherence relations concerning the conceptual schemes the agent interacts with. Finally, it was also suggested that true belief is the preferable *telos* of intellectual character, as opposed to wisdom, for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, if we hold wisdom to be the specific end of intellectual character we will not be able to account for the rough equality of intellectual virtue of past great thinkers while we can do such if true belief is held to be the end of intellectual character. Having defended the instrumental connection between intellectual character and true belief, and clarified the type of true belief intellectual character is conducive to, we now turn to two criticisms of truth-conducive cognitive strategies in the following two chapters. One criticism comes from philosophy and is offered by Stephen P. Stich. The other comes from psychology and is based largely on the research of Shelly E. Taylor. Through consideration of these two criticisms it becomes apparent it is very difficult to claim that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. The claim that it is therefore will be formulated with these criticisms in mind.

Chapter Five: Problems with True Belief and a Pragmatic Alternative

Two indispensable claims for determining the constitutive value of intellectual character were established in the previous chapter. The first was the notion of true belief as accurate representation the agent acquiesces in, and the second was, despite sceptical challenges, that intellectual character is conducive to true belief so understood. With the next two chapters the intent is to question the constitutive value of intellectual character by setting out two rival cognitive strategies that either explicitly or implicitly display the disvalue of truth-conducive cognitive strategies. The cognitive strategy to be considered in this chapter comes from Stephen Stich who explicitly rejects truth-conducive cognitive strategies in favour of a pragmatic cognitive strategy. The second strategy, to be considered in the next chapter, comes from psychology, most notably from the work of Shelly E. Taylor. These two positions will have significant implications for the constitutive value of intellectual character due to their either explicit or implicit rejections of truth-conducive cognitive strategies. Thus, through their consideration we will be better equipped to understand in what way intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

5.1 Stich's Consideration of the Value of Truth-Conducive Cognitive Strategies

In this section the goal is to explicate two criticisms formulated by Stich that target cognitive strategies which focus on true belief.¹ Since it has been argued that intellectual character is truth-conducive his criticisms have implications for the constitutive value of the former. Stich specifically criticizes both the intrinsic and instrumental value of true belief. It is in part this criticism that leads him to a purely pragmatic cognitive strategy.² It is a pragmatic cognitive strategy, for its specific *telos* is not true belief but rather other intrinsic goods. A significant

¹ Stich (1990) pp 21-22

² Stich (1990) p 21

aspect of Stich's position depends on criticizing the theory he holds best explains how beliefs can have semantic properties such as being true or false or being about things in the world³ Before he gets to this criticism, though, he summarily dismisses an account of true belief that appears to be the account offered in the previous chapter. I will therefore start with this criticism before moving onto Stich's second criticism. Response to Stich's position is reserved for the next section.

5.1.1 Stich's Criticism of True Belief as Accurate Representation

Stich begins his first criticism with the observation that most people propose that they value true beliefs because they take such beliefs to mirror the world, or to be accurate pictures of the world. Under this interpretation true beliefs are said to resemble what they represent and therefore can be ascribed value since they facilitate successful action in the world. True beliefs are like accurate maps that an agent can employ to steer himself through the world. The problem with this description of true belief, Stich suggests, is that it is merely metaphorical. He proposes that if we take a materialist approach to beliefs, and we will follow Stich here, then they are located in the brain and are best construed as brain states. By holding beliefs to be brain states we will further embrace, as Stich does, "the so-called token-identity hypothesis, which claims that each instance (or token) of a belief is identical with some neuro-physiological state."⁴ If we take beliefs to be brain states, then we can see why descriptions of

³ Stich, (1990), pp 22-23

⁴ By taking this position concerning beliefs Stich explicitly rejects Daniel Dennett's construal of beliefs as explanatory fictions. "Beliefs are instead to be understood as 'real psychological states'." Instead of entering into this complex debate concerning how beliefs should be construed we will simply accept Stich's position. This acceptance is justified in two ways. First, by accepting the way Stich construes beliefs we give the most charitable interpretation to his criticisms, for we have allowed him to set the parameters of the debate. Thus, any response to his position will entail meeting it head-on. Second, holding beliefs to be identical with some complex 'neuro-physiological state' appears to be compatible with the folk/virtue psychological position advocated in this thesis. As outlined explicitly in the previous chapter, and is apparent from other claims made throughout the thesis, beliefs are taken to be real things with representational properties. Since virtue psychology is not under investigation in this thesis we will accept a notion of belief that is consistent with its general description of human psychology, as the token-identity hypothesis appears to be. Stich, (1990) pp 102-103

true beliefs as mirroring the world, or as being accurate pictures, are both merely metaphorical uses of language. For if we look into the brain, Stich proposes, we literally do not find any mirrors, maps or accurate pictures. There is nothing in the brain that resembles the true beliefs we have and therefore talk of mirroring reality, or being an accurate picture, is merely a metaphorical use of language. To display the merit of his position Stich uses the example of the belief that “Interstate 5 runs from Solana Beach to La Jolla.”⁵ Such a belief may be held by some agent, and may in fact also be true, but if we look into the brain of the agent who has it we will not find anything that resembles “the southern California freeway system.”⁶ If brain states do not resemble the things they are meant to represent then our talk of true beliefs as accurate pictures, or as mirrors of the world, is not literal but metaphorical. As a metaphor such a construal of true belief is, Stich suggests, “both obscure and profoundly misleading.”⁷ Thus, the claim that true beliefs are accurate representations seems to fall apart and cannot explain their value. We must therefore move onto what Stich considers to be a warranted construal of true belief, and, ultimately, his criticism of this construal.

5.1.2 Stich’s Account of True Belief

Taking beliefs to be brain states it then becomes imperative to explain how they can have semantic properties, such as being about things, in order to then explain how they can be true, which Stich proposes is also a semantic property. This is because our account of how brain states can have semantic properties will determine our account of true belief, and, in turn, the target of Stich’s criticism concerning the latter’s value. The explanation of how beliefs can have semantic properties that Stich advocates is one in which brain-state tokens are mapped

⁵ Stich, (1990), pp.102-103.

⁶ Stich, (1990), p.102.

⁷ Stich, (1990), p.103.

onto entities that he proposes “are more naturally thought of in semantic terms.”⁸ Examples of such entities include propositions, specifications of truth conditions, content sentences, and possible states of affairs. Beliefs, or brain-states, are mapped to such entities through an ‘interpretation function,’ so that we can account for the truth of the former through the specific entity it is mapped to. With this account a “belief is true if and only if the proposition [...] to which it is mapped is true [...] or if and only if the possible state of affairs to which it is mapped is actual” and so on.⁹ What is the nature of this ‘interpretation function’ that maps brain-states to semantic entities? The account Stich advocates was first proposed by Hartry Field, and draws on “Tarski’s theory of truth, the Putnam-Kripke causal theory of reference, and functionalism in the philosophy of mind.”¹⁰ We will briefly elaborate on this ‘interpretation function’ as explained by Stich, for it is the target of his criticism of the value of true belief and therefore truth-conducive cognitive strategies.

Stich’s own account of the ‘causal/functional interpretation function’ begins with Tarski’s theory of truth. What Tarski’s theory of truth accomplished, Stich proposes, is to display how one can “build an axiomatic theory about a language that will specify a truth condition for each of the infinitely many well-formed sentences, of the language.”¹¹ Unpacking this sentence, it entails that truth is to be defined within a language, called the object-language, through the use of a metalanguage. The metalanguage specifies the truth conditions for the object-language. This metalanguage therefore will have both axioms and theorems. The basic axioms of the metalanguage specify “the semantic properties of the

⁸ Stich, (1990), pp 103-104

⁹ Stich, (1990), p 104

¹⁰ Stich, (1990), p 106

¹¹ Stich, (1990), p 107 It is, of course, controversial concerning how Tarski’s theory of truth should be interpreted and what it specifically accomplishes. For example, is it limited to formal languages or does it have applicability to ordinary languages, or does it entail a correspondence account of truth or a deflationary account. We will not enter into such debates concerning how Tarski should be interpreted, but rather simply follow Stich in his exposition. Davidson, (1990), pp 282-295. Michael P. Lynch, (2001), *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press), pp 323-327

[object] language's noncompound predicates and names,"¹² and therefore will entail axioms such as the following

(x) x satisfies 'is cold' if and only if x is cold

'snow' denotes snow

The theorems of the metalanguage, on the other hand, will specify the truth conditions of the object-language and entail the following basic structure.

S is true if and only if p

Within this structure S represents a descriptive name for a sentence in the object-language whereas p represents a metalanguage sentence that specifies the truth-conditions for the object-language sentence. So, for example, we get

'Snow is cold' if and only if snow is cold

This theory offered by Tarski, Stich suggests, is incomplete, for it does not tell us how to generate correct axioms. That is, it does not tell us what relation must obtain between an object and a name in order for denotation to be satisfied, nor "what relation must obtain between a predicate and a satisfaction condition" so that the predicate is satisfied only by conditions that fit it.¹³ This is where the causal theory of reference enters. According to this theory, as explained by Stich, a name denotes an object "if and only if the appropriate sort of causal chain extends from an original use or dubbing [of the name] to the current production of the name [] in question."¹⁴ So, for example, the name 'Russell' denotes Russell if and only if we can delineate the proper causal chain from when Russell was first given this name to current uses of this name. The same also occurs with predicates. Stich does not dwell any further on the details of the causal theory of reference, but rather simply points out that 'commonsense intuitions' play a significant role within this theory. They play a significant role because "both the basic argument in favor of the causal theory of reference and the detailed

¹² Stich, (1990), p 107

¹³ Stich, (1990), p 108

¹⁴ Stich, (1990), p 108

working out of the theory rely heavily on commonsense intuition and the commonsense concepts or practices that underlie them”¹⁵ Although Stich offers some terse examples of such reliance he, again, does not dwell on this claim. Rather, he simply points out that commonsense intuitions are relied on since this aspect of the causal theory of reference will be attacked specifically in his criticism of the intrinsic value of true belief, and hence any cognitive strategies that have true belief as an end.

Before we get to this criticism there is one more aspect of the ‘causal/functional interpretation function’ that must be explicated. This is the functionalist account of the mind. This account is relevant, for what is being explained is not how sentences in a language can be deemed true or false, but rather how beliefs can be deemed such. So, one must connect the dots from language to brain-states, or beliefs, in order to explain the semantic properties of the latter. Relying on Tarski’s theory of truth combined with the causal theory of reference the next move is to place language inside the brain so that beliefs are construed as “complex psychological states which, like sentences, can be viewed as built up out of simpler components”¹⁶ If beliefs, or brain-states, are construed to be sentence-like, then all one has to do to determine their truth-value is map them to the symbols of “well-formed formulas” of a formal language, i.e. a Tarskian language which explicates truth conditions for the sentences of the language. Belief tokens are then seen as “neurally encoded inscriptions of the relevant well-formed formulas”¹⁷ We thus explain the semantic properties of beliefs, or brain-states, through an interpretation function that specifies the truth-conditions of the beliefs, and the latter is accomplished by mapping beliefs to well-formed formulas. This mapping process will entail connecting aspects of the sentence-like brain-states, i.e. predicates and names, to appropriate denotations “by tracing their causal ancestry in the way suggested by the causal theory of

¹⁵ Stich (1990), p 108

¹⁶ Stich, (1990), p 109

¹⁷ Stich, (1990), p 109

reference”¹⁸ The connectives and quantifiers we find in languages are themselves explained through the interactions that occur between belief inscriptions That is, we expect that certain interactions will occur between various beliefs that will mimic, or approximate, the rules of logic, for example beliefs interacting in ways similar to the material conditional This is the functionalist aspect of the theory, Stich proposes, for beliefs are held to “have the logical form they do in virtue of the pattern of causal interactions they manifest with other mental-state inscriptions,” i.e. beliefs¹⁹

5.2 Stich’s Criticism of the Value of True Belief

With all of these pieces in place we can now consider Stich’s criticism of the intrinsic value of true belief²⁰ His criticism focuses on what appears to be the idiosyncratic nature of the interpretation function that maps brain-states to semantic properties such as propositions, truth conditions and states of affairs To understand how such mapping is idiosyncratic, Stich

¹⁸ Stich, (1990), pp 109-110

¹⁹ Stich, (1990), p 110

²⁰ It should be noted that in what follows two of Stich’s three criticisms of the ‘causal/functional interpretation function’ will be ignored The two criticisms we will ignore purport to display that the ‘causal/functional interpretation function’ explanation of true belief has a very limited domain of mental states it is applicable to because either “the elements out of which those states are constructed are not hooked on to the world by the appropriate sort of causal chain or because the formal patterns of interaction the compounds manifest admit of no intuitive semantic interpretation” (Stich, pp 113-114) One reason why we will ignore these two criticisms is because they are largely ignored by other theorists who also attempt to confront Stich’s position Rather, what is focused on is his claim that the causal/functional interpretation function is idiosyncratic In this regard see James R. Beebe, (2003), ‘Deflationism and the Value of Truth,’ *Journal of Philosophical Research*, volume 28, pp 392-395 Alvin I. Goldman, (1991), ‘Stephen P. Stich *The Fragmentation of Reason*,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LI, number 1, pp 189-193 Gilbert Harman, (1991), ‘Justification, Truth, Goals, and Pragmatism: Comments on Stich’s *Fragmentation of Reason*,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LI, number 1, pp 195-199 William G. Lycan, (1991), ‘Why should we Care Whether Our Beliefs Are True,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, volume LI, number 1, pp 201-205 The fact that these theorists focus almost entirely on the ‘idiosyncratic’ criticism, and ignore the other two, is a good indication that this is the aspect of Stich’s position that has merit and therefore must be addressed The second reason why we will ignore the first two criticisms, though, is more relevant We will ignore the first two criticisms because they are idiosyncratic to the causal/functional interpretation function explanation of true belief Since we are going to reject this explanation of true belief the idiosyncratic criticisms of it are not applicable to the position in this thesis Stich’s idiosyncratic criticism, though, is applicable, and therefore must be explicated and addressed For the two criticisms we will ignore see Stich, (1990), pp 110-114

proposes, we have to consider “how causal theorists go about specifying the sort of causal chain that fixes reference”²¹ He explains the process as follows

“Typically, these stories dived into two parts, one part focusing on the process of “grounding” or “reference fixing,” whereby a name or predicate is introduced into a language to designate an object or class of objects, the other part focusing on the process of social transmission whereby the name or predicate is passed from one user to another, preserving the reference that was fixed when the term was introduced In each part, the task for a serious causal theorist is to specify the kinds of events or processes that count as legitimate groundings or legitimate transmissions And, as ever, an important part of the criterion of legitimacy is how well the resulting story accords with intuition”²²

With this depiction in mind, Stich then proposes that reliance on commonsense intuitions becomes indispensable since the various ‘grounding’ and ‘transmission’ accounts of divergent objects, persons, natural kinds and so on represent a heterogeneous group that shares no substantive property upon which legitimate causal accounts can be measured For example, the causal account one could offer to fix the reference for one’s own child will differ greatly from the causal account one could offer to fix the reference for quarks Since no substantive property is shared by various causal accounts we cannot determine whether some account is legitimate on the basis of possessing such a property Rather, one will have to consult commonsense intuitions to determine whether the causal account is legitimate What Stich means by saying that we must rely on commonsense intuitions is that we must check the causal account against “pretheoretic views about how words in a public language or a mental language are related to what they designate”²³ It is this reliance on ‘commonsense intuitions’ that then causes problems for this account of true belief, and, ultimately, the claim that true belief has intrinsic value

Such a reliance causes problems because our common sense intuitions could be altered to sanction other reference relations besides those sanctioned by the causal/functional interpretation function and therefore, in turn, would sanction alternative truth-conditions and

²¹ Stich (1990), p 114

²² Stich (1990), p 114

²³ Stich, (1990) pp 114-115

alternative true beliefs. For example, Stich contrasts the causal/functional interpretation function with a description-cluster interpretation function where the reference, or denotation, of mental tokens is determined by whether certain descriptions fit the objects of the mental token. That is, with the latter a mental token is said to refer to a particular object if and only if certain descriptions advocated by the mental token can actually be ascribed to the object. Reference is therefore not determined by some causal chain that links the mental token with the object. For ease of understanding Stich refers to the reference relation sanctioned by the causal/functional interpretation function as 'reference' and the reference relation sanctioned by the description-cluster interpretation function as REFERENCE*. These alternative means of establishing reference relations will in turn generate divergent base clauses and, in turn, divergent truth-conditions and true beliefs. To display this Stich uses the example of Jonah from the Bible. For if the majority of descriptions were deemed false concerning Jonah the mental token 'Jonah' would still refer to this individual under the causal/functional interpretation function, because there is a causal chain connecting the mental token to the individual. It would not, though, REFER* to Jonah under the description-cluster interpretation function since most of the descriptions are false. Consequently, under one interpretation function 'Jonah' would denote Jonah and under the other it would not. If alternative base-clauses can be generated in this way, depending on what interpretation function we employ to map mental tokens to objects, then alternative truth-conditions will also be generated and, in turn, alternative true beliefs²⁴. The problem that emerges is that our commonsense intuitions could either diverge or change so that they sanction different interpretation functions. This would then mean that mental tokens could be mapped to truth-conditions in a variety of ways. So, with one interpretation function a belief would be true because it refers, but under another it would be TRUE* because it REFERS*, and, again, under another it would be TRUE** because it REFERS** and so on. Thus, we

²⁴ Stich, (1990) pp 115-117

could generate a variety of beliefs deemed true depending on our intuitions and the interpretation functions they sanction

The possibility of a variety of reference relations, and in turn a variety of true beliefs, has at least two implications. First, true belief does not simply have false belief as an alternative, but rather TRUE* belief, TRUE** belief, TRUE*** belief and so on. So, when we are attempting to discern what to value, and what to base our cognitive strategies on, we do not simply have the choice between true and false belief, but rather the choice is more complicated. We have to choose between true belief, and TRUE* belief and TRUE** belief and so on, as well as various forms of false belief. The second implication, and this appears to be the most significant, is that our current notion of true belief, or the notion Stich favours, is idiosyncratic. It is a notion that is peculiar to a particular group of agents with a specific set of intuitions. If our intuitions changed, or if we were part of a different group, then our notion of true belief would also change. It is because true belief has so much competition, and the particular notion we settle on is idiosyncratic, that leads to scepticism concerning the value true belief²⁵. We shall now consider why this is so.

Stich begins with a consideration of the intrinsic value of true belief. He proposes that since ‘true belief’ is based on certain commonsense intuitions concerning the reference relation to value true belief intrinsically is just to value this specific set of intuitions. That is, if we value true belief intrinsically what we really value is simply the set of intuitions that tell us that the ‘causal/functional interpretation function’ provides the legitimate reference relation, for it is such intuitions that are the impetus for our notion of true belief. He then asks for the source of these intuitions, and proposes that they either result from cultural transmission “with little or no explicit instruction” or from evolutionary processes that have encoded them into our genes, or a combination of these two sources²⁶. In either case, Stich suggests, the intuitions are not the result of a “systematic and critical assessment of the many alternative interpretation functions

²⁵ Stich, (1990) pp 116-118

²⁶ Stich, (1990), p 120

and the various virtues they have”²⁷ Rather, we have simply inherited these intuitions and “have not made a reflective choice to have them”²⁸ In such a situation, then, we have simply let ‘tradition’ determine our cognitive values for us, since we have unreflectively accepted the interpretation function bestowed upon us by either our culture or our biology To choose to maintain valuing this tradition, Stich suggests, is a very conservative choice, which entails valuing “what is traditional and familiar for its own sake”²⁹ Valuing a tradition for its own sake will not appeal to everyone, and, specifically, it does not appeal to Stich The realization that true belief is really just an “idiosyncratic hodgepodge bequeathed to us by our cultural and/or biological heritage” is reason enough for Stich to proclaim that true belief is not intrinsically valuable³⁰ Nonetheless, it may still be instrumentally valuable, so Stich moves on to consider this possibility

If true beliefs are instrumentally valuable, then, Stich suggests, they will be valued because they are conducive to something else we value either intrinsically or instrumentally In this regard Stich recognizes that agents value many things both intrinsically and instrumentally, and therefore true belief could facilitate some possible end that is valued Consequently, he will not “attempt to argue that having true belief *could not be* instrumentally valuable,”³¹ for this would entail the daunting task of displaying that true belief never facilitates what some agent, or agents, value Nonetheless, he does offer reasons to question the instrumental value of true belief The first reason concerns what we are comparing the instrumental value of true beliefs with Typically, the instrumental value of true beliefs would be compared with the instrumental value of false beliefs, but such a comparison is not sufficient, Stich proposes, in order to demonstrate the instrumental value of the former For we must not simply compare having true beliefs with having false beliefs to demonstrate the instrumental value of the former, but rather

²⁷ Stich, (1990), p 120

²⁸ Stich, (1990), p 120

²⁹ Stich, (1990), p 120

³⁰ Stich, (1990), p 120

³¹ Stich, (1990), p 121

must compare true belief with TRUE* belief, TRUE** belief and so on. That is, since our notion of true belief will change as our interpretation function changes, we must not simply compare true belief with false belief to display its instrumental value, but also true belief with various other notions of true belief. It could be that these other notions will turn out to have more instrumental value than true belief, and therefore will be preferred. This consideration does not entail that true belief will never have instrumental value, but does display that it would be very difficult to demonstrate that it does possess such value.³²

The second argument that Stich offers against the instrumental value of true beliefs entails confronting a position that he proposes may appeal to many. This position proposes that having “a complex body of intuitions concerning the truth conditions of a wide range of mental states [] is a good reason to think that truth is instrumentally valuable.”³³ For it is likely the case that these intuitions are “the product of many years of social and biological evolution,” and therefore have become instantiated over other possible intuition sets due to their ability to facilitate successful action in the world.³⁴ Of course, it is highly questionable, as we will see in the next chapter, whether evolutionary processes have actually led us to have such intuitions or to have true beliefs, whatever the interpretation of true belief one favours, but this is not how Stich responds to this argument. Rather, he points out that evolutionary processes, whether biological or social, are not always conducive to “the best of all possible options, or even [to those that are] close to the best.”³⁵ They do not always lead to optimal functioning, and this is especially the case with processes of social evolution, which is likely the source of our intuitions concerning true belief. So even if our current intuitions were the product of a long evolutionary process this does entail they represent the best way to achieve thriving, survival, or many other

³² Stich, (1990), pp 121-122

³³ Stich, (1990) p 122

³⁴ Stich, (1990), p 122

³⁵ Stich, (1990), p 122

goods as compared to other nonintuitive interpretation functions. Consequently, one cannot cite evolutionary processes to demonstrate the instrumental value of true belief³⁶

Stich's final criticism focuses on the idea that true belief is not beneficial for agents in many cases. The specific example he focuses on entails a thought experiment where an agent has a true belief concerning what time his flight leaves and due to this true belief he dies when the plane crashes. If he had a false belief concerning when his flight left it would have been good for him as it would have contributed to his survival. The general claim is that true belief is not always good for agents, or not always more conducive to various goods than false belief.³⁷ Of course, such a claim seems to be quite limited, for one would expect that it is generally better to have true beliefs than false beliefs. Although such a claim is intuitively appealing it is empirically questionable. It is empirically questionable, since there is evidence that suggests that certain pervasive false beliefs are actually quite beneficial for agents. This claim is considered in the next chapter.

After offering these arguments that are primarily focused on the 'causal/functional interpretation function' construal of true belief Stich then proposes that his position can be generalized to any account of cognitive value which focuses on true belief as its specific *telos*. Of course, what he will generalize his position to is any account of true belief that relies on an interpretation function to connect mental sentences with propositions. This process of generalization begins with the instrumental value typically assigned to true belief. Stich begins by reminding the reader that he was not denying that true belief could be instrumentally valuable, but rather that it is not obviously such. This is because true belief has a lot of competition. It must not simply compete with false belief, but TRUE* belief, TRUE** belief, TRUE*** belief and so on. It is not obvious, then, that true belief is instrumentally more valuable than these other construals of true belief for an agent may be able to achieve more of what she desires if she advocated other reference relations and therefore other accounts of true

³⁶ Stich (1990) pp 96-97 122

³⁷ Stich, (1990), pp 122-123

belief. This observation thus leads to a general scepticism concerning the instrumental value of true belief since it can be maintained no matter what interpretation function is advocated. Even if another interpretation function was postulated as consistent with commonsense intuitions there would always be a variety of other interpretation functions to which its instrumental value must be compared. Thus, it would never be obvious that true belief is instrumentally valuable.³⁸ Stich's 'evolutionary' argument and the observation that having false beliefs, or TRUE* beliefs and so on, sometimes will be more instrumentally valuable than true beliefs easily generalizes to any account of true belief, since these two positions do not rely on anything specific about the 'causal/functional interpretation function' to make their case. For one cannot claim, whether one relies on the 'causal/functional interpretation function' account or any other account of true belief, that evolutionary processes have lead us to a specific notion of true belief because it is the most optimal in enabling agents to achieve various goods, since evolutionary factors do not lead necessarily to optimal functioning. So, whatever our account of true belief might be it is always possible that in specific situations it is better to not have true beliefs but rather false beliefs or to act in accord with some other account of true belief.³⁹

In regard to his arguments against the intrinsic value of true belief Stich reminds the reader that ascribing such value to true belief is a "deeply conservative normative" position that many will find unattractive.⁴⁰ It is deeply conservative since what the agent will actually value intrinsically are a set of intuitions given to him either by his culture or biology. As Stich phrases it, agents who intrinsically value true belief in such a situation are "resolving that in matters cognitive they will cleave close to the status quo."⁴¹ This observation generalizes to any account of true belief since, Stich claims, commonsense intuitions will always be relied on to determine whether some account is legitimate. Consequently, no matter one's account of true belief it will always be the case that when the agent values true belief intrinsically what he is

³⁸ Stich, (1990), pp 124-125

³⁹ Stich, (1990), p 125

⁴⁰ Stich, (1990) p 125

⁴¹ Stich, (1990), p 126

actually valuing is simply the commonsense intuitions he has inherited. Thus what one values is an idiosyncratic notion of true belief, and this makes its intrinsic value dubious. Stich acknowledges that a less idiosyncratic and more intuitively plausible and natural notion of true belief could eventually emerge, but he suggests that it is still an open-question whether we would value such a notion intrinsically. This is because we may discover that acting in accord with some other notion of true belief will actually lead agents to live “happier, healthier [and] more rewarding lives” than the less idiosyncratic notion. In such a situation it is likely that agents will intrinsically value the notion of true belief which makes them happier, healthier and so on than the one that appears to be less idiosyncratic and intuitively plausible.⁴²

5.3 Stich’s Pragmatic Alternative

Before a response is mounted against Stich’s criticisms of the value of true belief, and any cognitive strategy which takes true belief as its specific *telos*, we will briefly consider the alternative Stich replaces truth-conducive cognitive strategies with. It is a cognitive strategy that aims to facilitate the acquisition of intrinsic goods. That is, he advocates a ‘consequentialist’ cognitive strategy, or a strategy he proposes “grows out of the pragmatist tradition.”⁴³ We will consider Stich’s alternative for reacting to it, as well as responding to his criticisms of truth-conducive cognitive strategies, is indispensable for accomplishing the goal of determining the constitutive value of intellectual character. After Stich’s pragmatist position is briefly summarized we will then respond to his criticisms of truth-conducive cognitive strategies.

