

---

## THE EPISTEMIC VALUE OF REFLECTION

Allysson Vasconcelos Lima Rocha

**Resumo:**

Discuto reflexão como um meio de atingir crença verdadeira e evitar erro. Argumento na primeira seção como a questão pode ser tratada como um problema à parte. Na segunda seção, discuto a abordagem à reflexão na Epistemologia das Virtudes de Sosa. Na terceira, abordo problemas para esta perspectiva e argumento que, caso ignorância possua valor epistêmico, mostra-se como uma interessante maneira de lidar com as dificuldades mencionadas.

**Palavras-chave:** reflexão, valor epistêmico, epistemologia das virtudes, ignorância

**Abstract:**

*I discuss reflection as a means to achieve true belief and avoid error. I argue in the first section how can this be treated as a separate problem. In the second section, I discuss Sosa's Virtue Epistemology approach to the epistemic value of reflection. In the third, I raise problems for this view and argue that, if ignorance possesses epistemic value, it is an interesting form of dealing with these difficulties.*

**Keywords:** reflection, epistemic value, virtue epistemology, ignorance

The main goal of this paper is to discuss the limits and the prospects of attributing to reflection an epistemic value. I will argue that the view is defensible, albeit still in need of further development. In the first section, I give reasons in favor of a separate treatment of the notion of reflection and its value in Epistemology. In the second, I discuss how Ernest Sosa discerns the epistemic value of reflection. In the final section, I raise a few difficulties for the view and suggest how they could be dealt with.

## 1.

The goal of this section is to show how reflection can be treated as a separate topic in Epistemology, albeit one inter-related with other important current debates in the field, specially the internalism / externalism divide from which it emerges. As it will become clear, the issue is not reflection itself, but the question of its epistemic value. And a quick note about epistemic value is important before I proceed. I evoke the notion of epistemic value without assuming anything as strong as that there is this value. When I use ‘epistemic value’ I merely assume, as Pritchard (2016, p.135) says, epistemic value is based in “whatever promotes truth in one’s belief, and the avoidance of error”. I understand that this is sufficient for the discussion I want to make<sup>1</sup>. Thus, in what follows, I discuss different ways of making sense of the epistemic role of reflection. By the end, my aim is to offer a basic and initial understanding of the problems related to reflection and its value to our epistemic goals.

I believe is best to begin with internalist views regarding epistemic justification for a specific reason. Basically, as a whole, most internalists hold that, if an epistemic agent believes in a justified proposition, she must at least be able to tell by reflection that her belief is justified, that is, she must at least be able to make a movement of recognition of what favors the justification of her beliefs. Thus, in general, we could identify this first epistemic role for reflection: it is the means through which I identify

<sup>1</sup> As I intend to make a point about the epistemic role of reflection in our cognitive lives, I understand that it is sufficient to work with the notion above described, even though I’m aware that there is a fierce discussion about whether value and epistemic value are different, as Pritchard mentions in the work cited. Also, I will put aside other possible positive epistemic outcomes for reflection: understanding and rationality, for example.

what makes the propositional content of my belief true, i.e., the crucial feature capable of allowing myself to discern when my belief is justified.

Being more specific, it is possible to sort at least two basic kinds of epistemic internalism. Pappas (2014) shows this by explaining that, for the internalist, what an epistemic agent has to access through reflection is a justifier. He tracks this term back to Alston (1989, p. 189), where a justifier encompasses other beliefs, experiences and facts concerning how the belief came about, and are obviously responsible for justifying a belief. I wish to emphasize something about the access of these justifiers through reflection, namely, the constraints on the scope of access are responsible for delineating two basic manners of conceiving internalism:

**Weak Access Justification Internalism (WAJI):** one has justified belief that  $p$  only if one can become aware by reflection of some essential justifier one then has for  $p$ . (PAPAS, 2014)

**Strong Access Justification Internalism (SAJI):** one has justified belief that  $p$  only if one can become aware by reflection that some item  $j$  is an essential justifier one then has for  $p$ . (PAPAS, 2014)<sup>2</sup>

Observe how reflection is framed in each case. As shown, this cognitive attitude is applied in order to recognize what constitutes the key feature responsible for the belief's justification. This means that, albeit a lot may be working for the epistemic status of the belief, by reflecting, the epistemic agent must be concerned only with what is essential for the justification. I return to the issue concerning the scope of 'essential' in the final section, where this will have consequences for a view on the epistemic achievements through reflection.

