

KNOWING AND VALUING

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Three cases and a puzzle:

Misnamed Friend: Though he has been friends with Ryanna for many years, Giovanni is prone to forgetting her name, and call her 'Brianna'. He has spent significant effort trying to fix the right name in his head, but it doesn't help. As a remedy, he has written a note on his phone to check her name before he meets her. He is ashamed he has to do this.

City-Maps: Technology, Kevin admits, has greatly improved many aspects of our lives, not least of which is the ability to avoid traffic with Google Maps. Yet, he demurs at his children's reliance on it. 'I could get from anywhere in Decatur to Douglas easily on my own, picturing every corner in my head; whereas my children would be as utterly lost as a tourist in their own city without their phones'.

Secretary Gifts: 'How lucky I am that my secretary, Peggy, knows my wife so well!', Don thinks as his wife's birthday approaches. 'Without her, I would not have a clue what to get her. Peggy always finds just the perfect gift!' Despite his obtuseness, Don feels an uneasy sadness about the very circumstance in which he rejoices.

The puzzle of easy access: What explains the loss? Why is easy-access inferior to knowledge so?

- Relation to traditional puzzle / Aristotle's puzzle in EE/NE 5/6.12 (which knowledge does it arise for?(cf. (Farkas, 2015)on phone-numbers).

1. SOME ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

A. Reliability

Knowledge gives us a kind of easy/reliable access to information lost with external devices.

- **Problem:** Mental lack of access/reliability; Easy-access/reliability in some devices.

B. Extended Knowledge

No qualitative difference: externally stored info may be knowledge.

- **Problem 1:** Can rephrase the problem in terms of 'internal' knowledge.
- **Problem 2:** Extended mentality ≠ Extended knowledge (Carter, 2018; Pritchard, 2010, 2013)

C. Checking-costs¹

Knowing permeates our choices in a way that easy access does not: it organically (i) informs the choices we make, and (ii) how we accomplish them, without the need to check.

- Illustration with a doughnut / Joshua Bell at L'Enfant Plaza.
- **Problem 1:** K might not play this role; might play it in a way that is inferior.
 - A/ By and large?
 - **Problem 2:** Feasible for external devices to integrate themselves more.

General Problem for A-C: Misclassification of the loss. Not a matter of efficiency.

¹ Thanks to Dan Greco and Jeremy Shipley for suggesting a version of this explanation.

D. Achievement (Virtue)

Knowledge is an achievement, with value that having easy access to the achievement lacks.

Problem 1: The storage of info might can be an achievement (testimony; contribution to storage). (Carter, 2018; Pritchard, 2010)

Goldilocks problem for achievement: If too lax, then extended knowledge is an achievement; if too demanding, then testimonial knowledge is in danger.

-n.b. Virtue epistemologists tend to opt for the lax notion (ib.).

Problem 2: Still misclassifying the loss? More 'personal'? (Appropriateness of blame).

E. Attention, please

Forgetfulness, too, causes anger, as when our own names are forgotten, trifling as this may be; since forgetfulness is felt to be another sign that we are being slighted; it is due to negligence, and to neglect us is to slight us (1379b33-7).

Neglect here must be 'in thought'. (Good question: why do we care about this (cf.(Arendt, 2013))).

Solution: lack of knowledge is indicative of lack of attention/thought about ourselves.

Problem 1: Indications may be misleading: the best efforts might fail.

A/ Not blameworthy in such cases?

Problem 2: Yes, but residue of loss remains.

2. KNOWING AS VALUING

Prolegomena

'Carnal knowledge'. *yada* (Hebrew), γινώσκειν (ancient Greek), cf., 'I'd like to get to know you'.

- "And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain" (Gen. 4.1).

- Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (Lk 1:34-5).

- For Caius, as it would appear, while still a young man, had been intimate with the mother of Nymphidius... (Plutarch, *Galb.* 9: trans. Perrin).

Contemporary perspective: Weird coincidence! (cf. 'bark').

Contemporary perspective in accounts of valuing as comprised of: (i) beliefs, (ii) desires, (iii) emotions. (Kolodny, 2005; Scanlon, 1998; Scheffler, 2011; Smith, Lewis, & Johnston, 2015)

- N.b. Belief=belief that the object is valuable/good (e.g., Scheffler, below).

Anscombe ([1957] 1963): an "incorrigibly contemplative" conception of knowledge stands in our way of understanding agency.