The first step Stich takes in the development of his pragmatist position is to propose that cognitive processes “should be thought of as [] akin to tools or technologies or practices that

⁴² Stich, (1990) pp 126-127

⁴³ Stich (1990), pp 130-131

can be used more or less successfully in achieving a variety of goals.”⁴⁴ If we think of cognitive processes in this way, then they can be evaluated through “appeal to the rich and varied class of things that people take to be intrinsically valuable.”⁴⁵ By proposing that cognitive processes can be evaluated on such grounds, Stich immediately appears to have overcome the charge of idiosyncrasy that was a significant difficulty for truth-conducive cognitive strategies. This is because he ties the means of evaluation not into some idiosyncratic notion of true belief, but rather into the interests of various agents. Thus, his cognitive strategy would not be tied solely to the commonsense intuitions of a particular community, but rather to any agent who has interests or deems certain things to be intrinsically valuable. Of course, this has the consequence that the cognitive strategies themselves could be quite idiosyncratic, for they will vary on the basis of what actual agents value. But nonetheless, the means of evaluation are not idiosyncratic since evaluation will always be premised on how well the specific, and likely idiosyncratic, cognitive strategy enables the agent to achieve things he intrinsically values.⁴⁶

What means of evaluation can remain consistent in the face of a plurality of intrinsic goods? Stich proposes that the appropriate means of such evaluation would be a type of ‘cost-benefit analysis’ where a list of possible outcomes is constructed and a specific cognitive strategy is assessed according to how well it facilitates these outcomes. He admits that some assessment of the value of these various outcomes must be offered and the value expressed as a cardinal number. Once a cardinal number has been ascribed to each possible outcome various cognitive strategies can be assessed “by multiplying the value of each outcome by the probability that [... each specific cognitive strategy] will lead to that outcome and then summing the numbers that result.”⁴⁷ The cognitive strategy to be preferred is “the one with the

⁴⁴ Stich, (1990), p.131.

⁴⁵ Stich, (1990), p.131.

⁴⁶ Stich, (1990), pp.131-132.

⁴⁷ Stich, (1990), pp.132-133.

greatest expected value”⁴⁸ In this regard Stich admits that it will be very difficult to assign values to different intrinsic goods so that they can be measured against one another For example, it can be difficult to measure the value of a highly pleasurable event against the value of a personal achievement that entails much personal sacrifice and therefore some level of displeasure In admitting this possibility Stich also admits that the “epistemic pragmatist has more work to do”⁴⁹ Specifically, he suggests that “at some point in the elaboration of a pragmatic theory of cognitive valuation, a careful and empirically well-grounded examination of the concepts of valuing and intrinsic valuing will be in order”⁵⁰ So Stich acknowledges that his position is incomplete Hence his description of it as only a “sketch of [a] pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation”⁵¹

5.4 Consideration of Stich’s Criticisms of True Belief

With this section the goal is to respond to Stich’s criticisms of the intrinsic and instrumental values of true belief What we will find is that many of Stich’s criticisms are not applicable because they rely on certain assumptions that he does not argue for and do not have to be accepted Some of his remarks, specifically concerning whether true belief can be construed as accurate representation and whether beliefs can possess semantic properties will be addressed These remarks will be addressed for they are directly relevant for the position that has been developed in this thesis concerning intellectual character Responding to those aspects of Stich’s criticisms that are relevant will not settle the issue at hand, for in the next section Stich’s position is reformulated so that it is applicable to the construal of intellectual character offered in this thesis We will begin by focusing on various questionable assumptions made by Stich

⁴⁸ Stich, (1990), pp 133-134

⁴⁹ Stich, (1990), pp 133-134

⁵⁰ Stich (1990), p 132

⁵¹ Stich (1990), p 132

5.4.1 Questioning Stich's Assumptions

Stich's criticisms of the intrinsic value of true belief appear to be quite effective, and if they are so too is his criticism of the value of any cognitive strategy that takes true belief as its specific *telos*. But his criticisms are only completely effective if one accepts his specific construal of true belief, which one does not have to do. This is because Stich makes specific choices along the way with his construal of true belief that do not have to be accepted. This point is made by James Beebe in his response to Stich. Beebe points out that in order to generate his criticism Stich assumes the orthodoxy of the causal theory of reference, and combines this with a functionalist account of the mind as well as a "Tarskian-style truth theory that explains truth in terms of reference and predicate satisfaction."⁵² There are, of course, alternatives to the theory of truth upon which Stich builds his criticism. For example, as pointed out in the previous chapter, even if we accepted the correspondence theory of truth we do not have to accept the causal theory of reference but could opt for Russell's structural isomorphism account.⁵³ Or we could simply opt for some other account of truth, such as the deflationist account Beebe relies on to criticize Stich.⁵⁴ Controversy does not simply surround divergent theories of truth but even how Tarski's claims concerning truth should be interpreted.⁵⁵ For example, Stich interprets Tarski as offering a broad theory of truth that is applicable to agents when they use natural languages to make truth claims; especially when it is combined with the causal theory of reference. But not all agree with this interpretation. For example, Scott Soames has argued that Tarski's formulations apply only to formal languages, and not to the natural languages employed by agents. Soames has also argued that Tarski's account is deflationary in character

⁵² Beebe, (2003), p 392

⁵³ Russell, (2001), pp 17-24

⁵⁴ Beebe, (2003), p.395

⁵⁵ Davidson, (1990), pp 282-295 Lynch, (2001), pp 323-327

and therefore is not a correspondence theory where truth is explained in terms of reference and predicate satisfaction⁵⁶

So, one approach to confronting Stich is to advocate a different notion of true belief with a different interpretation of Tarski. Unfortunately, as was the case with the previous chapter, we cannot enter into the daunting task of providing a theory of truth, or enter into the equally daunting task of arguing for the correct interpretation of Tarski, in order to confront Stich's criticisms. Fortunately either approach to responding to Stich does not have to be engaged in, for all one has to do is point out that his criticisms are only completely effective if one accepts how he construes the debate. Since the specific notion of true belief Stich assumes the orthodoxy of, and basis his criticisms on, is not the one advocated in this thesis his criticisms are also not completely applicable to the position offered in this thesis. Stich does offer criticisms that appear to be directly relevant for the particular construal of true belief advocated in this thesis, and hence demand a response, specifically, his claim that describing beliefs as accurate pictures is merely metaphorical, and his claim that brain-states do not have semantic properties and therefore must be connected to semantically respectable entities to be considered true or false. In what follows these relevant remarks are addressed. After these relevant claims are addressed we will consider a reformulation of Stich's position that does seem applicable to the position concerning true belief and intellectual character advocated in this thesis. We will then consider the implications of this reformulated position for the value of intellectual character.

5.4.2 Defense of True Belief as Accurate Representation

The first criticism from Stich that we will focus on, one that appears directly applicable to the notion of true belief offered in the previous chapter, is his claim that talk of true beliefs as

⁵⁶ Scott Soames, (2001), What is a Theory of Truth? *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Michael P. Lynch, (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press) pp 397-418

accurate maps, or mirrors of reality, entails only a metaphorical, and hence not a descriptive, use of language. Recall that he proposed that if we take a materialist approach, then beliefs are located in the brain and are best construed as brain states. Taking beliefs to be brain states then leads to the conclusion that talk of true beliefs as mirroring the world, or as accurate pictures, is solely a metaphorical use of language, since if we looked into a brain we would not find any mirrors, maps or accurate pictures. To make his case Stich uses the example of the belief that “Interstate 5 runs from Solana Beach to La Jolla”⁵⁷. Such a belief may be held by some agent, and may in fact be true, but if we look into the brain of the agent who has it we will not find anything that resembles “the southern California freeway system”⁵⁸. This causes Stich to conclude that if beliefs do not resemble the things they are meant to represent then our talk of true beliefs as accurate pictures, or as mirrors of the world, is not literal but metaphorical. As a metaphor such a construal of true belief is, Stich suggests, “both obscure and profoundly misleading”⁵⁹. Thus, the claim that true beliefs are accurate representations seems to fall apart and cannot explain their value.

In response to Stich’s dismissal of the construal of true beliefs as accurate representations I want to suggest that talk of true beliefs as accurate maps or pictures is not merely a metaphorical use of language, but rather that maps, picture and mirrors, when they are accurate, are analogues to true beliefs. The reason why the former can be described as analogues to true belief is because they display that accurate representations can be achieved with material conditions that are completely different from what is being represented. For example, when we have a map of some terrain we have a representation of that terrain that is materially quite different from what it represents. A typical map is itself materially constituted by paper and ink with the lines of ink arranged in certain patterns so as to represent a specific landscape either accurately or inaccurately. The material conditions of the map are quite

⁵⁷ Stich (1990) pp 102-103

⁵⁸ Stich (1990) p 102

⁵⁹ Stich (1990) p 103

different from the asphalt, plant life, geological conditions and maybe even humanly constructed structures of the terrain it represents, and yet there is no problem with saying that a map can represent these completely different material conditions either accurately or inaccurately. For example, some map may include a road or geologic condition that is not actually part of the terrain it is meant to represent, and for this reason we would refer to the map as an inaccurate representation of the terrain. In the same way, both pictures and mirrors entail certain material conditions that have the ability to represent completely different material conditions, and they can do this either accurately or inaccurately. One only has to think of the 'fun-house' mirrors that distort the images reflected onto them, typically found at many fairs and theme-parks.

What pictures, maps and mirrors offer us, then, are uncontroversial examples of how one set of material conditions can represent a completely different set of material conditions, as well as the ability to accomplish such representation either accurately or inaccurately. If it is unproblematic for one set of material conditions to represent another completely different set of material conditions, and to do this either accurately or inaccurately, then it should not be a problem to think of true and false beliefs in terms of accurate and inaccurate representations. Assuredly, beliefs construed as brain states are materially quite different from what they represent, but this does not entail that they cannot represent these materially different conditions and do such either accurately or inaccurately. We have everyday unproblematic examples with pictures, mirrors and maps where such representation occurs. So is there any reason, offered by Stich, that would compel us to reject the talk of true beliefs as accurate representations even though it is uncontroversial that one set of material conditions can represent a completely different set of material conditions either accurately or inaccurately? Is such use of language only metaphorical?

The reason Stich appears to offer is the rather odd remark that when we look into an agent's brain we do not see anything that looks like accurate pictures or maps. He proposes

that a belief cannot be said to be an accurate representation, for example that “Interstate 5 runs from Solana Beach to La Jolla,”⁶⁰ since if looked in to the head of the agent who has such a belief we would not see any maps or pictures that resemble what is supposedly represented. Assuredly, by such a remark Stich must not mean that we do not find the same material conditions as what is being represented, for the fact that we do not find the same material conditions does not mean that a representation is lacking. For as it was just pointed out maps do not contain the same material conditions as what they represent, and yet they can still represent either accurately or inaccurately. What he must mean is that we do not find an accurate *visual* representation of what is believed. In response it simply has to be acknowledged that it would be odd if we did find such a visual representation, either accurate or inaccurate, of what is believed and the lack of such a visual representation does not mean that beliefs cannot be accurate representations. It is odd that we would expect a visual representation, since the brain does not appear to rely on visual means to interact with the information encoded within it. To put it another way, inside the brain there does not exist a set of optical lenses by which information can be surveyed and therefore we should not expect visual representations of such information. Maps and pictures, on the other hand, are designed for an optical interface, and this is why they *look* like the things they represent, but since beliefs as brain states are not designed⁶¹ for optical interface we should not expect visual representations of the information they contain. The lack of a visual representation, though, does not entail that a material representation is lacking nor that it could not be accurate or inaccurate. For we have many examples where information is conveyed by non-visual means, and this information has a representational quality that can be either accurate or inaccurate. One only has to think of utterances, which entail verbal transmissions of information that can be representational as well as either accurate or inaccurate. Would Stich say that we cannot

⁶⁰ Stich, (1990), pp 102-103

⁶¹ By using the term ‘design’ here I am not attempting to insinuate that human agents, and, in turn, their brain states, are the result of intelligent design, as maps are. Rather, it simply means in this context that brain states are not conducive to a visual medium.

talk of true beliefs as accurate representations because when we open the brain nothing *sounds* like what is being represented? Or, to consider another example, compact discs contain information that cannot be visually deciphered – i.e. when I look at the disc I do not see the information contained on it – and yet the information is there and can be extracted with the right interface.

Stich's quick dismissal of the claim that true beliefs are accurate representations, while false beliefs are inaccurate representations, is therefore unconvincing. It does not seem problematic that a set of material conditions can be a representation, either accurate or inaccurate, of another set of material conditions, and his claim that we do not *see* anything in the brain that looks like what it represents seems to be an odd constraint on whether beliefs as brain states can be said to be accurate or inaccurate representations. Since Stich's remarks are unconvincing we can therefore maintain the account of true belief as accurate representation. As mentioned, though, there is one more seemingly effective aspect of Stich's criticism that must be addressed before we move on to a reformulated construal of his position. This seemingly effective aspect concerns whether brain-states can have semantic properties or not. We shall now consider this possibility.

5.4.3 Beliefs and Semantic Properties

Recall that a significant impetus for Stich's adoption of the causal theory of reference was to explain how brain-states can have semantic properties, such as being true or false or being about things; i.e. to have meanings or to refer. He proposes that we can account for the semantic properties of brain-states by mapping these neuro-physical events to "entities that are more naturally thought of in semantic terms;"⁶² such as propositions, truth conditions or states of affairs. The motivation for Stich's explanation of the semantic properties of beliefs through

⁶² Stich, (1990), p.104.

a mapping relation appears to be the claim that brain-states themselves cannot possess semantic properties. Hence, the claim is that one has to account for the semantic properties of brain-states through a mapping relation because brain-states are incapable of possessing semantic properties themselves. If, instead, we held that brain-states are capable of possessing semantic properties - for example being about things, and therefore being possibly accurate or inaccurate - then we would not have to map them to other entities to explain their semantic properties.

The puzzling question that emerges is why the other entities to which brain-states are mapped are more 'naturally semantic' than brain-states? Why is their semantic status unproblematic while we *must* account for the semantic status of brain-states through them? One possible reason why the semantic status of brain-states is problematic, that Stich hints at, is because they are complex physiological, or physical, events. The idea is that it is problematic for physical events, and/or physical entities, to have semantic properties, and therefore to account for the semantic properties of physical events such as brain-states we must connect them to explicit, or natural, semantic entities. It must be acknowledged, though, that many of the candidates that Stich offers as naturally semantic, to which brain-states could be mapped, are also physical events or physical entities, and would therefore suffer from the same problematic status as brain-states. That is, states of affairs, facts, truth conditions, sentences and utterances are all physical entities, and hence it is also difficult to account for their semantic status. For example, a sentence is merely a set of physical marks arranged in a certain way on, or in, some physical medium and an utterance merely sounds waves produced by some agent. Thus, if we had to map brain-states to such entities to account for their semantic properties, because they cannot have semantic properties due to their physical status, we would not have solved the semantic problem, for these other entities are also physical entities. No actual solution to the semantic status of brain-states is accomplished, but rather the problem of semantic properties is simply displaced. Instead of having to account for the semantic status of beliefs/brain-states we now have to explain the semantic status of the equally physical entities.

to which they have been mapped. So, if it is problematic for brain-states to refer, to be true or false, or to have meanings it is equally problematic for sentences and utterances to do such. Stich himself is aware of this problem; for he acknowledges both that it is puzzling how these other entities can be true and that “on some accounts, the semantic properties of nonpsychological entities like sentences are themselves to be explained by appeal to the semantic properties of psychological states like beliefs.”⁶³

In this regard, it must be acknowledged that explaining how physical entities can possess semantic properties is a significant and complex issue, and cannot be entered into in this thesis. Thus no attempt will be made to explain how physical entities can have semantic properties. Especially, no attempt will be made to explain the semantic properties of other entities through the semantic properties of belief. Rather, what is to be derived from this brief discussion is that what Stich has drawn our attention to is the general problem of semantic properties and not specifically how beliefs can be true or false, or accurate or inaccurate. For the semantic status of most of the candidates he proposes we map beliefs to is also a mystery. That is, it is also a mystery as to how utterances, sentences, states of affairs and so on can have semantic properties. Since we cannot enter into the daunting task of explaining semantic properties it will simply have to be admitted that it is unresolved in this thesis how beliefs/brain-states can possess semantic properties such as being accurate or inaccurate. It must simply be pointed out that this is not simply a problem for belief, but also for many other entities that philosophers have described as capable of being true or false; i.e. sentences, utterances, states of affairs and so on. This is therefore the issue of the general problem of semantic properties which is simply beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate.

Of course, as was indicated in the previous remarks, not all of the mapping candidates Stich mentions are physical entities, for one specific candidate appears to be essentially

⁶³ Stich, (1990), p 104 For examples of explanations of semantic properties due to the intentional properties of agents see, for example, Michael Jubien, (2001), “Propositions and the Objects of Belief,” *Philosophical Studies*, volume 104, p 54, 59-60

semantic This is the ‘proposition’ Stich does not clarify what he means by the term ‘proposition,’ and it is certainly debatable as to what this entity is, as he admits,⁶⁴ but propositions can be described as essentially semantic since they are typically held to contain the semantic content that is expressed by sentences, utterances, and beliefs That is, propositions generally fulfill the role of meaning-bearers, and, as such, are what is stable and expressed by various divergent sentences⁶⁵ For example, the following two sentences “George Bush is an incompetent president” and “George Bush does not know what he is doing as president” express the same meaning, and therefore the same proposition, even though they are different The reason why such an observation is important for our purposes is that if a single proposition can have two different physical manifestations, as with the former two sentences, and this would be even more apparent if one were a sentence and the other an utterance, then beliefs as brain-states can also be the bearers of propositions To put it another way, if the same proposition can be expressed through divergent physical manifestations, for example as an utterance or as a sentence, and this is essentially their role as meaning-bearers, then there is nothing preventing brain-states from also expressing propositions Sounds waves, scratches on a physical background and brain-states are all quite physically different from one another, but if propositions are meant to be the bearers of semantic content that remain stable while the physical manifestation varies then brain-states are a tenable candidate as the bearers of propositions This is certainly why some philosophers have proposed that “propositions are the contents of beliefs”⁶⁶

Bringing such an observation to bear directly on Stich’s position, this entails that one does not have to map beliefs to entities such as sentences to explain their semantic content If a sentence can express a proposition, and it is a physical entity, then so too can a brain-state or

⁶⁴ Stich (1990) p 104 For an explanation as well as criticisms of various notions of proposition see for example, Jubien, (2001) pp 47-62

⁶⁵ Jubien (2001) pp 58-59 Jonathan Westphal, (2006) The future and the truth-value links a common sense view *Analysis* volume 66 number 1 January, p 6

⁶⁶ Lynch, (2004), p 499

belief. This in no way explains the mystery of semantic properties. For as John Heil remarks, propositions themselves are mysterious entities that he proposes bring with them more problems than solutions when they are relied on as the bearers of truth.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, if we do not have to map beliefs to propositions to explain their semantic content, but rather hold that beliefs simply contain propositions as is the case with other physical entities such as sentences and utterances, then we do not run into the problems Stich proposes emerge when we have to rely on different interpretation functions to establish this mapping relation. Brain-states, or beliefs, simply have propositions as their content and do not have to be mapped to them. If we combine this claim that beliefs can possess semantic properties - or, at least, it is no more mysterious than how other physical entities can possess semantic properties - with the previous claims concerning the ability of one set of material conditions to be a representation, either accurate or inaccurate, of another set of material conditions, then Stich's criticisms of cognitive strategies based on true belief seem to evaporate. Beliefs can be accurate or inaccurate representations, and do not have to be mapped to other entities to explain their semantic content, and therefore the criticisms Stich offers based on his rejection of these claims do not emerge. Admittedly, such a position does leave a lot of significant issues unaddressed, for example how physical entities can have semantic properties in the first place, but the intention of entering into this discussion was not to resolve such issues. Instead, the intention was simply to address Stich's criticisms of truth-based cognitive strategies, and this has largely been accomplished. It has only been 'largely' accomplished for, as hinted at previously, there is a way of reformulating Stich's criticisms to address the position advocated in this thesis. We will now turn to this reinterpretation and, in turn, respond to it.

⁶⁷ Heil proposes that since propositions are meant to act as intermediaries between true representations and truthmakers they generate new relations that have to be explained. For now we have to explain not simply the relation between true representations and truthmakers, for example between accurate beliefs and states of affairs, but instead the relation between truthmakers and propositions and, in turn, the relation between propositions and the utterances, beliefs, etc., that expresses them. Heil recommends, then, that we focus solely true representations and truthmakers. We will, of course, not enter into this debate, but rather accept the prevalent role ascribed to propositions when it comes to explaining truth and falsity. John Heil, (2006), 'The legacy of linguisticism', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, volume 84, number 2, pp 241-243.

5.5 An Applicable Reformulation of Stich

In the presentation of his criticisms Stich proposes that they can be generalized to other accounts of how beliefs can be true by focusing on the idiosyncratic nature of any interpretation function that maps beliefs to other entities to determine their truth or falsity. Of course, since in response to Stich it was argued that one does not have to map brain-states to other entities to determine whether they are true or false, it would seem that the idiosyncrasy argument is not applicable. There is a way, though, that idiosyncrasy can still emerge in the account of intellectual character advocated in this thesis, and therefore this possibility must be addressed. Once such idiosyncrasy has emerged it then also seems that true belief will have a lot of competition besides mere false belief, as Stich suggests. This possibility must be addressed as well. In what follows we will take Stich's remarks concerning how idiosyncrasy enters into accounts of true belief and reinterpret them to apply them to the position developed in this thesis concerning intellectual character and its connection to true belief. Reacting to this reformulated construal of Stich's criticisms will also refine our understanding of what intellectual character provides for agents as well as on what basis we can propose intellectual character possesses constitutive value.

In order for Stich to apply his general criticism he simply has to take the idiosyncrasy he argues attaches to the interpretation function and attach it to aspects of the account of intellectual character developed in this thesis. The application would likely run as follows. The intellectual virtues are defined as a set of character traits that reliably lead to true belief. True belief is itself defined as accurate representation the agent acquiesces in. The idiosyncrasy associated with the interpretation function can enter into this account at two points. First, it can enter at the point of identifying the aspects of intellectual character on the grounds of their being truth-conducive. Second, idiosyncrasy can enter in at the point of determining what an 'accurate representation' is. We will now turn to consider why

idiosyncrasy could possibly enter at these two points. A response is then offered in the next section.

Beginning with the identification of intellectual character traits on the basis of their truth-conduciveness we can see how idiosyncrasy could be a problem if we recall two aspects of this process. First, as outlined in chapter three, the identification of various character traits as intellectual virtues is mediated through particular communities. Recall that the community was proposed as the means of identifying which traits are intellectual virtues in order to avoid the possibility of a vicious regress. The community identifies certain character traits as intellectual virtues through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere, which facilitates the ability to identify those traits that are conducive to excellence in that sphere; i.e. true belief. Idiosyncrasy threatens here because those traits that are identified by one specific community as aspects of intellectual character could be quite different from what a different community might identify as intellectual virtues. For some community may hold that it is intellectually virtuous to defer to a certain class of scholars or religious leaders, or that true belief only occurs by unquestioning adherence to some particular text, while another community may hold such dispositions to be intellectually vicious. Consequently, since the identification of intellectual virtues occurs through the community, and various communities can provide divergent lists of virtues, those on any list would appear to be idiosyncratic. The second way that idiosyncrasy can enter into this process of identification, intimately related to the first, is through the influence of the conceptual schemes employed. That is, it was also acknowledged in chapter three that with this perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere we do not rely solely on empirical input to identify various character traits as truth-conducive, but rather empirical input mediated through specific conceptual schemes. These conceptual schemes can vary from one community to another and therefore so too can the character traits identified as intellectual virtues. Thus, the intellectual virtues could be idiosyncratic not only in regard to specific

communities but also in regard to various conceptual schemes. As one's conceptual scheme changes so too does one's list of intellectual virtues.