When externalists offer their criticism of the access requirement, they evoke the plausibility of cases where justified belief should be obtained without the access defended by internalists. Usually, these are cases where it is put in doubt the plausibility

<sup>2</sup> In the original, the term "by reflection" is not present for strong AJI. As Papas doesn't make any comment on the absence, I understand the reason is because he forgot to include.

of denying justification for supposedly unreflective episodes of belief formation, as when a child can identify her blue ball in a park. But of specific interest in the present occasion are episodes where a great deal of elements seems to converge to the justification of a belief within a short span of the time. Given the limits of our consciously entertaining a great number of evidences in such restrained instant, if justification is to be possibly manifested in these episodes, its existence would be better explained by externalist views on the subject, that is, a view that does not rely on reflection as a necessary condition for justification.

Given the discussion I wish to make, I address a defense of this intuition through a reliabilist view on epistemic justification. In general, according to the view, justified beliefs are issued by reliable process of belief formation or acquisition. The following principle offered by Sosa exemplifies in a more detailed manner:

**General Reliabilist Principle:** S's belief that p at t is justified iff it is the outcome of a process of belief acquisition or retention which is reliable, or leads to a sufficiently high preponderance of true beliefs over false beliefs. (SOSA, 1991, p. 131).

Thus, I may have available different process of belief acquisition or retention. Some of them are to be discerned from others as what epistemologists call relevantly reliable processes. With these, I can achieve a good deal of true beliefs without having to consciously reflect on their justifiers. Importantly, this would allow for occasions where a process could collect more evidence than I consciously could assess, given certain limitations in my scope of attention. Thus, it seems that, if reliabilism is true, then reflection should not occupy the central role which some internalists try to defend. However, a few intuitions associated with the role of reflection are difficult to dismiss.

A defense of these intuitions is made through a case which became a common objection against externalism. To see this, imagine that S possesses an unusual faculty among humans which issues 'a sufficiently high preponderance of true beliefs over false beliefs', as mentioned above. Moreover, the propositional contents of these beliefs describe situations in a place far away from where S stands now. This makes a very difficult case for S to gather justifiers in favor of her belief. Plausibly, she would also be lacking in justifiers which could support the having of such faculty, not so common

among humans. It is more probable that S would possess justifiers against the very existence of her faculty. In a possible exemplifying scenery of such cases (cf. BONJOUR, 1980), Norman, a clairvoyant who is in Nashville, forms the true belief that ‘the president of the United States is now in NY’, although any justifier she possess in the present moment cannot appropriately support this. According to the principle above mentioned, the beliefs obtained through this faculty are justified. However, it is intuitive and plausible to ask, given what she has in favor of the proposition and the possession of the faculty, if S should ascribe justification to her beliefs. The most plausible response expected from a reasonable believer would be to avoid giving assent to these mental states.

There are two initial ways of dealing with the case. In the first, the internalist could argue that the reliabilist is caught in a difficult position in this example. On the one hand, if the view allows for a reflective consideration of Norman’s available information, we’re going to have cases where justified beliefs are discarded. After all, the president is actually in NY but, by reflecting on what she has available, the epistemic agent would discard such belief. On the other hand, if the view discards reflection as a whole and sticks to its principles, then reliabilism will end up endorsing counter-intuitive cases of justified belief. Thus, it is clear how both paths could undermine a defense of this conception of epistemic justification, thereby hinting a resort to an internalist framework as a way of dealing with the problem.