Say I: an "incorrigibly *practical*" conception of valuing stands in our way of understanding the relation between valuing/love and knowledge.

Love and knowledge

A conversation:

A: I really love the Monotonics! I would pay anything to see their show. My mind constantly turns to thinking of them, and I get immense pleasure from this.

B: Oh, cool name for a band! What kind of music do they play?

A: I don't know if they're a band, actually...

B: Sorry, I just assumed! What kind of shows do they perform? Is it art? Magic? Something else?

A: I don't know.

B: Who are its members?

A: I don't know.

B: Where did you hear of them?

A: I don't remember...

B: Wait! I thought you said you love them?

A: I do! I told you: I think they're really good—the best! And if I learnt they broke apart or something happened to them, I'd be devastated, and rightly so. I'd pay anything if I ever had the opportunity to see them! Plus, I just get so much pleasure from thinking of them.

Baffling! But hard to explain from standard accounts of valuing, e.g., Scheffler (2011, p. 29):

1. A belief that X is good or valuable or worthy,
2. A susceptibility to experience a range of context-dependent emotions regarding X,
3. A disposition to experience these emotions as being merited or appropriate,
4. A disposition to treat certain kinds of X-related considerations as reasons for action in relevant deliberative contexts

R/ Baffling because unbelievable?

Problem 1: Then the right response should be annoyance.

Problem 2: Fans, creeps, and stalkers. (Not unbelievable but unintelligible).

RR/ Epistemic condition *presupposed* e.g., in the disposition to treat considerations related to X as reasons (cf. Hyman (1999, 2015))

Problem 1: Knowledge seems important enough to be acknowledged.

Problem 2: Epistemic requirements arising from 1-4 are too minimal (they don't explain our bafflement at the conversation).

Problem 3: Distinctive relation of love and knowledge, not shared by other emotions. *Fear may be fear which ignorance sustains, but love is not love of a darling one knows not.*

Counterexamples?

- Love at first sight. (Progenitor)
- Babies. (Lots of knowledge!)

Central thesis: Valuing is centrally constituted by knowledge of the beloved's characteristics ranging from the deep to the (apparently) trivial).

- Losses in the initial examples explained as realizations of a failure to live up to the way something should be valued, whether by oneself or others.

When is knowledge more valuable than easy access?

A/ When it reveals something about an object worth valuing.

Shedding new light on the traditional puzzle

The problem of trivial knowledge (Baehr, 2009, p. 50):

Consider as well cases of so-called 'trivial knowledge,' for instance, knowledge about the number of blades of grass on one's front lawn or the number of names listed under 'C' in the local phonebook. Here the subject matter is likely to be of no interest to me at all (it lacks even the practical payoff of the belief just considered). I am likely to regard knowledge of this subject matter as epistemically neutral, and perhaps even as a waste of cognitive resources. But if the subject matter in question is not an epistemically worthy one, why should knowledge of it be superior or preferable to mere true belief?

Compare (Letter of John Muir to Miss Catherine and other Merrills, July 19th, 1868):

Just see what I gathered from a single square between the Diabolos and river opp[osite] Merced. I have no books and so cannot give specific names:

Nat. Ords.	Plrs.	Species	
Polemon	401	2	purple
Gram'	29830	3	
Comp.'	32125	2	yellow
Log'	2620	2	purple & white
Soroph'	169	1	"
Umb'	620	1	yellow
Geran'	22	1	purple
Rub'	40		white
?	85	Nat. Ord.	unknown
?	60		yellow
Misc.	1,000,000	2	purple
Total of open flowers	165912		
" " flowers in bud, say	100000		
" " withered flowers			
40000			
" " Nat. Ords. 9-11			
" " Species 16		Mosses	1,000,000

The yellow of these compositae, both of the ray and disc flowers, is extremely deep and rich and bossy, and exceeds the purple of all the others in superficial quantity forty or fifty times their whole amount. But to an observer who first looks downward, then takes a wider and wider view, the yellow gradually fades, and purple predominates, because nearly all of the purple flowers are taller . . . The color-beauty of these mosses, at least in the mass, was not made for human eyes, nor for the wild horses that inhabit these plains, nor the antelopes, but perhaps the little creatures enjoy their own beauty, and perhaps the insects that dwell in these forests and climb their shining columns enjoy it. But we know that however faint, and however shaded, no part of it is lost, for all color is received into the eyes of God.

Lesson: even seemingly trivial knowledge might have value, if revelatory of a valuable object.

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