Idiosyncrasy therefore attaches not to the functions we use to map brain-states to propositions and so on, but rather to those traits that are supposed to facilitate accurate representations for the agent. As Stich suggests, this makes the valuing of such traits very conservative and questionable. This is because what the agent has chosen to value is the specific idiosyncratic list of intellectual virtues identified by her community through the influence of its specific conceptual scheme. Thus, by valuing the aspects of intellectual character the agent has simply decided to embrace the status quo, as was the case with the interpretation function. This makes the value of such traits dubious, since the community could always be wrong in what it identifies as intellectual virtues, as was displayed in the last chapter when we focused on epistemic luck, and it is questionable to value something just because one's community values it. For example, we would not deem slavery to be valuable just because some community identified it as such. Consequently, because a community values something does not mean that it is actually valuable or should be valued.

Due to the idiosyncrasy of those character traits on our list of intellectual virtues the value of the latter appears conservative and dubious, but the problem is exacerbated because idiosyncrasy can also enter, as mentioned, into the process of determining the conditions of accuracy. Idiosyncrasy can enter at this point because what is deemed accurate, and therefore an accurate representation, will be mediated through conceptual schemes. That is, the conceptual schemes that agents are influenced by fulfill a significant role in determining the truth conditions for various beliefs, and since these conceptual schemes can vary so too will the truth conditions. If the truth conditions can vary, then how we determine which beliefs are accurate or inaccurate will also vary. To see this we will briefly consider how conceptual schemes can determine truth conditions, and, in turn, alter the conditions of accuracy.

Conceptual schemes can determine the truth conditions for various beliefs through the way they demarcate the world and through the divergent terminology used to describe the same phenomena. For example, with a motivation-based account of self-deception we generate a divergent set of truth-conditions than we would if we employed a homuncular subsystems account to explain the same phenomena. With one conceptual scheme relying on motivations to explain an agent's self-deceptive behaviour can be either accurate or inaccurate but not with the other. We also obtain divergent sets of truth conditions if we accept either the virtue reliabilist account of intellectual virtue or the virtue responsibilist account. Depending on which account we accept we generate divergent lists of intellectual virtues and will, in turn, set out divergent truth-conditions for ascriptions of intellectual virtue to specific agents. Also, since each of the conceptual schemes mentioned in the previous examples will dismiss the merit of its contrary conceptual scheme each will deem the others claims to be completely inaccurate. Consequently, this will mean that the exact same set of claims will be deemed either accurate or inaccurate depending on the conceptual scheme one accepts. For example, if I accept the motivation based account of self-deception then I will hold that certain claims concerning an agent's self-deceptive behaviour are accurate, whereas if I accept the homuncular account these same claims will be deemed inaccurate. Thus the same set of claims would be deemed both true and false.

Thus the conditions of accuracy are quite idiosyncratic to various conceptual schemes, and therefore the desire for accurate representation would appear to entail the valuing of these various idiosyncratic conditions. The problem of idiosyncrasy is again exacerbated by the fact that sometimes it is only the conceptual schemes that we can be described as having true beliefs about. This is the conclusion that emerged from the previous chapter, since there it was proposed that we can describe past great thinkers as having many true beliefs because they possessed accurate representations of the conceptual schemes they employed. This can thus make true belief, or accurate representation, quite idiosyncratic, for, again, as our conceptual

schemes change so too will those beliefs deemed accurate or inaccurate as well as the means by which we determine the conditions of accuracy or inaccuracy. For example, with Aristotle's approach to natural phenomena deductive methods fulfill a significant role in determining whether some claim is accurate or not, whereas with contemporary approaches inductive methods fulfill more of a significant role.

These considerations display the idiosyncratic nature of accurate representation, and, in turn, have significant implications for the constitutive value of intellectual character. Similar to the axiological implications of the idiosyncrasy of our list of intellectual virtues, to value accurate representation appears to be dubious and conservative. That is, since accurate representation appears to depend on our conceptual schemes to value it appears to entail the conservative value of simple adherence to these conceptual schemes. What is even more problematic, though, is that the intellectually virtuous agent must value true belief, and therefore accurate representation, intrinsically. Recall, as argued in chapter two, an intellectually virtuous agent must value accurate representation intrinsically because true belief must be an overriding concern in order to mitigate the influence of other concerns which are the impetuses for self-deception. Another problem, then, is that it is not clear what exactly the intellectually virtuous agent is supposed to value. Accurate representation does not appear to have any intrinsic properties, since its properties can alter as the conceptual scheme is altered, and therefore true belief cannot be held to be intrinsically valuable based on its intrinsic properties. If accurate representation does not have intrinsic properties it then becomes difficult to discern what the intellectually virtuous agent is supposed to value.

Consequently, even though many aspects of Stich's original criticisms of truth belief can be addressed a reformulated version of these criticisms, tailored to the position advocated in this thesis, appears to generate significant problems for the values of both intellectual character and accurate representation. Idiosyncrasy emerges in regard to both our identification of the intellectual virtues and in regard to the conditions for accurate representation. Such

idiosyncrasy seems conservative and dubious, as Stich suggests, and therefore means that the value of both intellectual character and accurate representation is questionable. Even further, it is not clear what exactly the intellectually virtuous agent must be intellectually conscientious about, and therefore must value intrinsically, since accurate representation does not possess any intrinsic properties. We will now consider these problems and their significance for the value of intellectual character.

5.6 Consideration of the Reformulation of Stich

In addressing this reformulated position offered on Stich's behalf it must be first acknowledged that a lot of its sting can be removed by explicating further the claim that the identification of the aspects of intellectual character occurs through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere and is not the result of an unreflective acceptance of shared, or common sense, intuitions. Recall that a significant aspect of Stich's claim that the value of true belief, and any cognitive strategy that focuses on true belief, is conservative and dubious was that such value is dependent on the unreflective acceptance of inherited intuitions which result from cultural transmission, or evolutionary processes, or a combination of these two sources. It is this construal of the process of determining the mapping function that facilitates Stich's claim we have simply let 'tradition' determine our cognitive values, and to further claim that such valuing is conservative and dubious.⁶⁸

The process of identifying those character traits on our list of intellectual virtues, as outlined in chapter three, does not entail the unreflective acceptance of inherited intuitions, and therefore the charge that valuing such traits is conservative and dubious is itself dubious. Such virtues are not identified by consulting the desires, or intuitions, of agents, nor even various cultural practices. Instead it is the sphere of experience, or the grounding experience, which

⁶⁸ Stich, (1990), p 120

provides the input for identifying which traits are truth-conducive. Thus, in this case, it would be the doxastic sphere that would limit the choices one can make regarding which traits are to make the list or not, and it is through analysis and observation of this sphere, or a perspicuous mapping of it, that one determines those traits that are intellectual virtues. In this way, as Nussbaum proposed, progress in our understanding of what is virtuous is analogous to progress in our scientific understanding of the world, since through our perspicuous mapping of grounding experiences we come to formulate a more accurate and fuller specification of the types of problems human agents encounter and the appropriate, or virtuous, ways to respond to such problems.⁶⁹ The focus is therefore on actual human experiences, as well as empirical input, and not on simply explicating shared, or inherited, intuitions. Such a process is also reflective, since the perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere will entail critical engagement with that sphere in order to determine which traits actually facilitate true belief. Quite generally, then, the doxastic sphere provides something independent of both human intuitions as well as cultural practices which can be analyzed to determine which character traits would make the list of intellectual virtues.

Of course, as noted in the previous section, divergent communities may identify different traits as intellectual virtues, which then appears to make the identification of the aspects of intellectual character idiosyncratic. This possibility must be admitted, but it does not necessarily preclude the possibility for consensus to be achieved in regard to which traits are intellectual virtues. Since we are not relying on inherited intuitions to identify which traits are intellectual virtues, but rather reflection upon the empirical input of the doxastic sphere, there is the possibility that idiosyncrasy could be removed and consensus achieved. Such consensus is especially possible if the agents who are attempting to identify truth-conducive character traits are sincerely attempting to be intellectually virtuous. This is because the agent who sincerely attempts to become intellectually virtuous will desire truth for its own sake, or be intellectually

⁶⁹ Nussbaum, (1998), pp.263-264.

conscientious As set out in chapter two, such a desire should then compel the agent to not favour those traits identified by her community, but rather favour achieving true beliefs This favouring of true beliefs, if it is sincere, should then also lead the agent to be open to changing the list of intellectual virtues if some trait is discovered not to be truth-conducive So, the intellectually virtuous agent would not unquestionably defer to some other authority, whether it is a class of scholars or some text, but instead take care to ensure that such deference is actually truth-conducive If it is not truth-conducive, then the intellectually virtuous agent would not attempt to habituate such a disposition

So, unless Stich can provide a reason for holding that idiosyncrasy is inevitable in such a situation, and to be fair to Stich he has not considered the debate as it is here construed, then idiosyncrasy is not really a problem This is simply because, in principle, such idiosyncrasy could be removed and consensus achieved through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere, especially if members of the community are sincerely attempting to be intellectually virtuous It would assuredly not be an easy task to achieve such consensus, but it does not appear to be impossible in principle One could therefore respond to Stich by proposing first that to value the intellectual virtues is not conservative and dubious, since their identification is not the result of the unreflective endorsement of shared intuitions Rather, their identification occurs through a perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere Through this perspicuous mapping there then emerges the possibility of removing any idiosyncrasy to achieve consensus, since the doxastic sphere provides something independent of various agents and their intuitions to which appeal can be made to come to consensus Such consensus is especially possible if the agents involved in the perspicuous mapping of the doxastic sphere are sincerely intellectually virtuous

The story is not that simple, of course, since conceptual schemes, and not merely empirical input from the doxastic sphere, fulfill a significant role in determining the list of intellectual virtues As it was pointed out in the previous section, idiosyncrasy threatens not

simply due to differences in communal lists but also due to differences in conceptual schemes, and it would seem that we can account, at least partly, for differences in communal lists as due to differences in conceptual schemes. If we recall the account of how intellectual character facilitates interaction with conceptual schemes and not merely empirical input explicated in the previous chapter, then the idiosyncrasy that results from divergent conceptual schemes is also not a problem. This is because the assessment of divergent lists offered by different conceptual schemes is no different than assessing lists offered by different communities, especially since the lists offered by different communities will be mediated through specific conceptual schemes. Intellectually virtuous agents, motivated by the desire for truth, would be able to critically engage various conceptual schemes in order to determine whether their respective lists of intellectual virtues are accurate or not. Through such critical engagement there is the possibility that the idiosyncrasy that results from divergent conceptual schemes therefore could be removed and consensus achieved. The only way to dismiss this possibility is to propose that in principle it is not possible to achieve consensus. But there does not appear to be any reason to hold that such consensus is impossible in principle, and therefore it is also possible to remove any idiosyncrasy that now exists no matter how difficult that may be.

Of course, such a response has consequences for how the intellectually virtuous agent should be disposed toward any list of intellectual virtues as well as the constitutive value of intellectual character. If the identification of various lists of intellectual virtues is subject to the idiosyncrasy of different conceptual schemes, then the intellectually virtuous agent must be cautious in regard to various lists of intellectual virtues. Such an agent must be willing to alter her list of intellectual virtues if she should discover that some item on the list is not actually truth-conducive. This claim seems especially warranted due to the role of epistemic luck outlined in the previous chapter. Recall that in order to get things right an agent must not be solely intellectually virtuous, but also epistemically lucky. It is always possible that we could be misled by some conceptual scheme, and therefore hold certain claims to be true when they

are not, and this possibility extends also to conceptual schemes that fulfill a role in the identification of intellectual virtues. This is especially the case since, as we saw in the previous chapter, Cartesian Demons and misleading conceptual schemes lead us not to doubt that the intellectual virtues are truth-conducive, but rather to doubt those virtues on the current list. If the intellectually virtuous agent must be cautious toward those items on the list of intellectual virtues, then the only stable intellectual virtue would be intellectual conscientiousness. This intellectual virtue can never be dismissed, since if the agent is attempting to obtain and sustain true beliefs then the desire for true belief, or accurate representation, will always be relevant. All other possible candidates, though, could possibly not be intellectual virtues, and thus the intellectually virtuous agent must be willing to jettison them if she should discover that she has been misled and that they are not intellectual virtues, i.e. they are not truth-conducive.

This conclusion has the consequence that the constitutive value of intellectual character can only be explained through its connection to true belief, and ultimately be based on the desire for truth or intellectual conscientiousness. Since it is always possible that other candidates on our current list, such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual humility and so on, are not intellectual virtues we cannot explain the constitutive value of intellectual character through them. This is not to say that such dispositions have no transformative impact, are not intellectual virtues or are not valuable, but rather that they may not be valuable as aspects of intellectual character since they may not be truth-conducive. So, contrary to what Swank suggests, as we considered in the previous chapter, we cannot designate those traits on the current list as intellectual virtues simply because we value them and then dismiss the desire for true belief. This is because valuing such traits would be idiosyncratic as it would entail valuing certain traits simply because they appear to us to currently be valuable or intellectual virtues. The idiosyncrasy of such traits is displayed by the fact that they have not always been valued, and are not on everyone's list of intellectual virtues. As Stich suggests, such valuing would then be conservative and dubious. To avoid such a

charge, as it has been argued, we must propose that the list of intellectual virtues emerges from critical engagement with the doxastic sphere, and such critical engagement has lead to the claim that intellectual conscientiousness is the only stable intellectual virtue. Consequently, the constitutive value of intellectual character must be explained through it alone. Intellectual conscientiousness must be maintained, since, as we saw in chapter two, it is necessary to thwart the influence of self-serving motivations so that true beliefs can be obtained and sustained.

Thus, we have come to the conclusion that intellectual conscientiousness is the only aspect of intellectual character that can currently be relied on to explain its constitutive value. We have come to this conclusion through the attempt to avoid the idiosyncrasy that Stich proposes threatens if we unreflectively value what we have inherited from either our community or our biology. If we simply valued intellectual humility, intellectual courage and so on because they are on our current list of intellectual virtues, then such valuing would be conservative and dubious. The sole stable requirement for the intellectually virtuous agent, then, is that she desire true belief, or accurate representation, for in this way she can do her best to reflectively identify other possible aspects of intellectual character and dismiss possible candidates if they are not truth-conducive. Of course, as we saw in the previous section, this valuing of accurate representation may itself allow idiosyncrasy to creep back in, for as our conceptual schemes change so too will our conditions of accuracy, i.e. our truth-conditions. We shall now consider this possibility.

Recall, then, that idiosyncrasy appears to be an aspect of true belief, since truth conditions, or the conditions of accuracy, will vary as one's conceptual schemes varies. They will vary since different conceptual schemes often demarcate the world differently and therefore set out divergent requirements for the conditions of accuracy. As we saw, this can entail that a specific set of claims will be deemed both true and false depending on the conceptual schemes employed. Thus, as it was pointed out, the conditions of accuracy will be quite idiosyncratic to various conceptual schemes, and therefore the desire for accurate

representation would appear to entail the valuing of these various idiosyncratic conditions. This problem is exacerbated by the fact, as mentioned, that sometimes it is only the conceptual schemes that we can be described as having true beliefs about. Due to such idiosyncrasy the problem that then emerges is that it is not clear what exactly the intellectually virtuous agent is supposed to value, since accurate representation does not appear to have any intrinsic properties. If accurate representation does not have intrinsic properties it then becomes mysterious concerning what the intellectually virtuous agent is supposed to desire when he or she desires true belief.

In response it must first be pointed out that even though the conditions of accuracy will vary as conceptual schemes vary this does not mean that 'accuracy' itself is an idiosyncratic notion. Accuracy will always have the same meaning, in that it always entails representing things as they are. The conditions of accuracy change, of course, but this would occur even if they were set by the world alone with no interference from conceptual schemes. That is, even if we had unmediated contact with the world what it means for a belief to be accurate would change as the world changed, for in order for a belief to be accurate in such a situation it would have to reflect the conditions of the world, which themselves can change from one situation to another. Nonetheless, referring to beliefs as accurate or inaccurate would still be the same. It would entail the claim that some belief either represents the conditions of the world as they are, if it is accurate, or that it does not represent the conditions of the world as they are, if it is inaccurate. Thus, the notion of accuracy is not idiosyncratic – it does not change its meaning from one situation to another – even though the conditions which determine accuracy are idiosyncratic – i.e. they change from situation to another. Of course, since our experiences of the world are mediated through conceptual schemes, our representations will always entail some mixture of empirical input and conceptual scheme. Consequently, to represent things as they are cannot mean representing the world as it is in-itself, i.e. we do not have 'God's-eye-view-accuracy'. In such a situation, representational accuracy, or true belief, must pertain to

the various mixtures of conceptual schemes and empirical input. Nonetheless, there is still the possibility of representing things accurately or not, which in this situation would entail representing our conceptual schemes and empirical inputs accurately. As we saw in the previous chapter, the aspects of intellectual character facilitate interaction with conceptual schemes to produce accurate representations of them, as well as how they fit with empirical inputs and so on. So, even though diverse conceptual schemes will alter the conditions of accuracy, the notion of accuracy itself will remain the same and the expectation will be that the intellectually virtuous agent represents such conditions as they are. That is, that the intellectually virtuous agent represents the various claims and conditions offered by specific conceptual schemes accurately.

Of course, these various conceptual schemes will cut-up the world differently and therefore set out different conditions for accuracy, which can entail that two different conceptual schemes may deem the same range of claims to be both accurate and inaccurate. Again, such a situation would not be much different than if we had direct contact with the world. For even if we had such direct contact the intellectually virtuous agent would still be confronted with contrary claims that pertain to the same range of phenomena. When confronted with such a situation the intellectually virtuous agent would thus have to assess the merit of each claim and a belief would follow from such assessment. Adding conceptual schemes to this situation simply entails that what the intellectually virtuous agent is assessing is not merely the world itself, but rather the world as it is presented by various conceptual schemes. In such a situation, the intellectually virtuous agent will assess these various claims, as pointed out in the previous chapter, by how well they fit with previous claims as well as empirical input. Consequently, the mere diversity of claims and conceptual schemes does not entail that true belief, or accurate representation, is itself idiosyncratic. It simply means that the intellectually virtuous agent will have some work to do, and if such an agent possesses truth-conducive character traits she will be better equipped to engage in such work.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

The focus of this chapter was to address Stephen P. Stich's criticisms of truth-conducive cognitive strategies. His criticisms displayed the difficulty of defining true belief in terms of accurate representation, as well as the idiosyncratic nature of true belief which would then make the valuing of it seem conservative and dubious. Stich's original criticisms were displayed to be either not applicable, since they relied on questionable assumptions, or ineffective, because it did not appear problematic to construe true belief as accurate representation or to propose that belief could possess semantic properties. A reformulated version of Stich's position was then offered that did have consequences for the constitutive value of intellectual character. Due to this reformulated position it has to be acknowledged that our current list of intellectual virtues may be idiosyncratic, and therefore one cannot explain the constitutive value of intellectual character through our current list. Rather, we must explain such value through intellectual conscientiousness alone. Any idiosyncrasy that may have emerged through Stich's reformulated position concerning accurate representation was also removed, since the notion of accuracy is not idiosyncratic even if the conditions determining it are. As part of the response to the reformulated position of Stich it was also acknowledged that 'accurate representation' could not mean 'God's-eye-view-accuracy,' but rather that accuracy must pertain to the empirical inputs and conceptual schemes agents are exposed to. Nonetheless, the constitutive value of intellectual character appears to depend on the value of accurate representation itself. With the next chapter we will consider a position that suggests that accurate representation is not valuable for agents, and may even be detrimental for agents. Such a position would thus display that intellectual character does not possess constitutive value for most people, since most people are better off without accurate representations.

Chapter Six: Positive Illusions and the Questionable Value of Accurate Representation

In the last chapter it was acknowledged that idiosyncrasy is a possibility when it comes to our current list of truth-conducive character traits. Consequently, we cannot explain the constitutive value of intellectual character by consulting our current list, but rather must rely solely on intellectual conscientiousness or the desire to obtain and sustain accurate representations. Thus questions concerning the value the latter become indispensable and will be the focus of this chapter. Determining the value of accurate representation will be accomplished through consideration of a position developed most fully by the psychologist Shelly E. Taylor. Taylor has argued that accurate representations may represent a disvalue for agents and that agents are better served by possessing certain pervasive positive illusions. If her position is correct, then it would be more valuable to possess false beliefs than true beliefs. Thus, Taylor's position deserves thorough consideration as it will have significant implications for the constitutive value of intellectual character.

6.1 Preliminary Remarks

In response to the position offered by Stich, Hilary Kornblith has argued that the valuing of truth is a prerequisite to valuing anything at all. He proposes that we require accurate beliefs to fulfill the various desires we have and therefore to achieve those things we intrinsically value. If we attempt to engage in the type of cost-benefit analysis advocated by Stich, Kornblith proposes, we will require true beliefs about what we value, about the consequences of certain choices and about the arithmetic with which we engage in such analysis. It is only if we possess accurate beliefs in regard to the former that we will be

able to satisfy our desires or interests and, in turn, acquire various intrinsic goods. A pragmatic cognitive strategy devoid of any concern for the truth, Kornblith suggests, would not tell us what we value, or the consequences of various choices, but rather “what we would be happiest to believe the consequences to be [...] what it is we would be happiest to believe that we value.”¹ If Stich’s cognitive strategy simply told us what would make us happy, Kornblith proposes, it would undermine our ability to fulfill our various desires or interests. True beliefs are required to fulfill such interests, and to achieve various intrinsic goods, and therefore adherence to truth is a prerequisite to valuing anything at all.²

Kornblith’s interpretation of Stich appears to be somewhat unfair, since the latter’s position does not have to jettison concern for the truth completely but rather only advocate adherence to it on the basis of its value for achieving various ends. Nonetheless, Kornblith’s position does possess intuitive merit, and is very similar to a position advocated by Zagzebski concerning intellectual character. Zagzebski proposes that if an agent cares about anything she must also care about obtaining true belief and in a specific way. If an agent cares about growing a beautiful garden, Zagzebski claims, then she will care about having true beliefs in regard to the various plants she may use to produce such a garden. The reason why true beliefs are important in such a situation, as well as others, is because they serve as the basis for action. So, for example, if an agent has true beliefs concerning which plants grow effectively together, and are mutually aesthetically pleasing, that agent will act accordingly to produce the garden she desires. Hence, we want true beliefs in order to accomplish other desirable ends. Zagzebski further suggests that we do not simply want true beliefs, but rather to be confident concerning these true beliefs, and this is where the

¹ Hilary Kornblith, (1993), “Epistemic Normativity,” *Synthese*, volume 94, pp 359, 369-371

² Kornblith, (1993), pp 371-372

value of intellectual character is displayed. Such confidence is desirable since acting takes time and effort, and sometimes sacrifice and/or risk, and thus it is only rational to ensure that our acting will be worthwhile. If we form our true beliefs through our virtuous character then we can be confident that they are true, since we have employed reliable means in achieving true beliefs, and therefore can further ensure that the actions chosen will be worthwhile.³ Consequently, if we care about anything we will also care about having true beliefs and even further care about forming beliefs in an intellectually virtuous manner since this will provide the confidence necessary to ensure our choices are worthwhile.⁴ As with Kornblith's position, then, Zagzebski holds that valuing truth is a prerequisite to valuing anything at all.

If it is true that the valuing of truth is a prerequisite to valuing anything at all, then we would have reason to hold that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. True belief would be required to achieve various goods, and since intellectual character would be required to obtain and sustain true beliefs, then intellectual character

³ Zagzebski makes the distinction here between mere true beliefs and knowledge, where knowledge entails a situation where the agent can be confident about the true beliefs she has. We can make the distinction instead in terms of mere true beliefs and true beliefs formed through the agent's virtuous character, for according to Zagzebski knowledge is achieved when the agent forms a true belief through her intellectual character. We avoid the term 'knowledge' simply because it is questionable whether beliefs formed through the agent's intellectual character constitute knowledge. Nonetheless, beliefs thus formed engender confidence for the agent since she has employed reliable mechanisms for belief formation. It should also be noted that Zagzebski proposes that we have a variety of epistemic goods that we care about if we care about anything. She includes examples such as understanding and the ability to identify trustworthy information. Nonetheless, she proposes that her position can be amended so as to include solely a concern for true belief and that her position does not depend on caring for knowledge or other epistemic goods. Zagzebski, (2004), pp 353-356

⁴ It should be noted that after formulating her position in this way Zagzebski moves on to propose that if we care about anything we then have an obligation to be epistemically justified, or "to engage in conscientious belief-forming behaviour." The rest of the article therefore focuses on explicating and justifying this obligation. Talk of obligations, epistemic or otherwise, has been intentionally avoided throughout this thesis. It has been avoided partly due to Anscombe's suggestion that such language belongs to a different type of discourse, i.e. deontological discourse, and partly because whether intellectual character has value or whether we have any obligations to think in specific ways represent two distinct issues. Whether we have epistemic obligations itself represents a substantial issue with its own literature. Thus, if it was the focus a different set of questions and issues would have guided the thesis. Anscombe, (1997), pp 26, 29-30, 33-34, 40, 43-44. Zagzebski, (2004), p 356-367

would be required to achieve various goods. Consequently, intellectual character would possess constitutive value since it would be required, or necessary, to achieve various other goods. Other philosophers, though, have questioned the necessary value of true beliefs, and have even proposed that self-deceptive cognitive strategies also provide something necessarily valuable for agents. For example, Robert Solomon has proposed that exposure to the truth can hurt, or even destroy an agent, and that the threatening nature of truth, “has long been white washed by philosophers.”⁵ Exposure to the truth, Solomon suggests, “is a source of considerable consternation,” “complicates social arrangements, undermines collective myths, destroys relationships, and incites violence and vengeance.”⁶ Also, human agents are flawed creatures, and thus recognition of these flaws “can be devastating to one’s self image and sense of self.”⁷ Self-deception, on the other hand, “sustains the illusions that sustain us,” and this is largely due to the self-fulfilling nature of belief; i.e. through believing falsely that one has more talent than one does, for example, one is able to accomplish various goals.⁸ Self-deception is a means of coping with life, and not a celebration of falsehood; especially in an “emotionally charged world [...where] the expectations of others matter more to us than that abstract metaconception known to us as “the Truth.””⁹

Amélie Oksenberg Rorty has echoed these claims made by Solomon. She proposes that agents both should not, and cannot, live without the self-deceptive illusions that sustain

⁵ Robert C. Solomon, (1996), “Self-Deception and Self-Deception in Philosophy,” *Self and Deception: a cross-cultural philosophical enquiry*, edited by R. T. Ames and W. Dissanayake, (New York: State University Press), pp.92, 97.