But Pappas (2014) rightly observes that the internalist is not immune to troubles if she associates reflection with the recognition of justifiers. The point is how strong should be the recognition of these justifiers? Pappas shows that, depending on how this is calibrated, a dilemma emerges for the internalist<sup>3</sup>. In the case of a weak recognition, there is something similar to WAJI described above, with the addendum that such recognition would be non-conceptual. There is a problem with recognizing by reflection something non-conceptual which justifies my belief: in the end, the internalist would be not far from a reliabilist framework, being the awareness of a justifier not so central for justification.

3 The dilemma is originally proposed by Bergmann (2006).

In the second case, if I pursue recognition in the strong sense, I would follow something similar to strong AJI above. Then, by having a justified belief that  $p$ , I would be able to recognize the item  $j$  which justifies  $p$ . Also, I would be able to recognize  $jI$ , which justifies me in believing that  $j$  justifies  $p$ . As the same would apply to  $jI$ , we face the prospect of an infinite regress, once that, under these strong demands, the recognition of a justifier  $j$  amounts to knowing that  $j$  justifies a belief, i.e., I would have to be justified in pointing out  $j$  as a justifier. Moreover, also under these requirements, the epistemic agent is in the path of a highly complex web of beliefs which would hardly be graspable at a certain point.

As I understand, the upshot of the discussion so far is that, if we approach the matter of the epistemic value of reflection as a way of defending an internalist framework, we may end up treating this cognitive attitude as something innocuous or merely secondary. For, the clairvoyant example does not make a case for reflection specifically, but for internalism, whose intuitions are closely associated with the role reflection has in our cognitive lives. Moreover, internalism can be defended without necessarily relying on reflection as a condition for justification. All that could be required is that the subject recognizes a link between her belief, what makes her belief true and how both are connected. Papas (2014) remarks that, observing the difficulties raised by the dilemma above, a basic notion of recognition or awareness of what justifies a belief would be better off as a way out. If this reasoning is correct, then the question of the epistemic value of reflection should be addressed in parallel to the discussion of the internalism / externalism divide.

This is what happens in the second way of dealing with the clairvoyant case. When Sosa (1991, p. 132) addresses the basic features of the case, he draws greater attention to S's reflective assessment of her own beliefs. Sosa discerns an incoherence between the reflective assessment and the non-reflective formation of beliefs. He endorses the internalist view that reflection is in this case damaging the believer, for it is precluding her from true beliefs. But instead of yielding to a full resort to an internalist framework, he understands that the problem demands a solution for the schism or incoherence between reflective and non-reflective faculties. As something which is mostly generated through a reflective take on non-reflective beliefs, he deems this situation a meta-incoherence problem. I would suggest that a different way of stating

this second implication is to say that, by attempting to put reflection aside as a source of positive epistemic results, the reliabilist is confronted with the meta-incoherence problem as a side effect obtained from the inadequate theoretical treatment given to reflection. Behind this analysis stands the view that a good theory in Epistemology should give due weight to both reflective and non-reflective achievements. In what follows, I understand it is plausible and possible to assume this position for the reasons already pointed out, i.e., to concentrate on the issue of reflection in parallel to the externalism / internalism debate.

With this in mind, the question now is what are the main challenges if we wish to explore the epistemic value of reflection? It seems that, even if treated as a separate issue, many of the difficulties of an internalist view seem to persist also for reflection. For, if I try to promote truth for my beliefs and avoid error, I may encounter problems in identifying what favors the truth of what I believe, or the conditions in which I'm entitled to recognize I'm not in error. Moreover, if attain success in these two tasks, what is the difference between the belief thus obtained and the others differently reached? I think as proper to explore these questions from a framework which was designed to respond them.

## 2.

I propose with this section to explore a framework which offers a path to understand the epistemic role of reflection in a cognitive life. This way of exploring the issue is important for it gives a way of delimitating what we meant by reflection when it is demanded as a means to access what supports the truth of our beliefs. My proposal, then, is to discuss the reliabilist Virtue Epistemology of Ernest Sosa.

