Zagzebski, Linda Trinkaus. *Epistemic Values: Collected Papers in Epistemology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 364.

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Linda Zagzebski has made wide-ranging and influential contributions in epistemology and philosophy of religion over her career. Within epistemology specifically, Zagzebski is rightly associated with her pioneering book *Virtues of the Mind*, which is a core classic in virtue epistemology. Importantly, though, Zagzebski has also carved out notable positions in a range of other areas of epistemology, including in debates about the nature of understanding, the value of knowledge, religious epistemology, intellectual autonomy and authority, and scepticism and the Gettier problem. *Epistemic Values: Collected Papers in Epistemology* brings together 20 of Zagzebski's epistemology essays, divided into six sections (with usually three or four essays each) that span all of the above general themes.

I will make a general comment about the book as a whole and then use the remainder of this space to critically focus on a limited selection of the specific essays included. The general comment is that, while the book contains no new articles — everything here has been previously published (the most recent of which in 2019) — it nonetheless helps readers of her work to better appreciate her various interventions in epistemology as part of a wider kind of vision. Recurring themes across her oeuvre include (but are not limited to): identifying historical mistakes that have led to downstream conceptual confusions; using ideas about value as reference points from which to test epistemological theses; and showing how, at the heart of certain epistemological problems, lie issues with deep ethical parallels. The above three themes were all present in *Virtues of the Mind*, and it is interesting to see how — with all of her work gathered together under one roof — these very same themes continue to resurface elsewhere and even in her more recent articles, with the takeaway being a much better sense of Zagzebski's epistemology as programmatic.

I want to begin my critical discussion with a brief point about her opening essay "What Is Knowledge?" (selected from Part I: Knowledge and Understanding), which appeared in 1998, shortly after the publication of *Virtues of the Mind.* One of the several tasks of this article is to show how a virtue-theoretic account of knowledge is able to sidestep traditional problems that face other accounts. One admirable task she undertakes is to reconcile what might look like an initial tension between (i) the idea that knowledge must arise from acts of intellectual virtue that

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[1] (Zagzebski 1996).

are themselves sourced in virtuous motivation; with (ii) the apparent datum that mundane, automatic perceptual and memorial knowledge doesn't seem to correspond to any such ostensible motivations, virtuous or otherwise. Zagzebski attempts to reconcile this *prima facie* tension with the following observation:

> The virtuous motivation from which an act of virtue arises need not be either conscious or strong, so ordinary epistemic motives will often be sufficient. In fact, nothing in the definition prevents the motivational component from applying to motives that are almost universal in some situations (Zagzebski 2020, 33).

The above passage can help to make sense of how her view doesn't rule out ordinary cases of mundane perceptual knowledge acquisition, where the relevant virtuous motivations are neither conscious nor strong. However, given the importance for any theory of knowledge to be able to 'rule in' clear-cut cases of perceptual knowledge, it is worth pressing Zagzebski further here. Suppose we have an 'epistemic villain' whose epistemic motivations are paradigmatically vicious, by Zagzebski's own lights, as well as conscious and strong — a hater of truth and knowledge. What should we say about a case where this epistemic villain sees a burning fire in front of her, too bright to ignore even if she tries? The right answer is surely that she *knows* via perception there is a fire in front of her. Yet, this subject would seem to fail Zagzebski's criteria, even taking into account her above clarification, for the reason that (in this imagined case) there is no plausible virtuous motivation *whatsoever*, even in an attenuated sense.[2]

Another important chapter, "Intellectual Virtues: Admirable Traits of Character" (selected from Part 2: Intellectual Virtue), combines the core picture of intellectual virtue from *Virtues of the Mind* (viz., that intellectual virtues are deep and enduring acquired intellectual excellences, with both a motivational and a reliable success component) with a more recent key idea from her *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (2017) that recruits the notion of 'admiration' — viz., that excellences are *admirable* traits which we admire on reflection and which have features identified in empirical studies. The combined and updated account of intellectual virtue is as follows:

> An intellectual virtue is a deep and enduring acquired intellectual excellence consisting of an admirable intellectual motive disposition and reliable success in reaching the truth because of the behavior to which that motive leads (Zagzebski 2020, 103).

One critical point worth considering for this account concerns what Mark Alfano (2012) terms 'low-fidelity' virtues. The 'low-fidelity/high-fidelity' distinction tracks the level of reliability that particular virtue demands. An example of a high-fidelity intellectual virtue is intellectual thoroughness; if you manifest thoroughness in 70% of your inquiries, that is plausibly not enough to make you virtuously thorough. Much the *opposite* seems to be the case, though, with *low*-fidelity virtues like insightfulness and originality. As Alfano puts it, 'If someone has an

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[2] For a variation on this kind of case, see Carter (2017).

original insight even once a week, that might quality her as insightful' (Alfano 2012, 246). This seems right.

The above considerations offer a helpful vantage point for thinking about what Zagzebski's proposal implies about the relationship between intellectual virtue and *admiration* for the agent's reliability. Take a paradigmatically insightful person — say, the mathematician Leonhard Euler, whose famous identify formula is often used as an illustrative example of beauty in mathematics.[3] Suppose for the sake of argument that Euler's career was limited to generating *only* this one deeply profound insight.