⁶ Solomon, (1996), p.92, 97.

⁷ Solomon, (1996), p.103.

⁸ Solomon, (1996), pp.92-93.

⁹ Solomon, (1996), p.109.

them, nor “without the second-order denials that they are illusions.”¹⁰ Rorty claims that if agents did not engage in some species of self-deceptive activity, then the various causes they dedicate themselves to, the friendships they form, and the vocations they pursue would collapse. An example she briefly elaborates upon to demonstrate her point is the decision to have children. Rorty proposes that in making such a decision agents must “ignore that travails of parents, obliterating [...the] otherwise keen awareness of the typical relations among parents and children.”¹¹ Rorty admits that self-deception is not always benign, and also proposes that it is only as good as the agent who engages in it, but nonetheless as a cognitive strategy it tends to be more beneficial for agents than truth-conducive cognitive strategies.¹²

Although the above claims made by philosophers such as Solomon and Rorty exhibit much intuitive merit their empirical credibility is questionable; especially since philosophers such as Kornblith and Zagzebski have made equally intuitively appealing, yet contrary, claims concerning the value of truth-conducive cognitive strategies. The empirical literature offered by psychologists concerning the value of ‘positive illusions’ is therefore indispensable to this debate, and for ultimately clarifying in what way intellectual character is constitutively valuable. Shelly E. Taylor, among others, has engaged in various experiments and consulted a number of other studies in order to argue that certain false beliefs are significant, and possibly indispensable, for the well-being of agents. If the position of these psychologists’ are correct, it then lends empirical support to the intuitively

¹⁰ Rorty, (1996), pp 73-74

¹¹ Rorty, (1996), pp 81-82

¹² Rorty proposes that self-deception is unavoidable. Rorty may be right that it is unavoidable, and therefore intellectual character would provide either little or no value, but this issue will not be addressed. Rather, it will be bracketed off as one of those issues that draws into question virtue psychology, and therefore outside the scope of this thesis. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, (1986), “Self-deception, *Akrasia* and irrationality,” *The Multiple Self*, edited by Jon Elster, (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp 119, 126-127. Rorty, (1996), pp 73-74, 85

appealing positions of Solomon and Rorty. In turn, it would have significant repercussions for any claims concerning the constitutive value of intellectual character. If agents achieve well-being not through obtaining and sustaining true beliefs, but instead true beliefs are detrimental for the well-being of agents, then it would be very difficult to say that intellectual character possesses constitutive value. We could not say that intellectual character is necessary for the human good due to its transformative influence if the empirical evidence suggests that agents are happier and more successful through engaging in self-deceptive cognitive strategies. We must therefore consider this empirical literature in order to determine its repercussions for any claims concerning the value of intellectual character.

6.2 The Descriptive Account of Positive Illusions

Before we begin our consideration of the various ways in which positive illusions benefit agents it is important to become familiar with the types of false beliefs Taylor, and others, have proposed have such benefit. It is also relevant to consider some of the characteristics of these false beliefs, e.g., the extent to which these false beliefs are prevalent amongst the population. This brief examination will indicate for us the type of cognitive strategy that is being contrasted with intellectual character.

It must first be noted that the types of illusions that various psychologists have identified as beneficial for agents do not entail gross distortions of reality. For example, agents who possess the false beliefs Taylor refers to as ‘positive illusions’ do not believe that they can control the movement of the stars or the planets. This is why these false

beliefs are referred to as ‘illusions’ as opposed to the more pejorative term ‘delusions,’ as they entail mild but specific distortions. They are also of an evaluative nature, such that these mild distortions entail evaluative assessments of various aspects of human life.¹³ Specifically, these evaluative illusory beliefs can be demarcated into three distinct types: illusions regarding the agent’s own attributes, illusions regarding personal control over future events and undue optimism concerning the future. In regard to the first type, often referred to as self-enhancement bias, agents tend to believe that they are more intelligent and are more likable than their peers. Attributes possessed by the agent are held to be indicative of rare and distinctive talent, whereas any faults are dismissed as common and inconsequential. In regard to personal control over the future, agents tend to take credit for positive outcomes, attributing them to their own qualities and efforts, while negative outcomes are attributed to factors beyond the agent’s control. Finally, regarding undue optimism concerning the future, agents hold that negative future outcomes are more likely to occur to their peers than to themselves. Thus, agents tend to evaluate their own attributes, their personal control and their personal success as being more positive than other agents.¹⁴

These evaluative distortions are held to be false, even though there are mild correlations between what the agent believes and how things are, in part due to the overestimation involved with such beliefs. For example, it is simply statistically impossible for the majority of agents to be above average in terms of personal success or personal talent. Consequently, when the majority of subjects in experimental situations rate

¹³ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200 Taylor, (1989), p 45 Taylor and Brown (1994a), p 24 Brown, and Dutton, (1995), pp 1289, 1291

¹⁴ Taylor, (1989), p xi, 6-7, 9-10 Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 193, 196-197 Taylor and Brown, (1994a), p 24-25 Anderson, et al (2006), p 1095

themselves higher than others in terms of personal talent or possible future success they are inaccurately representing their personal levels of talent and possible levels of future success. Such beliefs are illusory because they entail representations that do not fit with how the world actually is.¹⁵ These positive illusions are also held to be false because their impetuses are typically maintenance of the agent's self-esteem and self-schema. For example, psychologists have discovered that agents who exhibit high levels of self-esteem are also the agents who exhibit these positive illusions. If an agent's estimation does correlate with his actual attributes, and future possible success, such correlation is held to be the result not of accurate insight in these domains but an accidental correlation between what his self-esteem compels him to believe and the way things are. These evaluative distortions are therefore held to be false because agents do not arrive at them through an accurate assessment of evidence, but rather through the influence of personal levels of self-esteem.¹⁶ Also, as mentioned, agents tend to possess certain self-schemas - i.e. organized sets of beliefs about personal traits and role in the world - and these self-schemas also influence beliefs formed by the agent. Agents attempt to maintain the beliefs associated with their self-schemas, for example that they are witty or kind, and this in turn causes them to form false beliefs. This is because the self-schema acts as a filter through which information is interpreted. If some incoming evidence does not conform with the self-schema, then it is either modified or ignored as set out in chapter two. This is especially the case if the information is negative, for agents attempt to protect the self from informational inputs that may have a negative impact on either their self-esteem or self-schema. It is

¹⁵ Taylor and Brown, (1988), pp 194-197 Taylor and Brown, (1994a), p 24 Brown and Dutton, (1995), p 1291

¹⁶ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200, 204 Brown and Dutton, (1995), p 1291

therefore the maintenance of either of these that influences doxastic formation, and in turn causes the agent to form the types of positive illusions previously mentioned ¹⁷

These ‘mild distortions’ are also referred to as illusions, as opposed to errors and biases, since they entail enduring, pervasive and systematic patterns of belief. Positive illusions do not entail temporary distortions of reality, or temporary mistakes in reasoning and perception. Agents who possess such illusions have enduring beliefs concerning their ability to be more successful than their peers, or enduring beliefs concerning their relative intelligence as compared to other agents ¹⁸. They also do not represent a rare occurrence in the human population, but rather are quite pervasive. For example, in a 1994 article Taylor co-authored with Jonathan Brown, it was proposed that of those agents who have participated in studies of positive illusions the lowest percentage of participants that exhibited such illusions was 85%, whereas the percentage of agents who typically exhibit such illusions was above 95% ¹⁹. Also, numerous investigations have been conducted by various psychologists that attest to the prevalence of such illusions ²⁰. Taylor thus proclaims that the possession of positive illusions is representative of the normal human mind, and that agents are not merely passive recorders of their personal experiences but instead active revisionists in order to maintain their illusory states ²¹.

This brief description of positive illusions indicates that they represent a cognitive strategy that is in stark contrast with a cognitive strategy focused on intellectual character. Both represent certain patterns of doxastic formation but with very different results. Recall

¹⁷ Taylor, (1989), pp 13-15, 154-155

¹⁸ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 194. Taylor, (1989), pp 227-228

¹⁹ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 193. Taylor and Brown, (1994b), p 973

²⁰ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 193. Taylor, (1989), p 16, 20. Brown and Taylor propose that at least 120 studies attest to the claim that agents exhibit the illusion that they are less vulnerable to various risks than others. Brown and Taylor (1994b), p 973

²¹ Taylor, (1989), p xi, 7, 11, 20

that in chapter three it was argued that the various aspects of intellectual character can be habituated so that they become stable and enduring aspects of the agent that mitigate the influence of personal biases that could lead to false belief. Instead of believing as they want to agents who cultivate their intellectual character are concerned with the truth in order to acquire accurate representations which they acquiesce in. Intellectual character could therefore mitigate the influence of the impetuses for positive illusions, since through the influence of the former agents would not be concerned to maintain self-esteem or their self-schema, but rather to obtain and sustain true beliefs. Of course, it is an open-question whether counteracting the impetuses which cause agents to have such positive illusions is desirable or good for agents. We will therefore consider in the next section the various ways in which positive illusions have been documented as beneficial for agents. These benefits will draw into question the constitutive value of intellectual character, for they display that the true beliefs facilitated by such character are not necessary to achieve a variety of other goods. If this is the case, then it will be quite difficult to claim that intellectual character is constitutively value in the strong sense.

6.3 The Benefits of Positive Illusions

The focus of this section is to set out some of the benefits that various psychologists have proposed positive illusions provide for agents. These benefits will be divided into three broad categories: contribution to mental well-being; contribution to physical well-being; and contribution to the agent's ability to be adaptive. We will begin with contribution to mental well-being.

6.3.1 Positive Illusions and Mental Well-Being

Traditionally, as many of the psychologists who work on positive illusions have pointed out, mental well-being was thought to result when an agent possessed accurate self-perceptions. Accurate self-perception was in fact held to be an essential aspect of mental well-being, while the possession of illusionary beliefs was held to be indicative of mental illness. Consequently, when psychologists such as Shelly Taylor, Jonathan Brown and others proposed that mental well-being is achieved through the possession of positive illusions they had to change the definition of mental well-being slightly.²² Specifically, they removed the criterion of accurate self-perceptions and simply maintained other criteria traditionally associated with mental well-being. These criteria include happiness or contentment, positive view of self, ability to care for others, and capacity for productive and creative work.²³ The claim is that the possession of positive illusions is associated with these other criteria which are definitive of mental well-being, and therefore positive illusions are also associated with mental well-being. Thus, instead of being detrimental to mental well-being the evidence suggests that certain false beliefs contribute to mental well-being.²⁴ We shall look at some of this evidence as it relates to the above three criteria of mental well-being.

In regard to the first criterion, research suggests that agents who report experiencing greater levels of happiness and contentment are also agents that possess positive self-concepts, illusory beliefs of control and optimism concerning the future. Due to higher levels of happiness and contentment in agents with such illusions it is thought that it is the

²² Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 197 Taylor, (1989), pp 4-5

²³ Taylor and Brown, (1988), pp 197-200 Taylor, (1989), pp 47-48

²⁴ Taylor, (1989), p 7

illusions that are responsible for the presence of these elevated feelings of happiness and contentment, which has caused Taylor to propose that such illusions promote happiness. She admits that the causal chain can proceed in the opposite direction, in that agents in a positive mood will also express overly positive self-concepts, but nonetheless there are documented instances where it is positive illusions that are the impetus for the positive mood.²⁵ This claim is buttressed by research that displays that agents who engage in self-deception are less likely to be depressed, and exhibit fewer signs of mental disturbance, than agents who do not engage in self-deception.²⁶ We will consider this claim in more detail later in this chapter.

Positive illusions are also associated with the ability to care for others, as research has displayed there is a correlation between such illusions and social bonding.²⁷ Part of the contribution of positive illusions to successful social relationships is simply the result of the positive mood initiated by the former, since the positive mood itself initiates attempts to both interact with, and benefit, others, as well as positive evaluations of others. These illusions, though, can also have a more direct influence on social interaction. Taylor proposes that agents who do not possess positive self-concepts, but instead doubt their own self-worth, have difficulty caring about others since contact with these others can initiate “distress and feelings of inadequacy.”²⁸ On the other hand, agents who possess illusions that contribute to positive self-regard also exhibit positive regard for others. Also, agents who doubt their own talents and self-worth tend to be preoccupied with their own problems, and, in turn, cannot meet the needs of others. This then inhibits their ability to exhibit love

²⁵ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200 Taylor (1989), p 49, 52-53

²⁶ Taylor, (1989), p 159

²⁷ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200

²⁸ Taylor, (1989), pp 53-55

and affection for others.²⁹ In contrast, agents who possess illusions concerning the future are more willing to make personal sacrifices on behalf of others, which then facilitates stronger social bonds. Positive illusions contribute directly to self-sacrificing behaviour, as agents appear to be willing to endure personal sacrifices and privations if they believe that the future will bring good things.³⁰

In regard to the criterion of capacity for creative and productive work it has been discovered that agents who possess the self-enhancement bias, unrealistic optimism concerning the future and exaggerated beliefs of personal control are well equipped to achieve such work. This is because such illusions are “associated with higher motivation, greater persistence, more effective performance, and ultimately, greater success.”³¹ Agents who unrealistically believe that success will ensue from task engagement are more willing to attempt various projects, and are more willing to stick with a task until they succeed. Such agents in turn are more likely to succeed due to such optimism, which then leads to the conclusion that illusions concerning success tend to be self-fulfilling. The mere belief in personal success makes such success possible. On the other hand, agents who exhibit negative judgments about the future also focus on possible negative outcomes and therefore inhibit their own motivation and performance. Positive illusions concerning the agent’s own attributes also leads to personal success, since such illusions contribute to exaggerated assessments of the agent’s own performance. Agents who exaggerate in regard to their own performances are also more persistent when attempting various tasks.³² These positive illusions also contribute to creative and productive work through their ability to maintain

²⁹ Taylor, (1989), p.54-55.

³⁰ Taylor, (1989), p.58.

³¹ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p.199.

³² Taylor, (1989), p58-60, 63-64.

happiness or a positive mood in agents. Positive mood contributes to the agent's ability to engage in constructive and creative work, since agents who exhibit a positive mood are able to recall relevant information more quickly and easily than agents who exhibit a negative mood and are more likely to employ rapid and efficient problem solving strategies. Consequently, the positive mood engendered by positive illusions also facilitates the employment of effective cognitive strategies and therefore leads to success when attempting tasks.³³

Since positive illusions contribute to the mental well-being of agents Taylor has proposed that accurate representations can no longer be held to be a necessary aspect of such well-being. Rather, the mentally healthy agent is not an agent who possesses accurate representations, but instead represents the world as she would like it to be. Thus, in order to achieve mental well-being it seems that it is better that agents possess "systematic small distortions that make things appear better than they are."³⁴ These positive illusions, though, do not merely contribute to mental well-being, but also, as mentioned, to physical well-being. We will now consider this claim.

6.3.2 Positive Illusions and Physical Well-Being

In regard to the claim that positive illusions contribute to physical well-being Taylor, and others, are cautious. Taylor does not claim that agents can cure themselves of various physical ailments through positive thinking, but rather that evidence attesting to the value of

³³ Taylor, (1989), pp.68-69, 71.

³⁴ Taylor, (1989), p.227-228.

positive illusions for physical well-being is growing.³⁵ Positive illusions such as optimism and belief in control appear to contribute to health in two ways. First, if agents are optimistic about their futures, and have excessive beliefs in personal control, this may lead to better health practices which then leads to better health conditions for such agents. Second, these positive illusions appear to have direct physiological effects on the body which then leads to better health conditions for agents. We will consider each in turn.

Beginning with the claim that positive illusions contribute to better health practices Taylor and others have gathered evidence that attests to this claim. For example, in one research study it was discovered that subjects who tested seropositive for HIV, but were optimistic about not developing AIDS, engaged in better health practices than subjects whose HIV status was seronegative and subjects whose HIV status was seropositive but were pessimistic about developing AIDS. This correlation could be explained due to the seropositive status of such men, in that seropositive gay men engage in better health practices because of their seropositive status, in order to avoid developing AIDS, while seronegative gay men do not have to be as concerned about their health because they are seronegative. Assuredly, there is merit to this possibility, but the occurrence of AIDS specific optimism also fulfills an explanatory role and attests to the value of positive illusions. That such optimism also fulfills a role in explaining the behaviour of the seropositive men is attested to, in part, by the fact that such men possessed a number of illusory beliefs. These men believed that they had developed some immunity to the AIDS virus and were substantially more optimistic about not developing AIDS than seronegative men even though they acknowledged they were at greater risk for developing AIDS. Such beliefs, especially optimism concerning the possibility of not developing AIDS, were

³⁵ Taylor, (1989), p 87-91

unwarranted. The warranted belief was that the development AIDS was more likely, especially since, at the time of the study, it was commonly believed by the medical community that men who are seropositive were more likely to develop AIDS. The fact that the seropositive subjects possessed such illusory beliefs attests to the idea that their beliefs and habits, including better health practices, were not generally the result of an accurate representation of their situation. The seropositive subjects exhibited a pattern in their thinking and belief formation such that their beliefs appear to be the result of their optimistic outlook and not the result of adherence to the evidence. For even when they admitted that they were at greater risk for developing AIDS this did not influence the beliefs they formed. It did not cause them to believe that they were more vulnerable to developing AIDS, but instead they formed inaccurate beliefs concerning their present and future health status. They were more likely to form beliefs that were false but optimistic. Consequently, their beliefs concerning how their health practices could contribute to their future health also likely had the same impetus; i.e. AIDS specific optimism and not any evidentiary grounding.³⁶

That it is such optimism that caused the seropositive men to engage in various health-conducive practices is reinforced by the fact that men who were seropositive, but did not possess such optimism, were less likely to engage in better health habits. If it was the realization that one was more susceptible to developing AIDS that could explain their better health practices, then one would expect that there would be little, or no, difference in the health practices between men who were seropositive but optimistic and men who were

³⁶ Shelly E Taylor, Margaret E Kemeny, Lisa G Aspinwall, Stephen G Schneider, Richard Rodriguez, and Mark Herbert, (1992), "Optimism, Coping, Psychological Distress and High-Risk Sexual Behavior Among Men at Risk for Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease (AIDS)," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 63, number 3, pp 460-461, 463, 465-467, 469-472

seropositive but pessimistic. But men who possessed AIDS specific optimism were more likely to engage in better health practices than men who did not possess such optimism. Both sets of men possessed the same evidence, and believed that they were at significant risk for developing AIDS, but differed in terms of their optimism as well as their health habits. It therefore appears that it is the occurrence of AIDS specific optimism that can account for the differences in their behaviour and not an accurate appraisal of their situation.³⁷

Thus, the possession of certain illusory beliefs can have a positive influence on agent behaviour. Confirmation of the contribution of positive illusions to better health habits is not restricted to this single case, for Taylor has discovered similar phenomena with women who have suffered from cancer. Specifically, women who have suffered from cancer, and possess certain positive illusions of control, have also been found to engage in better health habits.³⁸ The evidence that positive illusions can contribute to positive health habits is therefore mounting, and has caused Taylor to claim that beliefs in personal potency, even when illusory, lead agents to engage in better health habits.³⁹

Illusory beliefs, as mentioned, do not simply influence agent behaviour, but also appear to have a direct positive impact on the physiological state of agents. One way in which false beliefs can have a positive influence on the physical well-being of agents is through placebos. Taylor defines a placebo, citing R. Liberman,⁴⁰ as any “medical procedure that produces an effect in a patient because of its therapeutic intent, and not its

³⁷ Taylor et al, (1992), pp 460-461, 469-472

³⁸ Taylor, (1989), pp 181-183

³⁹ Taylor, (1989), pp 91-93

⁴⁰ R Liberman, (1962), “An analysis of the placebo phenomenon,” *Journal of Chronic Diseases*, volume 15, p 761

nature.”⁴¹ When we think of placebos we tend to think they entail pseudo-treatments that have a positive effect only because they are meant to treat pseudo-physiological conditions. If this were true, then the value of false beliefs for our health would be questionable because their usefulness would be limited to situations where there is no real physiological problem. Taylor proposes, though, that the placebo effect is not limited to situations where there is no actual physiological problem. Rather, the placebo effect extends to situations where an actual physiological condition is present and an actual effective treatment has been administered. For in many situations where there is some apparent physiological cause associated with the patient’s suffering, and a treatment is administered that is in-itself effective in producing positive treatment for the agent, there is also a placebo component. In such situations the effectiveness of the treatment is “enhanced by the faith the patient and the physician have in its ability to achieve improvement.”⁴² One example cited by Taylor to demonstrate this point is a situation where some patients were injected with morphine to relieve pain while others received only a placebo. In regard to those patients who received only a placebo 35 percent reported that their pain was lessened. This then caused physicians to conclude that not only are placebos effective on their own in reducing pain, but also that some of the relief experienced by patients who did receive morphine was simply a placebo effect. Taylor proposes that the effectiveness of placebos occurs because the agent’s false belief has actual physical consequences for the agent. The false believing associated with placebo situations leads to the release of various chemicals into the body which then promotes healing. For example, placebos reduce anxiety by dampening the release of chemicals, such as epinephrine, that are associated with anxiety. Through

⁴¹ Taylor, (1989), p.116.

⁴² Taylor, (1989), pp.116-117.

reducing anxiety placebos then also allow the body to build up its resources to deal with the deleterious physiological conditions that are affecting it.⁴³ Hence, the false beliefs associated with placebos have therapeutic value because they initiate actual physical changes in agents.

To further demonstrate the therapeutic value of false beliefs, Taylor and others have conducted research that displays how the attitudes and beliefs of agents have positive physical consequences. For example, in one study Taylor and her research team examined the influence of beliefs in personal control, optimism and a sense of meaning on disease progression in HIV seropositive men. What they discovered is that men who possessed accurate beliefs concerning their HIV status, for example the belief that death was a real possibility given their HIV status, also died on average nine months earlier than men who refused to acknowledge the actual consequences of their HIV status. In this study Taylor and her research team were very careful to remove other possible variables that could explain the longevity of those men who were optimistic and who refused to acknowledge the real possibility of their death. Thus they controlled for variables such as poor health habits by men who accepted the possibility of their own death, as well as the onset of depression through such acceptance, and found that such variables could not account for the longevity of men who refused to accept the real possibility of death. Rather, it was the positive expectations of those men who refused to accept their own death, and therefore exhibited positive illusions such as optimism concerning the future and exaggerated beliefs in control, which led to greater longevity.⁴⁴ And in another research study Taylor and Jennifer S. Lerner have discovered that a self-enhancement bias, i.e. illusory beliefs about

⁴³ Taylor, (1989), pp.117-118.

⁴⁴ Taylor et al (2000), pp.99-100, 102-107.

one's own attributes and personal control, also has positive physical outcomes. They discovered that agents who exhibit the self-enhancement bias were better equipped to deal with stress, as their biological responses to stressful situations, for example cardiovascular recovery and cortisol levels, were more favorable than agents who did not possess such a bias.⁴⁵

Evidence is therefore mounting concerning the positive physical influence of certain illusory beliefs. Placebos possess therapeutic value for agents because they initiate actual biological changes that contribute to physical well-being. Optimism also appears to have similar positive physical outcomes, since it can contribute to agent longevity. If the evidence concerning the biological influence of positive illusions is combined with the consideration that such illusions contribute to better health practices it then becomes difficult to dismiss the merits of certain false beliefs for agent health. In turn, it does not seem that the possession of true beliefs would produce much good for agents. As we saw, the accurate beliefs of seropositive gay men appeared to lead such agents to die sooner than those agents who possessed illusory beliefs. It therefore seems that accurate beliefs are not necessary to achieve the good of health and may even be detrimental to it.

One could imagine, though, that in certain situations true, or accurate, beliefs would undeniably benefit agents, and therefore cannot be easily dismissed. Both Zagzebski and Kornblith suggested that true beliefs were required to achieve various goods specifically because they can be the basis of action. In certain situations, including ones related to agent health, it would seem that we require true beliefs in order to survive or thrive. Assuredly, this is, at least in part, the basis of practices of disclosure and consent within health-care.

⁴⁵ Shelly E Taylor and Jennifer S Lerner, (2003), "Are Self-Enhancing Cognitions Associated With Healthy or Unhealthy Biological Profiles?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 85, number 4, pp.605, 608, 612-613.