Sosa's view went through many modifications throughout the years. I address a few of them here, with the focus on what I intend to discuss. A very important point is to explain when the virtue is actually responsible for the case of justified belief. To do this, Sosa (2007, p. 22) develops a normative framework which is based on important assumptions. The first one is that knowledge comes in degrees, being the low ones called animal knowledge, and the more sophisticated ones, reflective knowledge. The second one is that, to better address the difficulties regarding epistemic justification, a

change in the vocabulary would be welcome. And this is where his normative framework begins to take place. He initially frames beliefs as a sort of performance. But not any sort of performance, only those with a specific aim. In the case of belief, it is obvious that the aim is truth. And to evaluate this performance, Sosa displays the AAA structure of his normative framework. It must be Accurate, Adroit and Apt. Thus, a belief might be solely true, which allows one to say that it was an Accurate performance. Also, even if false, it might demonstrate certain dexterity, exhibiting Adroitness. However, there is a situation in which the Accuracy of the performance is importantly obtained through the Adroitness manifested. In this central case for the theory, it is manifested an Apt performance, which may also be deemed and apt belief. This last case is central because represents the moment where knowledge is achieved. Knowledge, then, is apt belief, i.e., an accurate belief achieved importantly through adroitness.

How does intellectual virtue feature in this scheme? The notion is responsible for explaining the presence of adroitness and its important contribution for the accuracy of the belief or performance, i.e., aptness. Thus, intellectual virtue becomes something taken as a skill which allows its possessor to succeed whenever she tries.

However, it is important now to return to a feature of Sosa's view. As mentioned above, he offers the perspective that knowledge has degrees. The doubt here is how to draw a distinction between animal and reflective knowledge. For it looks as if we are endowed with a cognitive repertoire with different skills which, if virtuous, will issue more true beliefs than false, or more apt performances than mere cases of accuracy or sole adroitness. But this is supposed to be something that largely happens despite any reflective standing of an epistemic agent. Put differently, the AAA framework does not seem to afford for an explanation of what it means to achieve reflective knowledge, as Sosa intends to do with his virtue epistemology. However, he makes a huge effort to work out a view of reflective knowledge out of his proposed framework. In addressing this effort, it is interesting to approach it in two different moments: a perspectivist moment and a competence moment. In both moments, there are two basic questions I wish to explore: how does one achieve a higher level of knowledge? And why is this sort of knowledge better than the animal one?



In the first moment, Sosa usually begins his explanation of reflective knowledge from a principle like the following one:

**Principle of the Criterion:** Knowledge is enhanced through justified trust in the reliability of its sources (SOSA, 2009, p. 139)

There are other occasions where he offers a more detailed principle, but I think this one is enough to make the point I wish to. Thus, the question of ‘how to achieve’ seems to be initially responded by the principle. The epistemic agent achieves a higher level of knowledge by justifiably believing, or trusting, that the sources of this same knowledge are reliable. To understand better what this means I recall a basic detail in this debate, i.e., we are talking about propositional knowledge. So the aim is to achieve reflective knowledge of a certain proposition. To bring forth the justification that would allow this, and which is mentioned in the principle, the epistemic agent has to put in perspective the proposition she aims to reflectively know. In order to perform this task she would assess the reliability of the mental state related to the referred propositional content, that is, the belief. A basic criterion in this assessment is the coherence she can observe surrounding the belief under focus. Through the inferences made, she would begin to recognize the web of beliefs cohering with the target belief, thereby enhancing the understanding of, not only the truth of the belief, but why the belief is true. This is the process which is supposed to conduct the epistemic agent towards a reflective standing in her knowledge of a proposition she believes.

Unfortunately, the picture we have so far does not offer an explanation of how reflection makes a difference, in terms of positive epistemic results. For the achievements obtained through reflection are only to be so considered when connected to perceptual faculties already positively evaluated through the AAA framework. Put differently, it is not clear, yet, how reflective knowledge comes about, once reflection, through coherence and understanding, does not add much to the positive epistemic result which was achieved through virtuous faculties. It might be said that reflection brought an enhancement of the justification. But there are, basically, two problems with this view. First, this enhancement is something which occurs outside the boundaries of the AAA framework. Thus, it is difficult to assess it as reflective knowledge. There

might be room to call it reflective justification. But with this, on the one hand, we face the threat of the alternative systems objection to Coherentism, where two coherent systems of beliefs can be presented as justification for, respectively,  $p$  and  $not-p$ . On the other hand, by resorting to perception successfully manifested in the AAA scheme as a way of escaping this objection, a threat of circularity in reasoning emerges: the coherence of the system is confirmed by the reliability of perception, and the reliability of perception by the coherence of the system.