Here are two things about the case that seem plausible. First, Euler wouldn't have needed to do *more* to have qualified as a virtuously insightful person; our admiration for Euler *as* insightful isn't very plausibly undermined (in a way that should matter for whether he is virtuously insightful) by adding to the story a hopelessly unreliable track record, one that issued only this one profoundly deep insight. But if that is right, then it is hard to see how being virtuously insightful must consist, as Zagzebski's view implies it must, in one's being such that their *reliability* is admirable. On the contrary, it seems we would admire Euler (imagined in the thought experiment as a 'one hit wonder') *despite unreliability*, and in a way that a view of virtuous intellectual character virtue ought to make room for. If this is right, then a concern is that Zagzebski's latest articulation of intellectual virtue remains too strong, and so will require some further refinement.

A third chapter I'd like to engage with in this short space — less critically in this case and more ponderously — is "The Search for the Source of Epistemic Good" (selected from Part 2: Intellectual Virtue), originally published in 2003, and which is a central reference point nowadays in debates about the value of knowledge. It would probably be rare nowadays for the value of knowledge problem to be explained in an epistemology classroom without some reference to Zagzebski's espresso-machine example, which is sharply highlights a problem for reliabilism.[4] Her key espresso analogy that makes mischief for reliabilism proceeds as follows:

> A reliable process is good only because of the good of the product of the process. A reliable espresso maker is good because espresso is good. A reliable water-dripping faucet is not good because dripping water is not good. Reliability per se has no value or disvalue. Its value or disvalue derives solely from the value or disvalue of that which it reliably produces. So the value of the product of a process is transferred to the process that produces it. But the value of the process is not transferred back again to the product. A reliable expresso maker is good because espresso is good, but the espresso made now is no better because it was produced by a reliable espresso machine. The water dripping now is no better because it was produced by a reliably dripping faucet; and neither is it any worse (Zagzebski 2020, 141).

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[3] See, for discussion, Calinger (2019).
[4] Another popular example which makes a similar point, and which appeared the same year, is due to Jon Kvanvig (2003). See, in particular, his 'two lists' argument (pp. 47-8).

The above reasoning looks problematic for reliabilists in so far as they seek to uphold the pretheoretically plausible idea, from Plato's *Meno,* that the value of knowledge exceeds the value of *mere* true belief. The problem, distilled to a simple point, is that the property of 'being produced by a reliable source' doesn't look like a property capable of adding value to a *true* belief; the reliabilist, as this line of thought goes, lacks a story for how a given true belief would ever gain an extra 'boost' of value in virtue of having exactly that feature the reliabilist says would suffice to convert a true belief into knowledge.

Zagzebski's ambitions in the chapter, though, are not limited to a negative case against reliabilism. She draws several wider conclusions. One is that *any* attempt to vindicate the value of knowledge must decouple itself from an assumed 'machine-product' model of epistemic value. That is, we should part ways with the widely held assumption — not only found in reliabilist thinking — that truth *plus an independently valuable source* can explain the value of knowledge. Her second and positive aim is to show how a virtue-theoretic account of knowledge (along the lines she prefers, and which is claimed not to align itself with the machine-produce model of epistemic value) can vindicate the value of knowledge where other proposals cannot. On her proposed view:

> An epistemic agent gets credit for getting a true belief when she arrives at a true belief *because of her virtuous intellectual acts motivated by a love of truth.* She gets credit for getting a desirable true belief when she arrives at a desirable true belief because of acts motivated by love of true beliefs that are components of a good life. (Zagzebski 2020, 164, my italics).

I've registered above in discussing her chapter "What Is Knowledge?" that requiring virtuous motives[5] for all knowledge, including perceptual knowledge, runs in to problems. But setting that quibble aside, I wanted to focus here on a more ponderous note: Zagzebski rejects the machine-product model and proposes an alternative, but so has Kurt Sylvan (2018) in recent work on the value of knowledge. However, Sylvan's critique of the machine-product model (and more generally, of epistemic instrumentalism with which it is closely associated) also comes into tension with Zagezebski's own positive view, and in a way that (somewhat ironically) situates Zagzebski more closely with the machine-product line she challenges than with Sylvan's strong form of epistemic non-instrumentalism. As Sylvan points out, the 'because' that features in the kind of proposal Zagzebski presents in the above quoted passage lends *itself* to an intstrumentalist interpretation and a non-instrumentalist interpretation (2018, 27). Sylvan's tack is to deny that the 'because' must be understood instrumentally and maintains that it shouldn't.[6] This insight opens up an interesting space to compare two distinct approaches to the value

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[5] It's worth registering that this criticism does not extend to characterisations of (responsibilist) intellectual virtues in terms of motivations, but which do not then attempt to characterise knowledge in terms of such virtues. For some alternative proposals that give motivation a central role in intellectual virtue without subscribing to Zagzebski's approach to characterising knowledge, see Battaly (2015) and Baehr (2011).

[6] For a fuller development of this idea, see Sylvan (2020).

problem both of which reject the machine-product model through weaker (and stronger) 'anti-instrumentalist' rationales.

There are many other excellent and interesting chapters in *Epistemic Values: Collected Papers in Epistemology* that I lack the space to discuss in any detail here. But I want to conclude on the positive note I began with — which is that having Zagzebski's full[7] epistemological oeuvre all in one place, and divided helpfully into subsections, opens up an opportunity to notice connections between her various interventions in epistemology across several decades, and I think it will be a helpful resource for epistemologists, especially those interested in themes broadly related to intellectual virtues and values.

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[7] This is with the exception of a few papers she elected not to include, and which are discussed in her introduction to the collection.