Physicians are required to disclose various treatments to patients out of respect for their autonomy, but such disclosure is also justified on the grounds that accurately perceiving one's options will better facilitate beneficial choices on behalf of the patient. Accurate beliefs concerning the details and outcomes of various treatment options enables patients to determine which treatments fit with their specific values and therefore which treatments they hold to be beneficial. Physicians, of course, also require accurate beliefs in order to better treat their patients, for the outcome of false diagnoses could be significantly pernicious. Thus, even though false beliefs can have positive outcomes in certain types of situations one would think that overall it is better to possess accurate beliefs, and this would include situations where one's health is concerned. If one were to weigh the relative benefits and burdens of true beliefs versus false beliefs, then one would think that the scales would tip in favour of true beliefs. Sometimes it is beneficial to have false beliefs, as the above evidence displays, but generally it is better to have true beliefs and therefore better to lose some of the benefits that result from possessing certain positive illusions.

There is merit to such claims, but if we consider some of the research Taylor has conducted concerning the adaptive value of positive illusions we will see that this merit does not extend to the value of intellectual character. The claim that accurate belief is required to make informed choices does have merit, but this does not mean that agents, in turn, require intellectual character to acquire such beliefs. We will now turn to consider this possibility.

6.3.3 Positive Illusions and the Ability to be Adaptive

We have already seen that positive illusions provide adaptive qualities for agents. When we considered their contribution to mental well-being we saw that false beliefs lead agents to form better social bonds with others. We also saw that such illusions contribute to the ability to engage in creative and productive work, and in the previous subsection we saw that they contribute to physical well-being. All of these goods that result from the possession of positive illusions attest to their adaptive value. Agents who can form positive bonds with others, engage in creative and productive work and possess physical well-being will certainly be more successful than agents who do not possess such qualities. With this subsection we will focus specifically on how positive illusions either contribute to successful functioning in the world, or do not hinder such functioning. What we will find is that positive illusions are adaptive, since they provide their own means of taking in negative information to contribute to agent success. Moreover, such illusions seem to decrease naturally when they would hinder effective functioning and then return to normal levels when they would facilitate effective functioning. Ultimately, if positive illusions contribute to successful functioning for agents, or do not hinder it, it then becomes difficult to assert that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense since such character would not be necessary to secure a variety of goods.

Taylor writes extensively on how agents who possess such illusions are highly responsive to negative information. For example, agents who possess unrealistic optimism about the future are still quite responsive to what Taylor calls objective evidence; i.e. evidence about the risks involved with taking various courses of action. Such negative

information is reluctantly accepted, while positive outcomes are still regarded as more likely than negative outcomes. So, even though agents who possess positive illusions do not accurately perceive their vulnerability to specific threats they nonetheless acknowledge them, and this leads to an increase in their assessments of their personal susceptibility to such threats.⁴⁶ Consequently, illusions are maintained while negative information is acknowledged so that the latter can influence agent choices and behaviour. In fact, the mechanisms which lead agents to have illusory beliefs are also effective in facilitating the incorporation of negative information. When agents receive information that is contrary to their expectations or previous judgments, and their current stock of beliefs must be altered, such alterations typically occur unconsciously. This is, of course, congruent with the descriptive theory of self-deception set out in chapter two. In such situations agents construct memories that enable them to maintain that they have always held beliefs that are consistent with the new information they have received. In this way, Taylor proposes, agents can be receptive to new information and learn from their mistakes while maintaining illusions of infallibility. The perception that one has “made a mistake in judgement or changed [...one’s] opinion is [therefore] fleeting, if present at all.”⁴⁷

It therefore appears that the possession of positive illusions, and of mechanisms which are conducive to maintaining them, does not hinder the ability to acknowledge information, or the ability to adapt to various changes in the environment. Even further, as mentioned, such illusions do not appear to be always present, but rather conveniently decrease when they would be too detrimental to agent functioning. Specifically, it was discovered that when agents are in a predecisional phase, i.e. a phase when they have to

⁴⁶ Taylor, (1989), pp.36-37, 110, 131-132, 240.

⁴⁷ Taylor, (1989), pp.150-151, 157.

make decisions over what choices to make, their illusory beliefs are somewhat suspended. That is, when agents have to appraise various options by weighing the pros and cons of these different options agents are more aware of their own shortcomings, the likelihood of success, and the limitations imposed by the environment. Once deliberation has ceased to occur, and agents are in a postdecisional phase, and must implement the choices they have made, their illusions return to normal levels. This has caused researchers to make the distinction between the ‘deliberative’ mindset and the ‘implemental’ mindset. Agents in the deliberative mindset appear to be less affected by illusory beliefs while agents in an implemental mindset exhibit the normal illusions identified by Taylor and others.⁴⁸

It should also be noted that both mindsets are deemed adaptive. In regard to the deliberative mindset the adaptiveness of having accurate beliefs seems obvious. In such situations agents are typically making decisions that have a significant impact on the rest of their lives. For example if they are deciding on a particular career or to get married, then a significant degree of accuracy in their beliefs is indispensable. If some agent incorrectly assesses her talents, and chooses a career she is not well suited for, then only frustration will result. The illusions of the implemental mindset are also adaptive, since exaggerated beliefs in one’s talents, personal control and possibility of success typically causes agents to be more diligent in pursuing goals and therefore leads to success. Consequently, instead of leading to failure and frustration positive illusions appear to lead to personal success. When there is a possibility that they may hinder agent functioning they decrease, and when the agent requires the necessary motivation to accomplish goals decided upon positive illusions facilitate success by providing such motivation.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Taylor and Gollwitzer, (1995), pp.213-214, 217, 223-224.

⁴⁹ Taylor and Gollwitzer, (1995), p.224.

The fact that such illusions appear to have these adaptive qualities, and especially the ability to be malleable when agents are either deliberating over their choices or implementing their choices, draws further into question the constitutive value of intellectual character. If positive illusions are unconsciously maintained in order to provide various goods for agents, and then naturally decrease when they would be maladaptive, it then becomes a significant question as to why agents would require the various aspects of intellectual character, and specifically intellectual conscientiousness, in order to obtain various goods. Recall that in order to become virtuous, agents must engage in a conscientious effort to habituate the virtues and such habituation can be quite taxing. Even further, as set out in chapter two, they would have to value the truth intrinsically. There would be incentive to engage in such a process if it were the case that accurate representations were necessary for agents to be successful or to achieve various goods. As we have seen throughout this section, and specifically in this subsection, accurate representation does not appear to be necessary for such success. Agents who possess positive illusions appear to achieve various goods such as mental well-being, physical well-being, and, as well, the ability to be adaptive. Consequently, contrary to the suggestions offered by Kornblith and Zagzebski, it does not seem that valuing truth, and ultimately possessing truth, is a prerequisite to valuing and achieving other goods. We do not require accurate beliefs as a foundation for our actions, and even in cases where we might require mostly true beliefs, for example when we are deliberating over choices, we do not require intellectual character. Hence, when the evidence is considered it does not seem that intellectual character is necessary to achieve various goods and therefore its constitutive value is highly questionable. Even further, there is evidence that true beliefs may be

detrimental for agents. If it is the case that true beliefs are detrimental for agents, then the claims of Solomon and Rorty would gain further merit. Their remarks have already gained some merit, for it does seem that certain false beliefs do contribute to the human good. These authors also claimed, though, that exposure to the truth can be detrimental for agents. We shall therefore consider the possible detriment of true beliefs for agents, as Taylor has collected evidence that suggests that what both Solomon and Rorty have claimed is true.

6.4 The Disvalue of True Belief

Taylor's research is not limited to demonstrating the value of positive illusions, but has also turned to a consideration of the disvalue of true beliefs. Specifically, Taylor has consulted literature on 'depressive realism' to demonstrate this disvalue. She proposes that much of the research "that has documented the prevalence and adaptiveness of positive illusions [...] has implicitly or explicitly compared them with mildly depressed people [...] to show the maladaptive impact of the loss or absence of illusions."⁵⁰ What Taylor is implying is that without certain false beliefs, i.e. positive illusions, agents are both depressed and maladaptive. If the absence of such false beliefs entails that agents have replaced them with true, or accurate, beliefs, then the claim is that agents who possess true beliefs are both depressed and maladaptive. Taylor, though, does not merely insinuate such a claim; she appears to advocate the maladaptive value and depression-inducing impact of true beliefs explicitly. She states that in the past it was believed that depressed agents also distort reality, but recent evidence suggests that instead of distorting reality agents who are depressed actually possess accurate beliefs. Specifically, their beliefs are described by

⁵⁰ Taylor, (1989), p.211.

Taylor as being more accurate when it comes to “views of themselves, the world, and the future than [...the beliefs of] normal people,”⁵¹ or people who possess positive illusions. It is this tendency for depressed agents to have more accurate beliefs that then warrants the phrase ‘depressive realism,’ i.e. in certain situations mildly depressed agents possess accurate beliefs as opposed to the positive distortions identified by Taylor and others. For example, they tend not to exaggerate how competent they are, they recall both their successes and failures, and acknowledge both their positive and negative personal qualities. As Taylor puts it, “on virtually every point on which normal people show enhanced self-regard, illusions of control, and unrealistic visions of the future, depressed people fail to show the same biases.”⁵²

Taylor admits that it is not always the case that depressed agents have more accurate beliefs, for as depression becomes more severe the beliefs of such agents become less accurate and instead more negative. Nonetheless, she does conjecture that in certain cases it is the loss of biases, i.e. the biases identified as positive illusions, that leads to the depressed state since the agent is no longer sheltered from the harsher aspects of life.⁵³ Such a claim consequently appears to resonate with the claim made by Solomon that if self-deception is eradicated in an agent, so that she possess only true beliefs, then only negative outcomes will ensue.⁵⁴ Taylor admits that the causes of depression are various, and that some of these causes are physiological - a point we will consider when we critically assess the positive illusions position - but she also cites evidence that depression results from the inability to form positive illusions. Specifically, she cites Christopher Layne who suggests

⁵¹ Taylor (1989), pp 212-213

⁵² Taylor, (1989), p 214

⁵³ Taylor, (1989), p 215

⁵⁴ Solomon, (1996), p 92, 97

that a variety of stressful events during childhood could cause an inability to form the positive illusions that appear to protect agents from the harsher aspects of life.⁵⁵ She also cites the fact that in situations where agents become balanced in their self-perceptions, and acknowledge their faults and limitations as well as lack of control, mild depression typically ensues.⁵⁶ So, although Taylor admits that not all forms of depression result from the loss of positive illusions, she also proposes that some forms of depression result directly from such a loss. Consequently, there is evidence not only that certain false beliefs are beneficial for agents, but also that true beliefs may entail a burden for agents that then leads to depression. Such a claim would therefore attest to the disvalue of intellectual character, since the specific output of intellectual character is accurate representations. It would therefore be very difficult to say that intellectual character possesses constitutive value.

6.5 Questioning the Value of Positive Illusions

Even though the literature just surveyed attests to the value of certain false beliefs, and the disvalue of true beliefs, this does not mean that the case against the constitutive value of intellectual character has been made. This is because there are reasons for doubting whether the research on positive illusions has demonstrated that the possession of true beliefs is bad for agents. These various reasons include: empirical disconfirmation of the positive illusion hypothesis; methodological problems with the positive illusions literature; questions concerning evidence for the disvalue of true belief; and, finally, conceptual problems with the positive illusion literature. In the following subsections we will consider

⁵⁵ Taylor, (1989), pp 218-219 Christopher Layne, (1983), "Painful truths about depressives' cognitions," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, volume 39

⁵⁶ Taylor, (1989), pp.219-220, 222-223

these various reasons to display that the question of the constitutive value of intellectual character is still open. Since the question of the constitutive value of intellectual character is left unresolved a theory concerning its constitutive value can be offered in the next chapter.

6.5.1 Empirical Disconfirmation of the Positive Illusion Hypothesis

So far we have consulted empirical literature meant to display the value of certain pervasive false beliefs. In this subsection the focus is on empirical literature that questions the value of these false beliefs as well as their pervasiveness, for not all psychologists agree with the assessment offered by Taylor and others. We will now turn to a brief consideration of this literature.

First, there is evidence that positive illusions are not required to obtain or sustain mental well-being. For example, one study displayed that subjects can exhibit high levels of self-esteem, and fail to exhibit traits such as depression, maladjustment and neurotic behaviour, while also failing to exhibit the positive illusions identified by Taylor and others. These agents not only failed to exhibit positive illusions, but when they were compared with subjects who did exhibit such illusions they “were higher on self-criticism and personality integration and lower on psychoticism.”⁵⁷ Consequently, it does not appear that positive illusions are necessary for mental well-being but rather are simply not inconsistent with mental well-being. An agent can possess both positive illusions and mental well-being, and therefore the two are compatible, but an agent can also fail to

⁵⁷ C Randall Colvin and Jack Block, (1994), “Do Positive Illusions Foster Mental Health? An Examination of the Taylor Brown Formulation,” *Psychological Bulletin*, volume 116, number 1, p.9.

exhibit such illusions and nonetheless still possess mental well-being. Even further, as indicated above, agents who exhibit accurate beliefs also appear to exhibit other valuable behaviours and states such as increased capacity for self-criticism and personality integration. If these latter two are valuable, and the agent does not require positive illusions to possess mental well-being, then it seems that more desirable ends can be achieved without positive illusions than with them. There is also evidence that positive illusions can detract from mental well-being. For example, one study displayed that agents who possessed unrealistic optimism also experienced intense negative affect when this optimism was unfulfilled. Such intense negative affect is clearly detrimental to the agent's mental well-being. Since the optimism associated with positive illusions is 'unrealistic' it is also highly likely that this optimism is rarely fulfilled, and therefore that negative affect is a common experience for agents with such optimism.⁵⁸ Consequently, there is evidence that positive illusions can also detract from the mental well-being of agents due to the negative affect of unfulfilled unrealistic optimism.

There is also evidence that positive illusions can detract from social well-being. Another study displayed that agents who exhibit a self-enhancement bias also exhibit poor social skills and various undesirable personal traits when described by trained observers and friends. For example, male subjects who self-enhanced were described by observers and friends as guileful, deceitful, distrusting of others, condescending, hostile, unable to delay gratification and as having a "brittle ego-defense system."⁵⁹ Non-self-enhancing male subjects, on the other hand, were described by trained observers as "relatively straightforward and forthright, possessing high intellect, and having an internally consistent

⁵⁸ Colvin and Block, (1994), p.12.

⁵⁹ Colvin, et al, (1995), pp.1152, 1154-1156.

personality.”⁶⁰ When described by friends non-self-enhancing males were deemed to be considerate, sympathetic, charitable, and to possess a consistent personality.⁶¹ Female subjects were similarly described, for those that exhibited self-enhancement bias were described as narcissistic, hostile, self-defensive, self-defeating and as also possessing a “brittle ego-defense system.”⁶² Female subjects who did not exhibit self-enhancement bias were described as introspective, cheerful, interesting, complex, intelligent and as “possessing social poise and presence.”⁶³ Consequently, rather than contributing to social well-being the authors of this study concluded that exaggerated beliefs concerning the agent’s own attributes are detrimental to such well-being, since they lead to behaviours that are harmful to social interactions.⁶⁴

Such conclusions have been duplicated in similar studies. For example, in one study - which relied on evaluations from fellow participants as opposed to external observers - it was discovered that self-enhancers typically made better first impressions on their peers when compared to non-self-enhancers but as interactions continued peer judgments were reversed. Self-enhancers were deemed more agreeable than non-self-enhancers, but as group members were exposed to one another over a period of seven meetings it was the non-self-enhancers that were eventually deemed more agreeable.⁶⁵ On first meeting self-enhancers were described as confident, intelligent and entertaining, but by the seventh meeting these self-enhancers were described as hostile, defensive and as

⁶⁰ Colvin, et al, (1995), p 1155

⁶¹ Colvin et al, (1995), p 1156

⁶² Colvin et al, (1995), pp 1155-1156

⁶³ Colvin et al, (1995), pp 1155-1156

⁶⁴ Colvin et al, (1995), p 1159

⁶⁵ Delroy L. Paulhus, (1998), “Interpersonal and Intrapsychic Adaptiveness of Trait Self-Enhancement: A Mixed Blessing?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 74, number 5, p 1201, 1203

overestimating their abilities.⁶⁶ From this study it was also concluded that the self-enhancement personality overlaps significantly with narcissistic behaviour, and that instead of being a transient personality trait it entails a self-deceptive and inflexible “central component of character.”⁶⁷ The results of this study, though, did not lead to the conclusion that self-enhancement is always maladaptive, since self-enhancers did exhibit some adaptive qualities. For example, self-enhancers possess high self-esteem and therefore were deemed “adaptive with respect to the intrapsychic criterion of having a positive self-view.”⁶⁸ As noted, they also make good first impressions which attests to the claim that self-enhancement can be “interpersonally adaptive in the short run.”⁶⁹ Since many social interactions are short-term it would seem that self-enhancement will have socially adaptive consequences. Thus, the evidence from this study is mixed, which caused the author to conclude that whether some trait is deemed adaptive or not will depend on how ‘adaptiveness’ is itself construed and measured. In one context, as the above evidence suggests, self-enhancement will appear maladaptive while in another it is adaptive.⁷⁰

Other psychologists have also come to the conclusion that positive illusions are in some ways adaptive and in some ways maladaptive. For example, R. W. Robins and J. S. Beer conducted two studies which provided mixed results. In one lab study subjects evaluated their own performance in a group task. This was then compared with the evaluations of their fellow participants. The second study, performed in a real-world longitudinal context, measured students’ beliefs concerning their academic abilities as they progressed through college. This was then compared with their actual performance in

⁶⁶ Paulhus, (1998), pp 1203-1204

⁶⁷ Paulhus, (1998), p 1205

⁶⁸ Paulhus, (1998), p 1207

⁶⁹ Paulhus, (1998), p 1207

⁷⁰ Paulhus, (1998), p 1207

college. In regard to the first study Robins and Beer concluded that subjects who self-enhanced exhibited adaptive qualities such as positive affect, i.e. this study displayed that self-enhancement can contribute to mental well-being in certain contexts.⁷¹ Nonetheless, in the second study the maladaptive aspects of self-enhancement were displayed. It was discovered that those subjects who exhibited a self-enhancement bias also exhibited declining levels of self-esteem and became increasingly disengaged from the academic context as they progressed through college. These self-enhancers were able to maintain higher levels of mental well-being than non-self-enhancers, but nonetheless they exhibited a downward trajectory in regard to such well-being when compared to non-self-enhancers. This caused Robins and Beer to conclude that self-enhancement bias promotes mental well-being in the short-term, but as time progresses its positive effect diminishes. When faced with negative feedback that does not match with their unrealistic expectations self-enhancers, as mentioned, tend to disengage from tasks rather than persist at those tasks. Thus, contrary to what is suggested by Taylor and others, false beliefs concerning one's own abilities do not lead to better performance, due to the motivational influence of such illusory beliefs, but in fact lead agents to disengage from difficult tasks.⁷² Robins and Beer concluded that self-enhancement may contribute to subjective well-being, by producing positive affect and high levels of self-esteem, but since these diminish over time and do not result in better performance such illusory beliefs may only possess short-term benefits and entail long-term costs. Self-enhancement will entail long-term costs largely because self-enhancing agents will eventually have to come to terms with their unrealistic

⁷¹ R. W. Robins and J. S. Beer, (2001), "Positive Illusions About the Self: Short-term Benefits and Long-term Costs," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, volume 80, number 2, pp 341-342, 344

⁷² Robins and Beer, (2001), pp 344, 346-347, 349

expectations.⁷³ When they do what will likely result is the negative affect mentioned earlier in regard to unfulfilled unrealistic optimism of the self-enhancer.

Besides these mixed results concerning the contribution of positive illusions to the mental and social well-being of agents there is evidence that such illusions are not pervasive. For example, one study showed that subjects exhibited positive illusions when assessing their own performance on a task, but were more accurate when assessing how peers performed on the same task. Such a result indicates that the influence of positive illusions might be limited to self-assessments and that when agents assess others positive illusions do not exert an influence. This draws into question the claim that positive illusions are a pervasive aspect of human life, since the beliefs of subjects concerning others appear to be accurate. Hence, positive illusions appear to fulfill a limited role as they may be directed solely toward the self.⁷⁴ This study also drew into question the pervasiveness of positive illusions on the grounds that there were significant individual differences in subject assessments even when these assessments were directed toward the self. Instead of the vast majority of subjects exhibiting positive illusions concerning their own performance only about 60% of the subjects exhibited self-enhancement illusions. The assessments of the other subjects were dispersed between accurate assessments and inaccurate assessments due to self-diminishment; i.e. some subjects tended to underestimate their performance. The percentage of subjects who exhibited inaccurate assessments due to self-diminishment was 36%, but these percentages are misleading since many subjects exhibited assessments that were close to accurate. Accuracy was determined by how close self-assessments were to the assessments of peers involved in the task as well as the

⁷³ Robins and Beer, (2001), p.350.

⁷⁴ John and Robins, (1994), pp.206, 212, 215-216.

assessment of trained observers. Based on these criteria for accuracy it was discovered that “more than 50% of the subjects ranked themselves within one rank of the staff and peer criteria; less than 35% overestimated by more than one rank, whereas 15% underestimated by more than one rank.”⁷⁵ This caused the authors to conclude that only 35% of the subjects displayed “clear evidence of unrealistically positive self-perceptions” while 15% displayed “evidence of unrealistically negative self-perception” and “50% were fairly accurate.”⁷⁶

If 50% of the subjects exhibited assessments that were fairly accurate, and we combine this with the other finding of the study that subjects’ illusory beliefs were directed primarily toward themselves and not others, it seems that positive illusions are not a pervasive aspect of human perception and belief. Rather agents tend to possess accurate, or true, beliefs. If these results can be generalized, then one could not argue that positive illusions are highly adaptive solely due to their pervasiveness amongst the human population. It seems that many agents do not possess such positive illusions, and therefore they are not required to achieve well-being or various other good ends. Of course, the evidence of this study is not conclusive, but it at least draws into question the empirical merit of the positive illusion hypothesis.

Another study has displayed that the desire to be accepted by the group can influence how agents form beliefs, but in this study subjects exhibited accurate beliefs due to such a desire. This study focused on how subjects assess their status when engaging in face-to-face group interaction. Subjects’ beliefs were deemed accurate because they closely matched other group members’ assessment of their status. The authors proposed that such

⁷⁵ John and Robins, (1994), pp 212-213

⁷⁶ John and Robins, (1994), p 216

accuracy was maintained due to the fact that if the subjects overestimated their status within the group, and illegitimately demanded social privileges or tried to assume control from other group members, then they would have been disliked and rejected by the group. Consequently, subjects accurately assessed their status within the group in order to avoid such rejection.⁷⁷

What is significant about this finding, besides the fact that it draws into question the pervasiveness of positive illusions, is that it does not appear that agents have to be motivated to obtain and sustain true beliefs in order to obtain and sustain true beliefs. Rather, agents can be motivated by the concern to be accepted by a group, and this is sufficient to facilitate accurate beliefs. This result draws further into question the value of intellectual character, since agents could adopt a strategy of simply trying to fit in and they would receive the benefits of belonging to the group as well as any benefits that may result from possessing accurate beliefs. Such a result would therefore lend credence to the position of Stich, for one can avoid a cognitive strategy based on truth-adherence and still be successful as well as possess accurate beliefs. An agent could consciously adopt a strategy where she forms beliefs that will enable her to achieve intrinsic goods, as Stich suggests, and have ‘group-acceptance’ as one of these intrinsic goods. The agent would therefore achieve this good as well as accurate beliefs without having to develop her intellectual character. It therefore does not seem that intellectual character is necessary to achieve either the good of group acceptance or accurate belief. Consequently, to assert that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense would be dubious.

One final empirical objection to the remarks of Taylor and others deserves mentioning, although it is not derived from any particular research that responds directly to

⁷⁷ Anderson, et al, (2006), pp.1094-1097, 1101, 1105-1106.

the ‘positive illusion’ hypothesis. This objection concerns Taylor’s remarks about ‘depressive realism.’ Recall that Taylor proposed that agents who possess mild forms of depression also tend to possess more accurate beliefs. Rather than overestimating their personal attributes, possibility of future success and control over future events agents who are mildly depressed tend to have accurate beliefs in these areas. From the way Taylor construes the phenomena of ‘depressive realism’ it appears that she is suggesting that it is the possession of accurate beliefs that is the cause of depression. If this is not what she is suggesting it would at least have to be the implication of depressive realism in order to display the disvalue of intellectual character. That is, if ‘depressive realism’ is meant to entail evidence against the value of true belief, and in turn intellectual character, then it would have to be the case that the cause of this form of depression is the possession of true beliefs. To claim, though, that the cause of depression in such situations is the possession of true beliefs is dubious, since quite often the causes of depression are either physiological or social. An agent can become depressed because he is genetically predisposed to depression or because of some traumatic life event such as a divorce, death in the family or loss of employment.⁷⁸ If it is the case that depression is typically caused by either physiological or social causes, which Taylor admits,⁷⁹ it is difficult to assert that the cause of depression for those agents within the category of depressive realism is the possession of

⁷⁸ See for example, P F Sullivan, (2004), “The Genetic Epidemiology of Major Depression,” *Mood Disorders Recognition and Treatment*, edited by Peter R Joyce and Phillip B Mitchell, (Sydney, Australia The University of New South Wales Press Ltd), pp 80-82 E S Paykel, (2004), “Psychosocial Stress and Depression,” *Mood Disorders Recognition and Treatment*, edited by Peter R Joyce and Phillip B Mitchell, (Sydney, Australia The University of New South Wales Press Ltd.), pp 99-109 Alessandro Serretti, (2005), “Genetics of Mood Disorders,” *Mood Disorders Clinical Management and Research Issues*, edited by Eric J L Griez, Carlo Faravelli, David J. Nutt and Joseph Zohar, (West Sussex, England John Wiley and Sons, Ltd), pp 35-36, 42-61 P J Cowen, (2005), “Neurobiology of Depression,” *Mood Disorders Clinical Management and Research Issues*, edited by Eric J L Griez, Carlo Faravelli, David J Nutt and Joseph Zohar, (West Sussex, England John Wiley and Sons, Ltd), pp 191-192, 205-206

⁷⁹ Taylor, (1989), pp 198-201, 211, 218-219

true beliefs. And when elaborating upon the depressive realism literature Taylor never states outright that it is the possession of true beliefs that causes depression. Rather, she relies on ambiguous language that is merely suggestive. For example, she proposes that certain forms of depression are “marked by a loss of illusion” which suggests either that depression is correlated with accurate beliefs or caused by accurate beliefs.⁸⁰ If the two are merely correlated, then it is possible that it is the state of depression that causes accurate belief and not the other way around. And, in fact, this is what Jonathan D. Brown, Taylor’s coauthor for the seminal paper on positive illusions, has concluded. He has proposed that depressive realism literature does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that depressives are any more insightful or aware than non-depressives. Rather, depressives are simply more likely to rate themselves around the mean, and when these ratings are averaged across a population then these self-ratings will likely match the agent’s true standing.⁸¹ Consequently, it appears that it is the depressed state that causes true beliefs rather than true beliefs that cause the state of depression. One cannot then say that true beliefs must be avoided in order to avoid depression, nor that the depressive realism literature displays the disvalue of true beliefs. Hence, claims made by Solomon concerning the disvalue of true belief currently do not have sufficient empirical confirmation. It may be the case that being confronted with some awful truth may have negative consequences, but this does not mean that true belief generally represents a disvalue that must be avoided.