To better theoretically encompass what is a reflective achievement, Sosa (2015) brings forth a complimentary framework. And the basic strategy is to conceive important aspects of reflection as voluntarily manifested by an epistemic agent. More specifically, Sosa (2015, p. 124 and 129) conceives the different manifestations of our cognitive life as ranging inside a continuum, from non-volitional to volitional states. Thus, it is observable that already in the AAA framework above explained, Sosa has under his focus only performances with an aim. What happens is that the non-volitional/volitional line changes the way these aims are established. In the first case, the performances have their aims biologically or functionally determined. In the second case, we verify the role of intention as responsible for the delimitation of the aim. Moreover, in the volitional context a different understanding of performances arises, one that takes these performances as actions. In what follows I explain how this works in order to render clear how reflective achievements are framed in the theory.

Initially, Sosa (2015, p. 95) develops what he calls the SSS (Seat, Shape and Situation) structure of evaluation with two basic goals in mind. First, to allow his theory to give a proper explanation of responsibility, the lack of which was a constant critic cast against his Virtue Epistemology. Second, to address a question yet in need of response: when do the Adroitness relevantly contribute to the Accuracy of a performance? It is at this point that the notions of Seat, Shape and Situation appear to complement the AAA structure of evaluation. More specifically, for Aptness to be achieved, the epistemic agent must harbor the skill (Seat), she must also be in conditions to exercise that ability (her Shape) and, finally, the conditions surrounding her should allow her to perform successfully (Situation). Once these three requirements are observed, the epistemic agent goes from harboring a skill to manifesting a competence, whenever she tries. And competence for Sosa is now the fundamental element of his Virtue

Epistemology, the one which explains how and why a virtue conducts one into the path of propositional knowledge.

One last detail before properly giving reflection its place in the framework. Recall the non-volitional / volitional line. In this latter realm of our cognitive lives, Sosa (2015, p. 129) points out to a continuum which ranges from an affirmation aimed at truth (alethic) to a fully apt affirmation (or apt judgment). That is, alethic affirmations represent the most basic examples of what an epistemic agent can voluntarily manifest when trying to achieve knowledge. Besides, recall that these voluntary attempts are now seen as performances of a distinct kind, i.e., actions. As such, it is no surprise that the intention of the agent will play a highly relevant role in this framework. For in the case of an alethic affirmation, the epistemic agent wants to get it right. But she is not concerned about assuring that her attempt hits the mark, or about any consequence which could possibly unfold in case of any mistake. Things begin to change when these latter considerations enter the scope of intentions the agent harbors. She is no longer perpetrating an affirmation but a judgment. More specifically, she wants her affirmation to manifest competence or aptness according to the SSS framework (SOSA, 2015, p. 55).

According to the continuum established by Sosa, the most that an epistemic agent can aim for is the fully apt affirmation or the apt judgment. But what exactly happens in this case? This is a crucial moment for my purposes, for it is within these conditions that reflection mostly appears to be manifested. What is important to understand, initially, is how Sosa discerns reflection in this context. According to him, in this kind of judgment, the epistemic agent holds a second order look over her first order affirmation. More to the point, Sosa (2015, p. 83) envisages a second order competence which manifests a second order intention to bring aptly a first order apt affirmation, and only aptly. Trying to put this in details, I think it is fair to say that the SSS framework applies in both levels in this case, the difference being that, in the second order, the epistemic agent verifies the Seat, Shape and Situation of the first order attempt, envisaging, when successful, the right moment to make the affirmation. But the epistemic agent might not be required to make this same consideration regarding her second order competence. She will succeed as far as her skill is in conditions to manifest as a competence. As Sosa (2015, p. 84) clarifies, this second order stance

needs not to be consciously executed, “it might be just a presupposition, an implicit awareness”.

In the next section I consider what could be discern as the limits of this view, specially concerning the feasibility of this level of knowledge given the fact that we always tend to raise the bar for our achievements.

### 3.

The issue here is not reflection itself, but reflection as a means to achieve a positive epistemic result, be it knowledge, justification or identifying warrant for one’s beliefs. But, what does it mean to know a proposition reflectively, or to be justified in believing that  $p$  in the same manner? I took Sosa’s recent approach as an answer to this question, since his view places reflective achievements as issuing from an integrated cognitive life of an epistemic agent. Put differently, in Sosa’s framework the appeal to reflection in epistemic matters doesn’t emerge as a defense of internalist against externalist intuitions in Epistemology. This allows for an analysis which explores reflection as a distinctive means to achieve determinate results of our epistemic lives. Thus, instead of inquiring if knowledge or justification requires reflective assessment, what is inquired now is that which, epistemically, can only be obtained through reflection.

However, I’m inclined to say that it is not clear for me, yet, how feasible are the conditions for achieving reflective knowledge as defended by Sosa. To explore this point, I begin by addressing how Sosa understands that his framework the of Norman the clairvoyant, as discussed in the first section. Basically, Norman can be said to have knowledge. After all, he possesses a skill (Seat), his clairvoyant power, which properly issues more true beliefs than false ones whenever Norman is in the correct Shape and Situation. But Sosa (2015, p. 81) states clearly that this case constitutes animal knowledge or, more specifically, apt affirmation. Now, it is interesting to ask if, in his current scenario, Norman is eligible for reflective knowledge of the proposition his clairvoyant power delivered. For he is free to attempt to affirm this same proposition, already apt, with the intent to aptly place it in a field of propositions. However, in this second case, Norman faces difficulties which don’t allow him to ascend to reflective

knowledge, even if he intended to do so. For he wouldn't be able to monitor himself and verify that his Shape and Situation are favorable enough to aptly affirm the proposition delivered by his skill (Seat). Observe that, in a way, it is possible to say that he lacks true (or has false beliefs) regarding his clairvoyant power, and this absence is a hindrance for reflective judgment. In the end, Norman possesses knowledge of a certain kind, albeit not the reflective one.

To better explain this, as I understand, Sosa's view distinguishes two basic obstacles for an epistemic agent to overcome and achieve reflective knowledge. They are the demands of responsibility and the recognition of what counts in favor of one's belief to be considered knowledge. Remember that, in the first section, the attempts to satisfy these demands, illustrated in the attempts of responding the clairvoyant problem, resulted in different sorts of puzzles. You either faced the threat of a regress (due to the strong access clause), or you were not able to realize what responds for your successful case of true belief. In order to avoid these problems, reflection was either cast aside, in favor of a state of basic recognition, or it became epistemically innocuous, where it wasn't a necessary condition for achieving knowledge. Sosa's treatment of the clairvoyant case offers a way of rescuing the intuition that reflection is not something epistemically innocuous, but capable of a distinctive achievement which, as demonstrated in the example, is not always available. The question, now, is if the two demands can be met without generating the puzzles mentioned.

As seen in Sosa's framework, knowledge can happen without the epistemic agent's recognition. The responsibility evoked, however, is highly dependent on reflective skills or competences. To be more specific and better circumvent what Sosa means when he invokes responsibility, I consider that he takes this term in a not so strict way. Responsibility, the one specifically observed in his Virtue Epistemology, would gain the sense of being accountable for what you have judge, i.e., the action you have performed with the intention or in the endeavor to achieve truth. This would be the result of a deliberation, in which the epistemic agent is honestly considering the deliverance of a true affirmation, once that this affirmation is supposed to be shared in a context of mutual collaboration (SOSA, 2015, pp. 51-53). In this sense, someone who delivers a false affirmation could be held responsible for the judgment she went through to do so. Two more details concerning this explanation. First, this sort of responsibility

arises mainly out of a conscious deliberation, something very important for what I want to discuss. Second, remember that these judgments, when aptly conducted, represent the highest degree of knowledge pursued by a human being. Thus, these are key features, in Sosa's theory, to understand the distinctive manifestation of the positive epistemic outcomes of reflection.