⁸⁰ Taylor, (1989), p.223.

⁸¹ Brown and Dutton, (1995), p.1291.

6.5.2 Methodological and Conceptual Problems with Positive Illusion Research

In the last subsection the empirical studies consulted established that it is questionable whether positive illusions contribute to both social and mental well-being, and, as well, whether such illusions are pervasive. In this subsection the focus is on certain methodological problems that other psychologists have identified with the positive illusion literature and one conceptual problem. These problems again draw into question the validity of claims made by various psychologists concerning the value of positive illusions and therefore the value of certain pervasive false beliefs.

One of the prevalent methods relied on by psychologists who propose that positive illusions are associated with mental-well being is self-report scales. Self-report scales are simply reports filled out by subjects to indicate, based on their own judgments, whether psychological well-being is present or not. The validity of this method for determining whether subjects actually possess psychological well-being has been questioned because the subjects involved admittedly possess certain illusory beliefs and therefore are prone to distorting reality. The claim is that since such agents do not accurately perceive various aspects of the world, but instead interpret these aspects in self-serving ways, there is a significant possibility their beliefs concerning their own psychological well-being will exhibit similar self-serving distortions. Such subjects will profess that they do possess well-being when in fact they do not⁸²

The possibility of distortion has been confirmed in a study conducted by Jonathan Shedler, Martin Mayman and Melvin Manis. They discovered that some of the subjects

⁸² Jonathan Shedler, Martin Mayman and Melvin Manis, (1993), "The Illusions of Mental Health," *American Psychologist*, volume 48, number 11, pp 1117-1120 Colvin et al, (1995), p 1153

who were deemed to possess psychological well-being, based on self-report scales, were actually psychologically distressed and engaging in defensive denial. These subjects preserved the belief that they were psychologically healthy by denying much of their emotional life, so that they had little awareness of their own wishes, needs and feelings. Consequently, they possessed illusory psychological well-being. This diagnosis was based on judgments of clinical analysts, as well as certain physiological indicators of distress such as heart rate and blood pressure. Subjects who were deemed to be engaging in defensive denial not only exhibited higher levels of coronary reactivity than subjects deemed to possess actual psychological well-being, but also higher levels than subjects who were admittedly psychologically distressed. This led the researchers to conclude that the process of denial has physiological costs that could be significantly detrimental to the subject's physical health. The authors further concluded that self-report scales cannot be relied on as an indicator of actual psychological well-being, and therefore that claims made concerning the value of positive illusions for such well-being is questionable as these claims are largely based on self-report scales. Some subjects who report being psychologically healthy may actually be such, while others will be simply engaging in defensive denial.⁸³

One could object to the conclusions of this research proposing that the methods relied on by Shedler, Mayman and Manis to assess psychological well-being are themselves questionable. The authors admit this possibility, as they acknowledge that the methods they relied on have been disparaged by many researchers, but they nonetheless stand by this method and the results it led to.⁸⁴ Also, Taylor, along with Jennifer S. Lerner, failed to replicate the findings of the former study. Instead of discovering that certain positive

⁸³ Shedler et al, (1993), pp.1117-1120, 1123, 1127-1128.

⁸⁴ Shedler et al, (1993), p.1129.

illusions were associated with defensive denial and physiological costs they found that self-enhancement was actually correlated with physiological well-being. Subjects who were deemed to be engaging in self-enhancement also exhibited “lower physiological responses to stress and lower baseline cortisol levels”⁸⁵. That subjects who exhibited positive illusions also exhibited lower baseline cortisol levels was deemed a significant result, since baseline cortisol levels indicate chronic functioning of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical axis to stressful situations. What the lower cortisol levels in self-enhancing subjects thus suggests is that such positive illusions “may have been biologically protective across previous encounters with stress”⁸⁶. Hence, contrary to the research of Shedler, Mayman and Manis, Taylor and Lerner have provided evidence that positive illusions do have a positive physiological impact on subjects when they are in stressful situations.

This debate cannot be settled here, for its resolution would require further empirical research to generate consensus, as well as discussion of methodological issues. Nonetheless the debate shows that the ‘positive illusion’ hypothesis is questionable. It displays that not all agents who possess positive illusions actually possess psychological well-being, but it also displays more than this. It also shows that it can be difficult to distinguish between subjects who possess positive illusions and actual well-being from subjects who are engaging in defensive denial and therefore possess illusory well-being. Consequently, some of the subjects that Taylor and others have relied on to establish the positive illusion hypothesis would count against it and not in favour of it. The second methodological criticism we will look at has similar implications, for it also suggests that not all of the subjects that have been identified as attesting to the merit of the positive

⁸⁵ Taylor and Lerner, (2003), p 613

⁸⁶ Taylor and Lerner, (2003), p 613

illusions hypothesis actually do this. Rather than suggesting that some subjects who possess positive illusions actually possess illusory well-being, it suggests that some of the subjects who possess well-being actually possess accurate beliefs and not illusory ones. We will now consider this criticism.

The second methodological criticism focuses on how the beliefs of agents are deemed accurate or inaccurate. As indicated previously, psychologists working on positive illusions deem the beliefs of subjects to be inaccurate on the basis of how agents rate themselves when it comes to the possession of traits, personal control and possible beneficial future. Agents typically rate themselves higher than average when it comes to the former categories, and since it is statistically impossible for the majority of agents to be above average most of these agents can be deemed to possess inaccurate beliefs.⁸⁷ This is a problematic method for determining whether subjects possess false beliefs, since some of those subjects who report being above average will actually be above average. Their assessments therefore have to be considered accurate as opposed to inaccurate, and, in turn, some of those subjects who were deemed to possess well-being by positive illusion theorists will have achieved this state without the aid of positive illusions. Rather, well-being was achieved through the possession of accurate beliefs.⁸⁸

In order to distinguish better between subjects who possess accurate as opposed to inaccurate beliefs in the pool of subjects who also possess well-being, various psychologists have recommended that the self-reports of subjects be measured not against a statistical average but instead against valid external criteria. Examples of such external criteria include the assessments of observers, and performance on tasks that can be objectively

⁸⁷ Taylor and Brown, (1988), pp 194-197 Taylor and Brown, (1994), p 24 Brown and Dutton, (1995), p 1291 Paulhus, (1998), p 1197

⁸⁸ John and Robins, (1994), p 216 Colvin et al, (1995), pp 1152-1153 Robins and Beer, (2001), p 340, 350

measured.⁸⁹ Such criteria are deemed indispensable for studying the effects of positive illusions since “they provide an explicit standard for gauging bias in a person’s self-evaluations and thus provide a way to separate those who are truly biased from those who have accurate positive beliefs about themselves.”⁹⁰ It is reliance on these types of criteria that has provided the basis for much of the empirical disconfirmation of the positive illusion hypothesis considered in the previous subsection.⁹¹

To sum up, these two methodological criticisms display that it can be difficult to distinguish subjects that possess actual well-being from those who possess illusory well-being, as well as subjects who possess accurate beliefs as opposed to inaccurate beliefs. We then have a possibility of at least four different categories: agents who possess accurate beliefs and well-being; agents who possess inaccurate beliefs and well-being; agents who possess inaccurate beliefs and illusory well-being; and, finally, agents who possess accurate beliefs and lack well-being. This is quite different from the type of dichotomy that appeared to emerge from the positive illusion literature between agents who possess both positive illusions and well-being and other agents who possess accurate beliefs and lack well-being. If these four categories better represent how beliefs and well-being are distributed amongst the population, it then becomes difficult to claim that positive illusions are *required* for well-being. Rather, a more modest claim is that there is a correlation between positive illusions and well-being. Some agents who possess positive illusions also possess well-being whereas some agents possess well-being without the presence of illusory beliefs.

⁸⁹ John and Robins, (1994), p 206-207, 209 Colvin et al, (1995), p1153-1154 Robins and Beer, (2001), p 340, 347.

⁹⁰ Robins and Beer, (2001), p 340

⁹¹ John and Robins, (1994), pp 206, 216-218 Colvin et al, (1995), pp 1159-1160 Paulhus, (1998), p 1197, 1204, 1206 Robins and Beer, (2001), p,340, 350

The realization that some of the subjects relied on by positive illusions theorists to establish their position actually provide no evidence for it leads to the conceptual problem with their position. This conceptual problem also entails that some of the literature Taylor cites to establish the positive illusion hypothesis actually does not provide evidence for it. Specifically, Taylor writes extensively on how positive mood and optimism contribute to the well-being of agents, but it must be acknowledged that neither of these necessarily require, or entail, false belief. The conceptual problem is that Taylor includes within the category of false beliefs, or positive illusions, beliefs and states of the agent that legitimately cannot be conceptualized as false beliefs. For example, Taylor proposes that agents who exhibit a positive mood and optimism tend to also exhibit higher levels of motivation that then causes them to persevere at tasks. Since agents persevere, due to the influence of their positive mood and/or optimistic beliefs, this then causes agents to be successful at what they attempt. This causes Taylor to claim that positive illusions “help to create self-fulfilling prophecies.”⁹² If we assess these claims made by Taylor we can see that they do not attest to the value of false belief or the disvalue of true belief. We will begin with optimistic belief.

First, ‘optimistic belief’ does not always warrant the label ‘false belief.’ This is because the agent’s optimistic belief is directed toward a state of affairs that has not yet obtained and therefore it can be difficult to claim that it is either true or false. As Taylor admits, “the future provides the greatest opportunity for illusions to operate, because maintaining them requires no distortions of real events [...] one is not tied to concrete reality.”⁹³ Some optimistic beliefs, of course, can be deemed false even if they are directed

⁹² Taylor, (1989), pp.59-64.

⁹³ Taylor, (1989), pp.84-85.

toward a future that has not yet obtained, since what is represented by the belief can be highly improbable. But in some situations the optimism represented by the belief is underdetermined and therefore we cannot construe it as either true or false. Rather, the belief is merely positive in that it projects a positive, or desired, outcome as opposed to a negative, or undesirable, outcome. Such optimistic beliefs therefore seem to warrant the label ‘positive thinking,’ or ‘positive believing,’ as opposed to false, or true, belief. This label is especially warranted since, as Taylor proposes, optimistic beliefs can be self-fulfilling. That is, if some optimistic belief, due to its positive influence on motivation, leads to the obtaining of the intended state of affairs then hindsight tells us that the belief was not false. For example, if some hockey team believes that it can beat a statistically better team, and this optimistic belief leads them to beat the statistically better team, then their belief was not false. It was simply optimistic. Also, as the previous study indicated, an agent can be optimistic about the future and this optimism may be accurate. Consequently, when agents are motivated by optimistic beliefs it is inaccurate to claim that they are always motivated by false beliefs, and therefore optimistic believing does not always attest to the value of false beliefs over true beliefs.

A similar conclusion emerges when we consider positive mood. If an agent is happy this is an affective state of the agent but not a doxastic state; i.e. it is not a state by which the agent represents the world either accurately or inaccurately. Mood may influence the beliefs the agent forms, but these moods themselves are not beliefs. Positive mood is instead a disposition that influences the beliefs formed in the same way that maintenance of a self-schema can or intellectual character can. Consequently, when Taylor writes about the value of positive mood for human life, and especially contrasts it with negative mood

and low self-esteem, she is not writing about the benefits of certain pervasive false beliefs but simply the benefits of a certain psychological disposition. And it is a psychological disposition that is compatible with either true or false beliefs.⁹⁴ Hence, Taylor, and other positive illusion theorists, are making a conceptual mistake if they equate positive mood with false belief or negative mood with accurate beliefs. They therefore cannot rely on the benefits of ‘positive mood,’ or happiness, to display the value of false beliefs and the disvalue of true beliefs.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

At the beginning of this chapter we considered the claim, made by philosophers such as Zagzebski and Kornblith, that true belief is necessary to achieve various goods. We also considered the claim, made by philosophers such as Oksenberg-Rorty and Solomon, that self-deception, and therefore false belief, is necessary to achieve various goods. After consulting empirical literature on the subject we have to dismiss both of these claims. By consulting the research of various psychologists it seems undeniable that certain false beliefs, or positive illusions, do contribute to the human good in a variety of ways. Through the consideration of other empirical research – empirical research that confronts the positive illusion hypothesis directly – we have also seen that false beliefs can be detrimental to the well-being of agents and that the possession of true beliefs is compatible with agent well-being. Consequently, the empirical evidence is currently inconclusive concerning the value of false beliefs and the disvalue of true beliefs. It is therefore difficult to claim, as the above philosophers have claimed, that either true or false belief is *necessary*

⁹⁴ Taylor, (1989), pp.59-64, 68-69.

to achieve various goods. Even Taylor has acknowledged that the positive illusion hypothesis does not entail that false belief is necessary for agent well-being.⁹⁵ Of course, if we cannot conclude that true belief is necessary to achieve various goods it would be very difficult to claim that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense; i.e. that it is necessary to achieve some valuable end. We come to this conclusion not simply due to the inconclusiveness of the empirical evidence but also due to what the evidence suggests. It suggests that the possession of false beliefs is compatible with, and even conducive to, the achievement of various human goods and that agents may not require the mitigating influence of intellectual character in order to obtain and sustain true beliefs. With the next chapter, then, an attempt is made to establish that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense by setting out a different relationship between such character and the good.

⁹⁵ Taylor and Brown, (1994), p.25.

Chapter Seven: Identifying the Good and the Constitutive Value of Intellectual Character

In the previous chapter we saw that intellectual character is both not necessary to achieve various goods, and apparently not necessary to achieve true beliefs in certain situations. These two conclusions have significant implications for the claim that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. It is difficult to claim that intellectual character is necessary to achieve some good, or valuable end, since there is evidence that displays that the possession of false beliefs is not only compatible with achieving various goods but also conducive to it. In order to overcome this seemingly insurmountable obstacle a distinction is made between *achieving* various goods and *identifying* the good. Intellectual character may not be required to achieve various goods, but this depends on one's theory of the good. The good itself is a matter of dispute, and empirical inputs may be insufficient to determine what the good is or how things are good. Consequently, it can be difficult to identify the good. It will be argued that intellectual character can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good, and, even further, a valuable role in achieving the good. It will be because intellectual character can fulfill a valuable role in both identifying and achieving the good that it will be proposed that such character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

7.1 Achieving and Identifying the Good

The distinction between achieving goods and identifying the good is analogous to the distinction between practical activity and theoretical activity. Practical activity lines-up with achieving goods and theoretical activity with identifying the good. To clarify this distinction it is worthwhile to revisit some claims made in the previous chapter regarding the value of intellectual character and true belief, as well as claims made concerning the value of positive illusions. Recall that both Kornblith and Zagzebski claimed that true belief was necessary to

achieve various goods. According to Kornblith the valuing of truth is a prerequisite to valuing anything at all, since we require accurate beliefs to fulfill the various desires we may have and to achieve those things we hold to be intrinsically valuable. It is only if we possess accurate beliefs that we will be able to satisfy our desires or interests and, in turn, acquire various intrinsic goods.¹ Similarly, Zagzebski proposed that if an agent cares about anything she must also care about obtaining true belief and doing such through the influence of her intellectual character. True beliefs are important because they serve as the basis for action, and intellectual character is important because we want to be confident concerning these true beliefs. The virtues of intellectual character facilitate this confidence, since they are held to be a reliable means in achieving true beliefs.² Both of these philosophers therefore argue that true belief is required to achieve various goods. Without true beliefs agents will fail to achieve various goods because they will lack the appropriate foundation upon which to guide their choices. In order to fulfill one's desires, or to achieve intrinsic goods, agents require accurate beliefs that can facilitate the acquisition of what is desired or intrinsically good. Otherwise agents will not achieve the acquisition of various goods.

In contrast to these positions we were confronted with evidence that suggested that true beliefs are not necessary to achieve various goods, and therefore that intellectual character is also not necessary to achieve these goods. Agents can achieve various goods, such as social well-being, psychological well-being and physical well-being, through the possession of positive illusions rather than true beliefs.³ Even further, when true beliefs are required in certain situations, such as when agents are devising plans to accomplish goals, intellectual character is not required. This is because when agents are in a deliberative mindset, and have to appraise various options by weighing the pros and cons of these different options, agents are typically aware of their shortcomings, the likelihood of success, and limitations imposed by the

¹ Kornblith, (1993), pp 359, 369-372

² Zagzebski, (2004), pp 353-356

³ Taylor and Brown, (1988), pp 197-200. Taylor, (1989), pp 7, 36-37, 47-48, 87-91, 131-132, 240

environment. Hence, agents appear to form true beliefs when doing so seems indispensable. Once agents are in a postdecisional phase, and they must implement the choices they have made, illusions concerning their personal talents, control and likelihood of success return to normal levels.⁴ These illusions then become adaptive, since exaggerated beliefs in one's talents, personal control and possibility of success typically cause agents to be more diligent in pursuing the chosen goal and therefore lead to actual success.⁵ Consequently, contrary to the suggestions offered by Kornblith and Zagzebski, it does not seem that valuing truth, and ultimately possessing true beliefs, is a prerequisite to valuing and achieving other goods. We do not require accurate beliefs as a foundation for our actions, and even in cases where we might require mostly true beliefs we do not require intellectual character. Hence, when the empirical evidence is consulted it does not seem that intellectual character is necessary to achieve various goods and therefore it does not possess constitutive value in the strong sense.

This empirical evidence concerning the value of positive illusions pertains only to the accumulation of goods and not to the identification of the good. It displays that within the context of the everyday activity of pursuing various goals, and engaging in the planning of pursuing various goals, agents do not require true belief or intellectual character. If the agent is pursuing a relationship, seeking employment, planning a vacation and so on she does not have to value true belief intrinsically and does not have to develop her intellectual character. The agent may require some accurate representations, but does not require intellectual character to achieve them. And as long as her distortions of reality through her 'positive illusions' are not too exaggerated she typically will be successful in achieving the goals she sets for herself and will also achieve goals she may not be conscious of such as various aspects of psychological and physical well-being.

This practical activity of achieving various goods can be contrasted with the quasi-theoretical activity of identifying the good. The latter type of activity includes attempts to

⁴ Taylor and Gollwitzer (1995) pp 213 214 217 223 224
 Taylor and Gollwitzer (1995) p 224

discern the nature of the good and to determine what should be included on our list of intrinsic and instrumental goods. For example, identifying the good can entail activities where an agent attempts to discern whether the good is objective or subjective, or to decide whether items such as ‘respect for autonomy,’ ‘true belief,’ ‘pleasing illusions,’ ‘achievement,’ ‘elimination of poverty,’ ‘economic growth,’ ‘environmental stewardship,’ and so on are either intrinsically good or instrumentally good. Decisions concerning the nature of the good, and what items should appear on our list of intrinsic and instrumental goods will, of course, have practical implications. So the distinction between the activities of achieving various goods and identifying the good is not identical with the distinction between purely practical activities and purely theoretical activities. Nonetheless, the two can be distinguished, and even though evidence strongly suggests that we do not require intellectual character to achieve various goods I want to propose that such character can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good. And since it can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good it can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to achieve the good. To see why this is the case we must first attend to the fact that the good is a matter of dispute.

7.2 Disputes Concerning the Good

According to Stich cognitive strategies should be evaluated through “appeal to the rich and varied class of things that people take to be intrinsically valuable”⁶. Specifically, a cognitive strategy is assessed due to the possible outcomes of its employment, or the extent to which it facilitates the acquisition of intrinsic goods. In offering this position Stich admits that it can be very difficult to assign values to different intrinsic goods so that they can be measured against one another. Hence, he acknowledges that the “epistemic pragmatist has more work to do,” and that “at some point in the elaboration of a pragmatic theory of cognitive valuation, a

⁶ Stich (1990) p 131

careful and empirically well-grounded examination of the concepts of valuing and intrinsic valuing will be in order”⁷ The cognitive strategy offered by Taylor and other psychologists could fulfill the role that Stich wants from a pragmatic cognitive strategy This is because a cognitive strategy based on maintaining positive illusions can facilitate the acquisition of various facets of human well-being It also appears to be an empirically derived cognitive strategy, and therefore fulfills another desideratum of Stich’s position In this section the goal is to point out that what is ‘good’ is a matter of dispute, and that this presents a problem for both of the previous positions Specifically, what is, or should be, considered ‘intrinsically good’ is a matter of dispute and so too are the constituents of the human good The fact that both of the former are a matter of dispute then draws into question the legitimacy of both Stich’s and Taylor’s positions and makes room for the constitutive value of intellectual character In order to apprehend that what is ‘good’ is a matter of dispute, and so too are the constituents of the human good, we will first look at a position that proposes that ‘true belief’ is a constitutive element of human well-being We will then look at other disputes concerning the good in order to display that such disputes are pervasive

The position we will consider that proposes that ‘true belief’ is a constitutive element of the human good is offered by Michael P. Lynch In offering his position, Lynch acknowledges that ‘truth’ is not an absolute good, but rather a *prima facie* good He admits that in some instances the possession of a true belief is not good for the agent, for example if the content of a true belief represents painful information Nonetheless, he proposes that typically “being true is a good-making property of [a] belief”⁸ Lynch is therefore not claiming that true belief always benefits agents or that we should always attempt to obtain true beliefs regardless of the other things we value Rather, his position is that caring about, and possessing, true belief is an essential part of living a happy and flourishing life, and consequently we should care about

⁷ Stich (1990) p 132-134

⁸ Michael P. Lynch, (2004b) *True to Life: Why Truth Matters*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press) p 47

truth for its own sake⁹ Caring about truth is a necessary part of happiness because self-respect, authenticity and integrity, Lynch proposes, are necessary parts of happiness and true beliefs are necessary parts of the former¹⁰ We will briefly consider Lynch's arguments for these claims

Lynch proposes that in order for self-respect to be achieved agents must first possess a sense of self This is because self-respect is not merely "a matter of liking your self, or being self-satisfied, but a complex self-reflective attitude"¹¹ In order to achieve self-respect the agent must have a sense of her own value and believe that her life is worth living Both of these, in turn, require that the agent possess a minimal sense of who she is, i e a sense of self, or she would not know who she is valuing and therefore respecting¹² The sense of self upon which self-respect is built is itself achieved through the possession of various true beliefs, specifically, true beliefs about what the agent cares about, or what matters to the agent Through having true beliefs about what we care about we are able to form our self-identity, i e we are able to determine the various commitments and projects that define the self¹³ Self-respect is a constituent of human happiness, since if we lose self-respect life becomes empty and vain Without self-respect nothing seems worthwhile to the agent, and even if some things are held to possess value the agent will lack the desire to strive for them without self-respect¹⁴ If self-respect is an essential aspect of human happiness, and requires true beliefs to be achieved, as Lynch suggests, then true beliefs will also be an essential aspect of human happiness and must be cared about for their own sake This is because anything that is an essential part of happiness, according to Lynch, is worth caring about for its own sake

⁹ Lynch, (2004b), p 4, 127-128

¹⁰ Lynch, (2004b), p 143

¹¹ Lynch, (2004b), p 124

¹² It should be noted that Lynch uses the term "know" as shorthand for the possession of a true belief He proposes that by "know" he means "being aware," which in turn means having a true belief Lynch (2004) pp 121-124

¹³ Lynch, (2004b), pp 123-124

¹⁴ For this claim Lynch cite Rawls from the following *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge University Press 1971), p 440 Lynch, (2004b) p 124

Consequently, true beliefs are not simply a means to happiness but a constitutive element of happiness and must be cared about for their own sake.¹⁵

A similar line of reasoning applies to authenticity. Lynch proposes that to achieve authenticity the agent again requires a sense of self. This is because to be authentic the agent must be true to herself. The agent must identify with those desires that guide her action, and such identification is achieved when the desires of the agent reflect the kind person she wants to be or what she cares about. In order to achieve this state of identification the agent will have to possess true beliefs about herself. She will have to have true beliefs about who she wants to be and what she cares about, as well as true beliefs concerning how close she is to approximating both of the former. Hence, having true beliefs is essential to achieving authenticity. Authenticity itself is part of human happiness, according to Lynch, because if the agent is inauthentic then she is not in control of her own life. She is unaware of her desires and what she cares about, and therefore is unaware of what she actually wants and cannot make choices based on what she wants. She is adrift in indecision and cannot make choices that will be fulfilling for her, since she is unaware of what she requires to be fulfilled. Since authenticity is part of human happiness, and requires true beliefs, then the possession of true beliefs is also part of human happiness. Again, as is the case with self-respect, true belief must be cared about for its own sake since it is an essential part of happiness via its being an essential part of authenticity.¹⁶