Now, is this framework capable of avoiding the puzzles above mentioned? The problem is that, based on the description just given, *a good deal of the epistemic responsibility of an agent is connected to her recognition of what favors the proposition she believes in*. So, you can't actually separate the two demands so neatly. The question, then, is how far the recognition must go to properly support the epistemic responsibility of an agent, at least to the point of allowing us to say that she achieved reflective knowledge?

The first obvious step is to render clear what it means 'recognition of what favors' one's belief. Sosa (2015, p. 82-83) mentions that there are reasons which "a fully proper judgment must weigh", that is, reasons which a responsible epistemic agent should not neglect in her pursuing of knowing full well. They are either counterweighing reasons or undermining reasons. The first ones are reasons that favor an opposing judgment to the one which the agent intends to make. The second ones subdivide in absence of good reasons and reasons related to Seat and Shape, that is, those which an agent might have and would lead her to believe she is not in proper conditions to make a full apt judgment. At this point, there is already a lot to be considered by an epistemic agent in order to achieve the highest level of reflective knowledge. However, Sosa (2015, p. 84) mentions that not all of these reasons must be consciously entertained, for he obviously acknowledges that there is a limit for our scope of attention. Thus, in the case of undermining reasons related to Seat and Shape, it is not required that the second-order consideration feature as a conscious judgment. An implicit awareness would be enough. If, by this sort of awareness, the epistemic agent realizes she is not in conditions to perform a certain judgment, her refraining from doing so would be a manner through which she manifests responsibility in her judgments. Also, I understand that, based on the previous views on reflection developed by Sosa, described in the last section, an implicit awareness is capable of accounting for

the absence of good reasons. In a way similar to a Gestalt, the agent would notice if she was short of good reasons to properly endorse a judgmental belief about a proposition.

By conceding the role of unconscious reflection in the efforts to attain reflective knowledge, we might alleviate the burden of the conscious work and render feasible positive epistemic results through reflection. However, as I intend to argue, it does not lessen the burden enough. There might be cases of counter-weighting or undermining reasons where it seems inevitable that the agent effectively engages in conscious reflection. And here, there are problems for the framework defended by Sosa.

A problem associated with reflection is that the bar can always be set higher. Not only because of skeptical challenges, but also due to the agent's intention in achieving a higher level of knowledge. However, if being epistemically responsible is a necessary condition for achieving reflective knowledge and the bar can always be set higher, there could always be counter-weighting or undermining reasons to be considered. And if our scope of attention is limited, neglecting tends to be inevitable for us. Thus, responsibility in epistemic matters would not be attainable and, as a consequence, reflective knowledge.

Sosa (2015, p. 86) offers a response to this problem. In a footnote, he mentions that "creatures better endowed might attain incremental enhancement not attainable by limited humans. Since *ought implies can*, however, failure to surpass that limit is no human flaw". I will not enter the debate surrounding the '*ought implies can*' maxim. In what follows, I concede the point as Sosa declares it. My attention, rather, is directed to the limit which 'failure to surpass' wouldn't be something blameful for the epistemic agent. The question is how would this limit be better characterized so that neglecting would not render the subject blameful?

A plausible direction to begin responding this question is found, I understand, in an example commonly observed by Sosa. It concerns a case where someone dedicates herself to an epistemic task which *prima facie* could be seen as difficult to bear appraisal. This is the interpretation when, for instance, Sosa (2015, p. 48) describes the episode where someone spends a long time effort counting the number of grains in a bag of coffee. Apparently, even after attaining with certitude this number, the intuition we get it is that it was a pointless task. I don't wish to frame the example under the

ethic/epistemic distinction, which was the focus in this occasion. Rather, I want to highlight the point Pritchard (2016, p. 138) does when considering similar contexts.