Finally, true belief is a constitutive element of happiness because it is a constitutive element of intellectual integrity. Intellectual integrity, according to Lynch, is an intellectual virtue. It is a character trait, or robust psychological disposition, that impacts an agent's

¹⁵ Lynch, (2004b), p 127-128

¹⁶ In this regard it should also be noted that to care about the truth Lynch suggests that agents have to be disposed toward the truth, which means that they have to be intellectually virtuous and exhibit certain character traits such as open-mindedness and intellectual courage. This point will not be dwelt upon, since our concern with Lynch is not on his position concerning the intellectual virtues but his position on true belief as a constituent of human happiness. To avoid confusion, then, his claims concerning intellectual virtue have not been placed in the main body of the chapter. Lynch, (2004b), pp 125-129

perceptions, reasoning and choices. As described by Lynch, such integrity entails “caring about the truth for its own sake” and “being willing to stand up for your best judgment of the truth.”¹⁷ It also entails being willing to pursue the truth, or the desire to figure out what is true for oneself and base one’s opinions on such a pursuit as opposed to believing what is popular, fashionable or expedient. The agent who possesses intellectual integrity “stands for what she thinks is true *precisely because she thinks it is true*,” and, again, not because it is popular, fashionable, or expedient.¹⁸ The agent is not selective in her concern for the truth, but rather cares about truth for its own sake.¹⁹ What is the connection between intellectual integrity and human happiness? Lynch proposes that intellectual integrity is part of happiness because, similar to integrity *simpliciter*, it is intimately connected to self-respect. People are happier, according to Lynch, when they respect themselves. Self-respect, though, cannot be maintained if the agent “lacks integrity, intellectual or otherwise.”²⁰ If an agent does not stand up for what for she takes to be true, Lynch suggests, she will not respect herself. In turn, if she does not respect herself, then she will not be happy. In this regard Lynch admits that intellectual integrity can lead to misery for the agent. For example, it could lead to the agent being ostracized or to questioning the basis of her world view, but Lynch does not hold that these possibilities count against the value of intellectual integrity. Rather, they display that intellectual integrity is not sufficient to maintain happiness. Since intellectual integrity is part of happiness, and entails caring about truth for its own sake, then caring about truth for its own sake, again, is part of happiness.²¹

Lynch’s position provides a nice contrast to previously considered positions, since he proposes that true belief *is* a constituent of the human good as opposed to claiming that agents only have to focus on the fulfillment of various intrinsic goods, as with Stich, or that false

¹⁷ Lynch, (2004b), p 131

¹⁸ Lynch, (2004b), p 132

¹⁹ Lynch, (2004b), p 133

²⁰ Lynch, (2004b), p 135

²¹ Lynch (2004b), pp 135-136

belief is conducive to human well-being, as is the case with Taylor. If Lynch is correct in his claims concerning the value of true beliefs and the constituents of the human good, then maybe a case could be made for the constitutive value of intellectual character based on his position. Our interest in his position, though, is not to adopt it so that we can argue, contra Stich and Taylor, that agents require true beliefs in order to achieve the human good and hence also require intellectual character. Rather, our concern is with what these contrasting positions can tell us about the good. What it tells us is that the good is a matter of dispute, and it also informs us about how such disputes can be settled. For in reaction to Lynch's position concerning truth's constitutive value for the human good it must be noted that one cannot respond to it with the evidence offered by Taylor and others concerning the value of positive illusions, as was the case with Zagzebski and Kornblith in the previous chapter. It is true that Lynch is proposing that a concern for truth for its own sake is required to achieve various aspects of the human good, but in doing this he is offering specific criteria for the human good. He is not proposing, as Zagzebski and Kornblith did, that a concern for truth is required to fulfill our various interests or to achieve various desirable ends.²² Lynch is not merely suggesting that true belief is required to *achieve* various goods but instead he is attempting to *identify* the constituents of the human good. He proposes that the constituents of the human good include such things as self-respect, authenticity and intellectual integrity and then he proposes that a concern for true belief is necessary to achieve these aspects of the human good. The evidence offered by Taylor and others cannot be exploited to dismiss Lynch's position because such evidence relies on entirely different criteria of the human good. The criteria of the human good offered by Taylor and others includes such things as mental well-being, i.e. contentment, positive view of self and capacity for productive work,²³ social well-being, i.e. the ability to adaptive in a variety of situations,²⁴ and physical well-being.²⁵ It may be true that the

²² Zagzebski (2004), pp 353-356. Kornblith, (1993), pp 359, 369-372.

²³ Taylor and Brown (1988), pp 197-200. Taylor (1989), pp 47-48.

²⁴ Taylor, (1989), pp 36, 37, 110, 131-132, 240. Taylor and Gollwitzer, (1995), pp 213-214, 217, 223-224.

evidence gathered by Taylor and others attests to the value of false beliefs for achieving the former, but it is still a valid question whether Taylor and others have correctly identified the aspects of the human good. Consequently, if they have not correctly identified the aspects of the human good then the empirical evidence gathered will be irrelevant for supporting the claim that positive illusions contribute to the human good. The empirical evidence must be measured against adequate criteria of the human good, but this is still a matter of dispute. To draw out this point we will consider another debate concerning the human good. This is the debate between welfarism and perfectionism.

In response to the position offered by Lynch one could propose that his position is untenable because he claims that self-respect, authenticity, intellectual integrity, and the concern for true belief are necessary constituents of human happiness. This cannot be correct, one may argue, because human happiness, and consequently the human good, is subjective. That is, human agents are happy *if* they report that they are happy, or have some positive view of their own lives, and consequently agents do not have to meet some objective criteria in order to achieve such happiness. To achieve the human good one must achieve happiness, and since happiness is subjective so too is the human good. Lynch acknowledges this point and proposes that by happiness he does not mean a “fleeting and momentary state of mind,” but, rather, he follows the Greeks in holding happiness to entail “something far more complex, a feature of a life as a whole.”²⁶ In offering such a response Lynch has entered a larger debate concerning the human good between welfarists and perfectionists. A contemporary advocate of the welfarist position is L. W. Sumner. According to Sumner, the welfarist assesses the value of human life relative to particular agents. A life is considered good if it benefits, or contributes to the well-being, of an individual agent based on her own assessment. The human good for the welfarist is therefore subjective. It depends upon the aims, feelings, and preferences, what Sumner refers to as the concerns or attitudes, of the individual agent. The value of a life is

Taylor (1989) p 87-91

²⁶ Lynch, (2004b), pp 136-137

therefore relative to the particular subject that is living it, and, ultimately, her judgment concerning how well her life is going. If an agent judges her life to be good and she is happy, then she is living a good human life according to the welfarist²⁷

In contrast, perfectionists propose that the human good is not relative to particular agents but is objective. An example of a contemporary perfectionist is Thomas Hurka. Hurka distinguishes between what he calls “broad perfectionism” and “narrow perfectionism.” Broad perfectionism refers to any position that identifies the human good with the development of specific capacities, such as artistic and scientific capacities, in order to achieve excellence. Narrow perfectionism also focuses on excellence, but defines what is excellent for humans to achieve, and therefore how agents are to achieve perfection, through a consideration of human nature. With the latter type of perfectionism an attempt is made to determine what is definitive of human nature. Based upon a notion of human nature such perfectionists then propose what it means for any particular human agent to achieve human excellence and then defines the human good through the achievement of such excellence²⁸. With perfectionism, then, the human good is not achieved through satisfying the subjective desires of various agents, but rather through the development of intrinsically valuable states of human agents. In fact, the achievement of the objective goods identified by the perfectionist may even detract from the happiness of agents, since the achievement of goods such as knowledge may prove to be a painful endeavour²⁹. Hurka himself develops a narrow perfectionist position he calls Aristotelian perfectionism, since human rationality plays a central role in understanding human nature and therefore human perfection³⁰. With such a position the human good is therefore achieved through the development of both the agent’s theoretical and practical knowledge³¹.

²⁷ Sumner, (1992), pp 4-5

²⁸ Thomas Hurka, (1993), *Perfectionism* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp 3-4

²⁹ Thomas Hurka, (1987), The Well Rounded Life. *The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 84, number 12, December, pp 727

³⁰ Hurka, (1993), pp 5-6

³¹ Hurka, (1987), pp 728-729. Hurka (1993), pp 5-6

This distinction between welfarist and perfectionist descriptions of the human good provides further evidence that the good is a matter of dispute, but it also attests to the claim that empirical input is not sufficient on its own to determine the human good. For example, one cannot simply propose that the human good is achieved through desire satisfaction and then consult empirical evidence to discern whether agents are achieving the human good, since desire satisfaction is simply one option concerning what constitutes the human good. It is the welfarist option. Hence, it appears that conceptual schemes also fulfill a significant role in determining the human good, for even the position that asserts that goods are identified through what agents desire is itself a welfarist conceptual scheme that can be contrasted with the conceptual scheme of perfectionism. A similar claim can be made concerning Taylor's position. Taylor proposes that she has gathered abundant empirical evidence that certain false beliefs contribute to human well-being, but it is disputable whether she has correctly identified the criteria of human well-being. For in response to her position we could advocate Lynch's position, since he develops a position concerning human flourishing and happiness that proposes that true belief, and a concern for true belief, is constitutive of human well-being. If we held that Lynch is correct, then we would consult different empirical inputs to discern whether agents had achieved human well-being. Of course, one could object and say that the human good and human well-being are distinct, and, in turn, that Taylor's position captures human well-being while Lynch's position captures the human good. Such a claim is problematic since perfectionist positions are typically understood as also setting out the conditions of human well-being,³⁷ and any attempt to suggest otherwise requires further argument as well as scheme development. One would have to develop a conceptual scheme where one demarcates the human good from human well-being and, of course, provides reasons that suggest that such a demarcation is tenable. Consequently, the suggestion that the two are distinct would simply further add to the claim that the good is a matter of dispute.

³⁷ James Griffin (1986), *Well Being: Its meaning, measurement and moral importance*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press) p. 56.

Two general claims can be derived from the previous discussion: first, that the good is a matter of dispute, and, second, that empirical input is insufficient on its own to settle such disputes. In regard to the first claim we have only scratched the surface of such disputes through our consideration of the positions of Taylor, Lynch, Sumner and Hurka. For example, Lawrence Becker has identified ten competing categories of conceptions of the good life, and within each category there are nuanced differences between divergent conceptions. These categories of the good human life include: the good life based on inner unity, right conduct, vocation, personal excellence, human excellence, aesthetic value, autonomous activity, rationality and congruence.³³ Besides debates concerning the human good there are also debates concerning the nature of the good itself. For example, there are debates concerning the nature of intrinsic value. Generally something is held to be intrinsically valuable based upon either its intrinsic properties or based on whether this something is held to be an end-in-itself by some agent. These two ways of construing intrinsic value line up with the former distinction made between objective construals of the good and subjective construals of the good. If something is held to be intrinsically valuable based on its intrinsic properties, then one is working with an objective notion of the good since this something is good independently of the desires or values of various agents. If, on the other hand, one proposes that something is intrinsically valuable only when some agent desires it as an end, then one is working with a subjective notion of the good for the thing in question is good only because some agent desires it. Consequently, the notion of intrinsic value is not something that is itself clear-cut and indisputable, but rather will differ depending upon how one construes the nature of the good; i.e. whether it is subjective or objective.³⁴

³³ Lawrence C. Becker, (1992), "Good Lives: Prolegomena," *The Good Life and The Human Good*, edited by Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, (New York: Cambridge University Press), p.23.

³⁴ J. O'Neill, (1992), "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value," *The Monist*, volume 75, pp.119-120. Shelly Kagan, (1998), "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *The Journal of Ethics*, volume 2, pp.278-282. M. Bernstein, (2001), "Intrinsic Value," *Philosophical Studies*, volume 102, pp.330-332.

Finally, there is dispute not only in regard to what makes a human life good and the nature of the good itself, but also in the way that some particular thing, whatever it may be, is itself good. Consider, for example, the completely distinct ways in which philosophers construe the value of the virtues. Rosalind Hursthouse provides a theory of the value of the virtues where the virtues are held to be constitutive of *eudaimonia*. She proposes that through a consideration of human nature we can come to the conclusion that the items on the standard list of moral virtues – items such as courage, honesty and benevolence – benefit those agents who possess them.³⁵ Hurka, on the other hand, proposes that the virtues are intrinsically valuable because they entail the proper attitude toward intrinsic goods. This proper attitude entails loving intrinsic goods, such as knowledge and achievement, for their own sake and not due to any consequences of the possession of such goods.³⁶ A significant difference between these two positions is the relationship of the virtues to the good. With Hursthouse's position the virtues are good due to the causal role they fulfill for agents, i.e. the benefit they generate for agents, whereas for Hurka the virtues do not have to fulfill such a causal role. Rather, even though Hurka allows that the virtues could fulfill some causal role in achieving various goods, the mere fact that they entail the proper attitude toward intrinsic goods is sufficient to explain their value. So the virtues within Hurka's position are not good because they benefit agents in some tangible way, but simply because they entail the proper attitude toward intrinsic goods.³⁷

Again, the point of considering these divergent positions on the good is not to endorse any of them specifically, but instead to display that the good is a matter of dispute. In turn, our interest in the fact that the good is a matter of dispute is to display that the good is not something that is easily identifiable. Rather, work must be done in order to identify the good. This work entails consultation with the empirical world, but such consultation itself is insufficient since our understanding of the empirical world, at least in terms of the good, is

³⁵ Hursthouse, (1999), pp 8-10, 192, 202, 212, 222-223, 240

³⁶ Hurka, (2001), pp 3-4, 13-15, 20

³⁷ Hurka, (1987), p 727. Hurka, (2001), pp 13-17, 20-23

shaped through conceptual schemes. If we adhere to a perfectionist conceptual scheme we will cite different empirical conditions under which the good is achieved than we would if we accepted a welfarist position. So it is unlikely, as Stich suggests, that an “empirically well-grounded examination of the concepts of valuing and intrinsic valuing”³⁸ is sufficient to identify the good. Besides consulting empirical evidence to identify the good we must therefore also engage in conceptual scheme analysis. It is because we have to engage in such axiological work to identify the good that a valuable role can be ascribed to intellectual character in the attempt to identify the good. With the next section this valuable role for intellectual character in identifying the good is explicitly outlined.

7.3 The Role of Intellectual Character in Identifying the Good

At various points in this thesis the role of intellectual character in aiding agents to obtain and sustain true beliefs has been described in detail. It is this ability of intellectual character that will provide the first step toward the claim that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense. Specifically, by consulting previous claims concerning the role of intellectual character in belief formation we will apprehend the value of such character for identifying the good. Displaying the value of intellectual character in identifying the good is not sufficient to display that it is necessary to identify the good. Nonetheless, through focusing on previous claims concerning the introspective quality of the self-deceived agent as compared to the non-self-deceived agent it will be proposed that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true or accurate. We will begin by consulting the claims of previous chapters to display the value of intellectual character for identifying the good.

³⁸ Stich, (1990) p 132

In chapter two it was proposed that intellectual character fulfills a role in doxastic formation by mitigating the influence of motivations, dispositions and background beliefs that facilitate self-deception. Specifically, a motivational account of self-deception was outlined and connected to the prevalent theory of human psychology offered by virtue theorists. Through our consideration of the motivational account of self-deception it was proposed that motivations, dispositions and background beliefs cause agents to form false beliefs in two distinct ways. First, specific explanations are favoured by an agent due to the influence of that agent's own motivations, dispositions and background beliefs, and this causes the agent to gather evidence in a way that will either confirm, or conform to, a favoured explanation. The evidence is therefore perceived, but interpreted to suit an explanation favoured by the agent.³⁹ The second way in which motivations, dispositions and background beliefs were proposed to influence agents so as to produce false beliefs is by simply causing agents to miss evidence in the first place. In such situations agents either evade an issue altogether or they engage in selective attention and evidence gathering. No misinterpretation or reinterpretation occurs, since the evidence is never acknowledged.⁴⁰ Another important aspect of the explanation of self-deception outlined in chapter two was that the impetus for such cognitive mechanisms is typically some form of self-preservation. That is, agents desire to see themselves, those close to them, and cherished beliefs in a positive light in order to avoid the anxiety that could result if the falsity of their beliefs were exposed.⁴¹ Of course, as also pointed out in chapter two, the agent who engages in self-deception is not conscious that the process is occurring, and this lack

³⁹ Sanford, (1988), p 161-162, 169 Johnston, (1988), p 75 McLaughlin, (1988), p 39, 52-53 Audi, (1988), p 97-99, 101-105, 107-108 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 79-80 Baier, (1996), p 58 Mele, (2001), p 29-30 McLaughlin, (1996), p 38

⁴⁰ McLaughlin, (1988), pp 42-43 Johnston, (1988), pp 67-68, 75, 87 Audi, (1988), p105 Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), p 11, 18 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), pp 77-79 Baier, (1996), p53-55 McLaughlin, (1996), p 38 Fingarette, (2000), pp 38-40, 46, 167-169 Mele, (2001), pp 26-27, 51-52

⁴¹ Johnston, (1988), p 66, 73, 86 Audi, (1988), p 97, 101-102, 105, 107-108 Taylor, (1989), 8-45 Deutsch, (1996), p 316 Sanford, (1988), pp 157-159 van Fraassen, (1988), p 145 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 77 Baier, (1996), p 55 Asendorpf and Ostendorf, (1998), pp 961-962 Fingarette, (2000), pp 65-69, 86, 139, 142, 145 de Sousa, (1988), p 327 Paul, (2000), p 172 Anderson, et al, (2006), pp 1095

of awareness is indispensable for the successful occurrence of self-deception⁴² If the agent were to become aware of the fact that she was influenced by specific motivations, dispositions and beliefs that led her to form false beliefs then such self-deceptive cognitive mechanisms would no longer be efficacious. This is because the agent would then be aware that her beliefs were the result not of evidentiary warrant, or being true, but rather her own biased states. The agent would thus realize that she was being duped by her own motivational structure, and would, in turn, no longer be taken in by it. Hence, the agent must be oblivious to their influence⁴³ Finally, it was proposed that the mechanisms that can lead to self-deception are not episodic, but instead represent enduring psychological stratagems of the agent, or, more simply, habits of the mind Agents typically maintain specific desires, motivations and beliefs that can cause occurrences of self-deception so that perceiving, reasoning, and ultimately believing through their influence becomes habitual In such situations these stratagems and patterns of entrenched doxastic behaviour act as an “automatic filtering process” through which evidence and reasons are considered, so that those beliefs that serve the agent’s interests, by conforming to desires, motivations and beliefs already held, are maintained⁴⁴

Intellectual character was proposed to entail a cognitive strategy that could mitigate the influence of those mechanisms that lead to self-deception due to the fact that the motivational/dispositional structure of intellectual character mirrors the motivational/dispositional structure of self-deceptive cognitive mechanisms but with an entirely different focus The intellectually virtuous agent is not motivated by self-preservation in regard to her beliefs, but is instead motivated by an overarching desire to obtain and sustain true beliefs This overarching desire was referred to as intellectual conscientiousness, or the love of truth Due to this overarching desire to obtain and sustain true beliefs, as well as avoid

⁴² Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), p 12 Audi, (1988), p 94, 102-105, 109 Baier, (1996), pp 54-55 Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-49, 60 61, 65-66, 78

⁴³ Johnston, (1988), p 65-66, 70-76, 78, 87 Audi, (1988) p 94, 102-105 109 Baier, (1996), pp 54-55 Deutsch, (1996), p 317 Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-49, 60 61, 65-66, 78, 98-99

⁴⁴ McLaughlin, (1988), pp 43-44 Johnston, (1988), p 66, 87 Oksenberg Rorty, (1988), p 18-19 Taylor (1989) pp 227-228 Oksenberg Rorty, (1996), p 76-78 Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-47

false beliefs, the agent habituates specific intellectual virtues which themselves possess motivational and dispositional components. These various intellectual virtues, due to their motivational and dispositional components, not only compel the agent to be careful and thorough in her belief formation, but also mitigate the influence of the self-serving motivations and dispositions that lead to self-deception by focusing the agent specifically on the accumulation of true beliefs and the avoidance of false beliefs. Hence, intellectual character acts as a means to overcome certain natural shortcomings that lead to self-deception, and once habituated such character itself becomes enduring cognitive strategy that reliably produces true beliefs for the agent.

Recalling the transformative role outlined for intellectual character in chapter two allows us to apprehend the value of such character in identifying the good and assuring the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true or accurate. Through the influence of intellectual character agents are not motivated, or disposed, to maintain some cherished conceptual scheme concerning the good for the purposes of self-preservation. Rather, the agent is concerned to maintain some specific belief, or even a whole conceptual scheme, only if it is true. Specifically, the agent does not interpret evidence and claims so that they fit a favoured conceptual scheme or explanation of the good. Nor does the agent engage in selective attention so as to avoid evidence and claims that could bring a favoured explanation of the good into doubt. Instead, due to the influence of her intellectual character, the agent is attentive to the evidence, criticisms, arguments, explanations and so on that could display the falsity of the explanation of the good she favours. The agent's intellectual character will motivate, or dispose, the agent to be thorough and careful in her attempt to identify the good and when forming beliefs concerning the good. The intellectually virtuous agent will also be better equipped to identify the good because she will not be influenced by unconscious mechanisms that could lead her to misidentify the good for the purposes of self-preservation. Instead, she is influenced by cognitive mechanisms, or an entrenched cognitive filter, which reliably enables

her to have true beliefs concerning different conceptions of the good, including her own, as well as the ability to avoid false beliefs concerning the good. Since the agent is influenced by cognitive mechanisms which orientate her toward true beliefs, and mitigate the influence self-deceptive mechanisms, the agent gains some assurance that her beliefs concerning the good are true and therefore that she is correctly identifying it.

We can further refine our understanding of the role of intellectual character in identifying the good by also reconsidering claims made in chapter four. Recall that in chapter four the goal was to maintain the connection between intellectual character and true belief. In order to do this the notion of true belief had to be clarified. The notion of true belief settled upon was accurate representation the agent acquiesces in. Recall, that to say that a belief is representational is to say that when an agent has a belief he represents aspects of the world in a certain way, and when a belief is expressed the agent *asserts* that something is the case. It is this connection to assertion that leads to the claim that true belief entails not merely accurate representations, but instead accurate representations the agent acquiesces in. When an agent has a belief she does not merely represent some possible aspect of the world, but rather *holds and asserts* that what is represented is the case. In chapter four it was also argued that this is the more desirable result that one would want intellectual character to provide, for intellectual character should not merely facilitate understanding but also alter what the agent is willing to assert. We came to this conclusion through a discussion of the Einstein case. Of course, intellectual character facilitates such acquiescence, or leads the agent to assert that certain things are the case, due the causal role it fulfills in belief formation. Another important conclusion of chapter four was that the accurate representation that intellectual character leads to is accurate representations of coherence or fit. In chapter three it was acknowledged that conceptual schemes can fulfill a significant role in shaping human experience, and this role was further clarified in chapter four through a discussion of epistemic luck. Acknowledging the role of conceptual schemes entails that the accurate representation that intellectual character

provides cannot be merely accurate representations of the world as it is in itself. Rather, this accurate representation has to entail how empirical inputs fit with one's conceptual schemes, how conceptual claims fit one another and how new claims fit with accepted conceptual schemes and empirical inputs. Hence, intellectual character leads the agent to have accurate representations in regard to her conceptual schemes, as well as empirical inputs, and it was this idea that was relied on to explain how intellectually virtuous agents of the past could have vastly different beliefs and yet we can still hold that intellectual character is truth-conducive.

Applying these claims to the role of intellectual character in identifying the good we can say that intellectual character would aid the agent in identifying the good since it would facilitate accurate representations in a variety of ways. It would facilitate accurate representations of various conceptual schemes concerning the good, for example, welfarist and perfectionist conceptual schemes. It would also facilitate accurate representations of how well empirical input fits with one's conceptual schemes of the good, so that the agent would be better equipped to determine whether the conceptual scheme had to be altered given some empirical input or even dismissed altogether. Quite generally, intellectual character would enable agents to apprehend whether some empirical input actually had any bearing on the merits of one's conceptual scheme concerning the good so that the agent would be able to apprehend whether the conceptual scheme should be favoured or the empirical input should be favoured. It would also allow the agent to possess accurate representations concerning how the different parts of the conceptual schemes concerning the good fit together, and whether some claim concerning the good is actually consistent given other parts of the conceptual scheme plus empirical input. For example, if an agent possessed a racist conceptual scheme where agents of a specific ethnicity were allotted less value intellectual character would lead the agent to apprehend accurately the empirical inputs and conceptual claims that bear on such a distinction. Hence, intellectual character would lead the agent to believe that racist beliefs are wrong given certain empirical inputs and conceptual claims. And the most significant aspect of

this role of intellectual character in aiding agents to identify the good is the causal role of such character in belief formation. Intellectual character would again compel the agent to be careful and thorough in her consideration of conceptual claims and empirical inputs, and it would also alter the agent's motivations and dispositions so that the agent would not be influenced by self-serving biases that could lead to false beliefs concerning the good. Hence, given the content of chapter four, intellectual character would fulfill a valuable role in identifying the good, since it would lead the agent to acquiesce in accurate representations of conceptual claims as well as empirical inputs and also how these various parts fit together.

Outlining such a role for intellectual character in identifying the good displays its value for any agent who wants to identify the good, but the stronger claim can be made that it is not merely valuable but necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true given the possibility of self-deception. It seems difficult to claim that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true, since it is reasonable to propose that agents are not always subject to self-deceptive mechanisms which may lead them to misidentify the good. With the empirical evidence cited throughout the thesis we get some sense that bias is quite prevalent, and we have the common sense idea that it is likely that no one is completely unbiased. Nonetheless, the presence of bias, or self-deceptive mechanisms, amongst any population is an empirical claim, and it appears empirically possible that some population is not biased. Consequently, intellectual character would not be necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true, since such character would not always be required to overcome any biases in the identification of the good. This claim is strengthened if we recall a point mentioned previously, that in certain types of situations the biases which typically influence agents naturally dissipate. This point was touched on in chapter six where it was proposed that agents are not always influenced by self-deceptive or self-serving cognitive mechanisms. Specifically, when agents are in a deliberative mindset and have to appraise various options by weighing the pros and cons of these different

options agents are more aware of their own shortcomings, the likelihood of success, and the limitations imposed by the environment⁴⁵ So one could imagine that when agents are in a similar mindset of deliberating over the good in the attempt to identify it, it is always possible that self-deceptive mechanisms are not exercising their influence It appears to be an empirical question whether biases are always present when agents attempt to identify the good, and therefore the claim that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true due to the possibility of being self-deceived is contingent on the prevalence of such biases in a population It is very difficult to claim, then, that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true, for it could be the case that agents are not biased, or subject to self-deceptive mechanisms, and consequently do not need intellectual character to overcome such biases In order to apprehend that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true we have to revisit the consideration of introspection set out in chapters two and three

Recall that in chapter two it was argued that from the introspective point of view the phenomenal experience of the self-deceived agent is indistinguishable from the phenomenal experience of the agent with true beliefs Both the self-deceived agent and non-self-deceived agent will hold their beliefs to be true, and will cite reasons for their respective beliefs, even though one agent's set of reasons and beliefs are false and the other agent's are true Through mere introspection an agent can be duped by her own assessments, as well as the reasons offered for her beliefs, and not be able to detect that her beliefs are false and that she is being self-deceived⁴⁶ This is especially the case since self-deception occurs unconsciously That is, not only is self-deception undetectable from an introspective point of view, but the mechanisms which lead to self-deception occur without the agent being aware of them In fact, as it was pointed out, self-deceptive mechanisms have to be unconscious in order to be effective for if

⁴⁵ Taylor and Gollwitzer, (1995), pp 213-214 217, 220, 223-224

⁴⁶ van Fraassen, (1988), pp 123-135 140, 144 145 Kornblith (1998), pp 48-60

the agent is aware of them she ultimately will not be duped.⁴⁷ It was due to these two reasons that it was proposed that intellectual character is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs are true. It is only through intellectual character that an agent can obtain some guarantee that she has displaced the mechanisms which lead to instances of self-deception and ultimately has done her best to acquire true beliefs

Of course, this is not the whole story, for in chapter two it was also acknowledged that the mechanisms which lead to instances of self-deception may not always exert their influence. For example, when an agent is forming a belief 'A cat is on the mat' it is likely that self-deception is not a valid concern, since the mechanisms which lead to self-deception likely will not be operative. In response to such examples it was proposed that intellectual character is only necessary when self-deception is a valid concern, and situations where self-deception is a valid concern were identified as any possible situation where motivations, dispositions and background beliefs could exert their influence. Attempts to identify the good appear to entail situations where self-deception is a valid concern, since such attempts entail situations where motivations, dispositions and background beliefs can exert their influence. The latter could always possibly exert their influence when agents are attempting to identify the good, because such situations exhibit two characteristics associated with instances of self-deception. First, as outlined in chapters two and six, self-deception often occurs due to an agent's desire to maintain a particular cover-story or self-schema.⁴⁸ That is, the agent adheres to a set of beliefs through which he interprets the world, and instances of self-deception occur because the agent is disposed to maintaining this cover-story, or self-schema, which then causes the agent to reinterpret or disregard disconfirming empirical inputs. As we have seen in this chapter empirical input is insufficient in the attempt to identify the good, since agents must rely on conceptual schemes with such identification. These conceptual schemes provide specific

⁴⁷ Johnston, (1988), p 65-66, 70-76, 78, 87. Audi, (1988), p 94, 102-105, 109. Baier, (1996), pp 54-55. Deutsch, (1996), p 317. Fingarette, (2000), pp 46-49, 60-61, 65-66, 78, 98-99.

⁴⁸ Fingarette, (2000), pp 34-37, 40, 46, 48-49, 52, 61-63, 69-71. Taylor and Brown, (1988), p 200, 204. Brown and Dutton, (1995), p 1291.

criteria concerning what is good, which is then relied on to interpret empirical inputs. The conceptual schemes relied on to identify the good are either analogous to, or indistinguishable from, the cover-stories and self-schemas which agents are disposed to maintain and, in turn, initiate instances of self-deception. They are analogous to cover-stories and self-schemas, because they entail organized sets of beliefs through which empirical inputs themselves are interpreted and organized. Conceptual schemes concerning the good are indistinguishable from cover-stories and self-schemas, because for many agents their specific cover-stories and self-schemas entail claims concerning what is good. That is, they will often entail certain claims concerning what is good and how things are good, and therefore can be construed as the agent's personal conceptual scheme concerning the good through which she identifies the good. If it is the case that conceptions concerning the good are either analogous to, or indistinguishable from, cover-stories and self-schemas, then self-deception is a valid concern in situations where agents are attempting to identify the good. In the same way that agents can be disposed to maintaining a particular cover-story or self-schema, which then initiates instances of self-deception, agents can be disposed to maintaining a specific conception of the good. The claim is not that in every situation where some agent is attempting to identify the good the mechanisms which initiate self-deception will exert their influence, for this is an empirical claim, but rather that it is always possible that such mechanisms will exert their influence. If it is always possible that self-deceptive mechanisms can exert their influence when agents are attempting to identify the good, and the agent will not be able to detect their influence, then intellectual character is necessary to assure the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true. Relying on intellectual character is the only way that the agent can obtain some guarantee that she has correctly identified the good, for intellectual character displaces the imperceptible influence of self-deceptive mechanisms and assures the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true.

The claim that it is always possible that self-deceptive mechanisms will exert their influence in situations where agents are attempting to identify the good is buttressed if we consider a second characteristic associated with self-deception. Recall that in chapter six it was pointed out that the positive illusions exhibited by agents are evaluative. They entail evaluative assessments of various aspects of life, and it is because they entail such evaluative aspects that they initiate instances of self-deception.⁴⁹ Because agents hold certain things to be good, valuable, or desirable, they are disposed to favour these things and will engage in instances of self-deception when forming beliefs in regard to them. For example, if some agent believes that it is good to be courageous, then she will be disposed to believe that she is courageous even if such belief is false. Conceptions of the good, of course, are essentially evaluative. They entail claims concerning the nature of value, what is valuable and why things are valuable. Consequently, in the same way that an agent is susceptible to positive illusions because these illusions entail evaluative claims, an agent is susceptible to self-deception when identifying the good because claims concerning the good are also evaluative. An agent can therefore be disposed, or motivated, to favour some conception of the good because such conceptions entail expressions of what the agent deems desirable, valuable or good. Since conceptions of the good are always evaluative it is always possible that the mechanisms which initiate instances of self-deception will exert their influence when agents attempt to identify the good. Again, this is not to say that every time an agent attempts to identify the good, or offers a conception of the good, the agent is biased or self-deceived. Rather, the claim is that every time an agent attempts to identify the good self-deception is a possibility and therefore a valid concern. Since self-deception is always a valid concern when agents attempt to identify the good intellectual character will always be necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true. Intellectual character is necessary to displace the imperceptible

⁴⁹ Taylor and Brown, (1988), p.200. Taylor, (1989), p.45. Taylor and Brown (1994a), p.24. Brown, and Dutton, (1995), pp.1289, 1291.

mechanisms that could lead to self-deception and to compel the agent to do her best to acquire true beliefs in her attempt to identify the good

In this section it has been displayed that intellectual character fulfills a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good. Through the influence of intellectual character agents will not merely be careful and thorough in their attempts to identify the good, but they will also mitigate the influence of self-deceptive mechanisms that could cause them to misidentify the good. They can then obtain accurate representations of empirical inputs and conceptual claims as well as their coherence relations, and will acquiesce in these accurate representations. Intellectual character can therefore provide assurance for the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true and accurate, and even further it is necessary to provide such assurance due to the imperceptible mechanisms which lead to self-deception. In the next section these claims will be built on to demonstrate the constitutive value of intellectual character.

7.4 The Constitutive Value of Intellectual Character

In the first chapter it was proposed that something is constitutively valuable in the strong sense if it is necessary to achieve some valuable end.⁵⁰ One of the conditions of being constitutively valuable in the strong sense therefore has been met, since it has been displayed that intellectual character is necessary to achieve a particular end. This end is assurance that the agent's beliefs concerning the good are true, or accurate. A second condition of being constitutively valuable in the strong sense, though, has not been addressed. This condition is whether the assurance provided by intellectual character is itself valuable. In what follows it will be argued that the assurance that intellectual character is necessary for is valuable, and therefore intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

⁵⁰ Kirschenmann, (2001) p 244

First, it must be acknowledged that it is a valid question whether the assurance intellectual character provides, and is necessary for, is itself valuable. This is because it is always possible that agents could identify the good without being intellectually virtuous. The previous section simply displayed that intellectual character fulfills a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good, and is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true. It was not displayed that such character is necessary to identify the good. Intellectual character is not necessary to identify the good because it is not necessary to obtain true beliefs concerning the good. Such character is not necessary to obtain true beliefs concerning the good simply because it is not necessary to obtain true beliefs in general. It is always possible for agents to obtain true beliefs by accident, for example via a lucky guess. Hence, agents could identify the good via a lucky guess. Also, it has already been admitted that an agent could achieve the good without first attempting to identify it. So it is always possible that an agent could come to have true beliefs concerning the good while engaged in various other activities besides attempting to identify the good. And, finally, it has also been acknowledged that an agent may not be influenced by self-deceptive mechanisms, and therefore may not require intellectual character to mitigate their influence. An agent could therefore engage in an attempt to identify the good and not require the overarching motivation/disposition to obtain true beliefs and avoid false beliefs in order to mitigate the influence of self-deceptive mechanisms. If it is possible for agents to identify the good in these various ways without being intellectually virtuous, it is questionable whether the assurance provided by intellectual character is valuable. Agents can identify and achieve the good without the assurance intellectual is necessary for, and therefore such assurance may have no value and intellectual character may not be constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

Even though intellectual character may not be necessary to identify the good, nor achieve the good, this does not mean that the assurance intellectual character is necessary for lacks value. Rather, it seems that the assurance intellectual character provides would be

valuable for any agent who wants to identify the good. This is because, first, true beliefs, or accurate representations, appear to be an indispensable aspect of any attempt to identify the good, since if an agent is attempting to identify the good she will require true beliefs. The agent will require true beliefs for she will not be able to identify the good unless she possesses true beliefs concerning empirical inputs and conceptual schemes. She will also require true beliefs concerning how empirical inputs fit with one another, how they fit with conceptual claims, and how conceptual claims fit with one another. If the agent does not possess true beliefs in regard to both empirical inputs and conceptual claims, and how they fit with one another, then it would not be possible for the agent to identify the good. This point seems obvious, for if an agent possesses false beliefs in regard to either empirical inputs or conceptual claims, or their coherence relations, then she has not identified the good. In order to identify the good the agent must therefore have true beliefs.

To strengthen the proposal that agents require true beliefs to identify the good, consider that it would seem absurd for any theorist to claim that they are not concerned with whether their claims concerning the good were true. This is the case even for the positions offered by Taylor and Stich. These two theorists advocate cognitive strategies that eschew the value of truth for agents. Nonetheless, if each of these theorists were to propose that their claims concerning the human good, and the value of different cognitive strategies, were not based on true beliefs, or accurate representations, then it would be difficult to take their positions seriously. For example, if Taylor's assertions concerning the constituents of human well-being, or the ability of positive illusions to achieve such well-being, were false or inaccurate, then her position would be dismissed. Assuredly, as we saw in the previous chapter, it was on the basis of such falsity that other theorists were attempting to dismiss her position. And, of course, if Taylor had proposed that she was not concerned with true beliefs, or accurate representations, in offering her claims concerning the human good or positive illusions it would have been easy for other psychologists to dismiss her position. The same could be said for

Stich's position Stich does point out some problems with truth-conducive cognitive strategies, specifically, the problem of offering a tenable account of what makes a belief true The only way, though, that his position can gain merit is if his claims concerning truth-conducive cognitive strategies are themselves true, or accurate, and as we saw in chapter five there were some problems with the way Stich had construed the debate over what makes a belief true Some of his claims are arguably inaccurate, and could be interpreted in other ways Consequently, true beliefs, or accurate representations, were also an indispensable aspect of Stich's attempt to identify the good

True beliefs are therefore an indispensable aspect of any attempt to identify the good If an agent wants to identify the good, then she will also want true beliefs concerning the good and this will require true beliefs about empirical inputs, conceptual schemes and their various coherence relations Unfortunately, in the attempt to obtain true beliefs concerning the good, for the purposes of identifying it, an agent cannot expect to ensure, or make certain, that her beliefs concerning the good are true, because luck plays too much of a role in the identification of the good As we saw in chapter four, not only must an agent be intellectually virtuous to obtain true beliefs, and avoid false beliefs, she must also be lucky enough to be exposed to conceptual schemes that are not misleading Conceptual schemes can always fulfill a role in belief formation, especially in regard to claims concerning the good, and therefore luck can always fulfill a role when agents are attempting to identify the good Just as past intellectually virtuous exemplars had many false beliefs due to epistemic bad luck, it is always possible to now suffer from epistemic bad luck in regard to the good An agent therefore cannot achieve certainty in the attempt to identify the good

Since the agent cannot ensure, or make certain, that her beliefs concerning the good are true she can, at least, provide assurance that her beliefs concerning the good are true or accurate That is, the agent can do her best to guarantee that her beliefs concerning the good are true when she is attempting to identify it This is where the value of intellectual character

in the attempt to identify the good emerges. For intellectual character can help to assure the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true, and, as we have seen, it is necessary to achieve assurance that one's beliefs concerning the good are true. And since true belief fulfills an indispensable role in any attempt to identify the good, the assurance provided by intellectual character will be valuable for agents who want to identify the good. That is, since any agent who is attempting to identify the good will require true beliefs, the assurance provided by intellectual character will be valuable since it will provide a guarantee for the agent that her beliefs concerning the good are true. It is true that agents may not be affected by self-deceptive mechanisms that could lead them to misidentify the good, but it is always possible for agents to be misled by such mechanisms and not be able to perceive that this is the case. So even though an agent, as mentioned above, could identify the good without the contribution of intellectual character the assurance that such character provides would be valuable for any agent who wants to identify the good in order to mitigate the imperceptible influence of self-deceptive mechanisms. Consequently, as pointed out in the previous section, if the agent is not intellectually virtuous she will not be able to assure herself that her beliefs concerning the good are true or accurate. It is only through being intellectually virtuous that the agent can assure herself that her beliefs concerning the good are true and therefore that she has correctly identified the good. Hence, the assurance intellectual character provides will be valuable for any agent that wants to identify the good.

Of course, this may mean that intellectual character is not that valuable, for there may not be many agents who want to identify the good and therefore not many agents who require true beliefs concerning the good. Nonetheless, the above argument still displays that the assurance intellectual character provides, and is necessary for, is valuable, since it will have value for those agents who do want to identify the good. If this assurance is itself valuable, then intellectual character can be construed as constitutively valuable in the strong sense simply because it is necessary to achieve a valuable end.

The value of this assurance, and in turn intellectual character, can nonetheless be extended, by acknowledging that the process of identifying the good is itself valuable. Assuredly, it has been acknowledged that agents can obtain true beliefs concerning the good, and achieve the good, without engaging in an attempt to identify it. As stated, an agent could come to have true beliefs about the good via a lucky guess, and could achieve the good while pursuing other goals and therefore obtain true beliefs concerning the good. But it must also be acknowledged that through the attempt to identify the good agents are more likely to obtain true beliefs concerning the good and, in turn, achieve it. First, if an agent attempts to identify the good she is more likely to achieve the good because she has not left such achievement to the vicissitudes of luck. Assuredly, agents can come to have true beliefs via a lucky guess, but this is not a reliable means to achieving true beliefs. It therefore would not be a reliable means to obtaining true beliefs concerning the good and not a reliable means to achieving the good. True beliefs are better facilitated through careful and thorough investigation, which entails consulting various theories and the evidence for various assertions. This would include true beliefs concerning the good. And if an agent possessed true beliefs concerning the good, she would better facilitate achievement of it simply due to her true beliefs. She would be aware of what the good is, of various goods or the ways in which things can be good. Also, since the agent who has intentionally attempted to identify the good has not left such identification to the vicissitudes of luck she will be better equipped to achieve the good than the agent who merely achieves the good while pursuing other goals and activities. Assuredly, it is not impossible for agents to achieve the good while engaging in other pursuits, and this means that neither identifying the good nor intellectual character is necessary for achieving the good. Nonetheless, as we have seen in this chapter, the good is a matter of dispute, and agents have a variety of options to choose from when attempting to decide what the good is or what is good. The good therefore seems to be something that is quite difficult to determine, and therefore likely difficult to achieve, which would make accidentally achieving it while pursuing other

goals also quite difficult. At least if an agent attempts to identify the good she is aware of her options concerning the good, and is in a better position to achieve it given the awareness she possesses of these options and the reasons offered for them. The attempt to identify the good would therefore better enable an agent to achieve the good than merely engaging in other pursuits and by some means accidentally stumbling upon it. So the process of attempting to identify the good is itself valuable because it better facilitates achievement of the good. Consequently, if an agent wants to achieve the good, or values achieving the good, then it would seem that the attempt to identify the good would be valuable for her since it would enhance the possibility of achieving the good. In turn, if identifying the good is valuable for any agent who wants to achieve the good, then the assurance provided by intellectual character is also valuable for such an agent. This is simply because the assurance provided by intellectual character is valuable for any agent that is attempting to identify the good. This means that the assurance intellectual character is necessary for would be quite valuable, for it would be valuable for any agent who wants to achieve the good.

It must be acknowledged, though, that there are two possible ways that attempting to identify the good through the exercise of one's intellectual character may not better enable agents to achieve the good. The first entails the situation where the good life involves possessing the positive illusions advocated by Taylor and others, while the second entails the good life based on faith. We will briefly consider each situation to apprehend their consequences for the value of intellectual character.

It could be proposed that identifying the good via one's intellectual character may not better enable agents to achieve the good if it were the case that to achieve the good an agent had to possess the positive illusions advocated by Taylor and other psychologists. If the research of these psychologists turns out to be correct in asserting that agents achieve human well-being by possessing certain pervasive positive illusions, then the attempt to identify the good through the exercise of one's intellectual character would appear to entail a hindrance to

achieving the human good. This is simply because if an agent is intellectually virtuous she would not benefit from these positive illusions, and the psychological mechanisms which lead to them. It is questionable, though, whether the attempt to identify the good through the exercise of one's intellectual character would not better enable agents to achieve the good even in this situation. This is because, as we saw in the previous chapter, it is questionable whether the research of Taylor and others attests to the disvalue of true belief, and truth-conducive cognitive strategies. At most, this research attests to the claim that the possession of positive illusions is compatible with human well-being, and may be conducive to human well-being given a certain interpretation of it. And, as we saw in this chapter, it is also questionable whether Taylor and other psychologists have correctly identified what is required to achieve the human good. This is because there are other competing notions of the human good against which their notion must be compared to discern which is correct. Given that there are still many questions which surround the positive illusions hypothesis, and what constitutes the good and the human good, the attempt to identify the good via the exercise of intellectual character can still fulfill a valuable role in achieving the good. It can still fulfill a valuable role, as outlined in this chapter, since it would enable agents to achieve accurate representations of how various conceptual claims and empirical inputs fit together. Even further, it is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true. Consequently, intellectual character would fulfill an indispensable role in enabling agents to correctly apprehend that Taylor's thesis concerning the human good is true if this were the case. Not simply because the intellectually virtuous agent would be diligent when attempting to identify the good, and would not be subject to self-deceptive mechanisms, but also because the agent's intellectual character would compel the agent to acquiesce in the beliefs she formed through her investigations. For recall, as set out in chapter four, the various aspects of intellectual character not only enable agents to possess accurate representations, but also to acquiesce in these representations. Intellectual character therefore would not simply enable the agent to apprehend that being

intellectually virtuous is not part of the good or the good life, but also believe that this is the case if Taylor's thesis turned out to be true. Consequently, even in this situation intellectual character, through the assurance it provides, would better enable the agent to achieve the good.

Turning now to the agent who is living a life of faith, and possibly a good life by normal standards, it would seem that intellectual character would be detrimental to such a life. This is because the agent who is guided by a principle of faith when forming beliefs would be intellectually vicious on many accounts. The intellectually virtuous agent is an agent who is careful with the beliefs she forms because of her desire for true beliefs. Hence, she will engage in various behaviours in an attempt to ensure that her beliefs are true. The agent who is guided by a principle of faith, although also likely concerned about the truth of her beliefs, appears to lack intellectual virtue since she accepts certain beliefs without any proof of their warrant. This is simply because by definition the agent who relies on faith as a guiding principle when forming beliefs has no proof for those beliefs, and will not subject them to critical scrutiny, but simply accepts them as true. Hence, the agent who guides her belief formation through a principle of faith appears to be in stark contrast to the intellectually virtuous agent. If the good life is one where an agent should be guided by faith, then it would seem that intellectual character would detract from such a life.

To say which type of life is preferable, or even more valuable, is difficult without a comprehensive theory of what the good life entails. Consequently, one cannot say conclusively that being intellectually virtuous would hinder the ability to live the good life, since it has not been established that the good life is one based on faith. Nonetheless, while recognizing that this issue cannot be settled in the context of this thesis, because no substantive notion of the good life has been established, it must also be recognized that intellectual character would have the same value for the agent who is guided by faith as for any other agent. If the good life entails one where agents must be guided by faith, either in whole or in part, then intellectual character would facilitate coming to believe that this is the case. That is, since intellectual

character fulfills a valuable role in facilitating the identification of the good, as outlined in this chapter, it could then lead the agent to believe that a life of faith is the good life if this were actually the case. This is not only because intellectual character would facilitate the true belief that the life of faith is the good life, but also because intellectual character compels the agent to alter what she is willing to assert or believe. So, if it were the case that the good life entailed exercising faith in regard to one's beliefs, either in whole or part, then intellectual character could be valuable as a means of reaching this conclusion and then guiding the agent in her exercise of faith due to the true beliefs such character provides.

These remarks, although not exhaustive of the value of identifying the good, thus display how identification of the good better facilitates achievement of the good. The attempt to identify the good would therefore be valuable for any agent who wants to achieve the good, and since the assurance provided by intellectual character is valuable for agents who want to identify the good it would also be valuable for agents who want to achieve the good. Since the assurance provided by intellectual character would be valuable for agents who want to identify and achieve the good, the claim can be made that intellectual character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense due to its transformative influence. Recall that in order for something to be constitutively valuable in the strong sense it must be necessary to achieve some valuable end. Intellectual character is necessary to achieve assurance that one's beliefs concerning the good are true due to the imperceptible influence of self-deceptive mechanisms. Intellectual character transforms the agent by altering her motivational and dispositional structure so that she is not influenced by such mechanisms when forming beliefs. Since the assurance provided by intellectual character is valuable for agents who want to identify and achieve the good, intellectual character is necessary to achieve a valuable end and is therefore constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

7.5 Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been to offer a theory of the constitutive value of intellectual character due to its transformative influence. The specific transformative influence ascribed to intellectual character is that it provides a set of dispositions that counteract cognitive mechanisms that lead to self-deception. It does this by disposing agents to obtain true beliefs and to avoid false beliefs. The true beliefs such character reliably produces are accurate representations, and not merely of empirical inputs but also conceptual schemes. Intellectual character also enables agents to apprehend how empirical inputs fit with conceptual schemes, and, as well, how different empirical inputs fit with one another and how different conceptual claims fit together. This is because intellectual character disposes the agent in the right way so that she will acquiesce in accurate representations and avoid inaccurate representations. Agents do not appear to require such accurate representations to fulfill various desires, or to achieve certain aspects of mental, social and physical well-being as identified by some psychologists. Consequently, agents do not require intellectual character to achieve a variety of things that some have identified as good. Nonetheless, it was proposed we can make the distinction between achieving the good and identifying the good, and that the identification of the good is itself a matter of dispute. That is, there are a number of competing notions of the good, which appear to be influenced by various conceptual schemes, and this makes the identification of the good difficult. It was then argued that intellectual character can fulfill a valuable role in the attempt to identify the good, and is necessary to assure agents that their beliefs concerning the good are true due to the imperceptible mechanisms of self-deception. It was also argued that this assurance is itself valuable for any agent who wants to identify the good, due to the indispensable role of true belief in such identification and the inability to achieve certainty in regard to our beliefs concerning the good. Even further, it was demonstrated that identification of the good is valuable for any agent who wants to achieve the

good, since the attempt to identify the good better facilitates achievement of the good. Consequently, the assurance that intellectual character is necessary for is valuable for agents who both want to identify and achieve the good, and for this reason such character is constitutively valuable in the strong sense.

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