Pritchard addresses these cases in order to discuss what he calls the trivial truths problem. First, remember the notion of epistemic value above mentioned: “whatever promotes truth in one’s belief, and the avoidance of error” (PRITCHARD, 2016, p. 136). Thus, if the notion of epistemic value we are working with is this one, the goal is to always increase our stock of true beliefs, regardless of the content of these mental states. However, returning to the example above, it is intuitive to think that a truth about the number of grains in a bag of coffee does not carry the same epistemic value of, as Pritchard (2016, p. 139) exemplifies, a truth concerning fundamental physics. According to him, this calls for a reconsideration of the notion of epistemic value.

Pritchard (*ibid*) points to a problem behind this notion of appraisal which is going to be important for the matters of reflective knowledge. Basically, from the fact that true belief is valued it doesn’t follow that all of them will be as well. Some true beliefs possess a distinctive content which allows them to manifest truth in a more encompassing way than others. To which Pritchard (2016, p. 140) adds that “aiming at the truth does not entail epistemically valuing all true beliefs equally”. More importantly, depending on the position of the subject, it is important that she ignores the trivial truths if she wants to be successful in achieving the most epistemically valued truth in her inquiring. As Pritchard (2016, p 137) demonstrates, this follows not only in the case of trivial truths, but also when facing counter-weighting reasons which misleadingly undermine one’s knowledge, i.e., misleading defeaters. Ignorance, in these cases, is epistemically valuable.

Thus, returning to the case of reflective knowledge, it seems that the neglecting which does not render an epistemic agent blameful is not actually a case of negligence but, more specifically, one of epistemically valuable ignorance. And by ignorance I mean, at first, lack of true belief. This is considered the New View in the debate concerning ignorance, being the Standard View the one which endorses lack of knowledge. I mention ‘at first’ for I still think this is more of a tentative way of better understanding the Epistemology of the reflective, as Sosa (2015, p. 82) names it. I close with one example in order to illustrate the point.



So, imagine the case of an inquirer, I1, who is trying to discern what is the proper Situation for issuing the judgment that P, which is a hypotheses she is defending in her field. She took a long time developing the high level skills which allow her to perform this judgment now. However, this comes with a price. Other skills which could have given her a more encompassing perspective of P were not equally developed. This should not be deemed her fault, for she can't develop many skills to a high level of performance. Now, picture another inquirer, I2. She has highly developed the skills I1 lacks. I2's view is that a few assumptions made by I1 in her judgement that P are problematic, for I1 seems to base her judgment on these assumptions without further reasons. I2 has very good points which are true and can count as undermining reasons against P. Given her limitations, the remarks raised by I2 are considered by I1, but she lacks the resources to better develop the skills I2 manifests. However, as she is highly confident in the judgment and understands that it would be probably true (or apt) if she had made it, she judges that P. It happens that, both, her apt judgment is aptly obtained and I2 remarks still hold. But the latter will take a longer time to be properly addressed, and they would not constitute a decisive hindrance for judgments like the one I1 made. I1's judgment is made out of a choice to strategically ignore the points made by I2.

My understanding is that I1's reflective judgment benefited from a case where ignorance has epistemic value. Observe that she reflectively decides to take a direction in her judgment. It might be said that her success is explained by the competence she possess. My point is that it is partially explained. The way she strategically ignored the points made by I2 should not be taken as a denial of the remarks. Rather, it is simply an affirmation of the lack of resources to address them now. Besides, I1 can also advance her judgment as a contribution to partially reduce the problem of the need of more reasons for her assumptions.

A few questions remain, though. For example, is the ignorance a case of lack of true belief or lack of knowledge? Is it best portrayed as a suspension of judgment regarding a few beliefs or as indifference? Is it factive or objectual ignorance?<sup>4</sup> Thus, based on what I have argued until here, if ignorance can have this sort of epistemic

4 Cf. Le Morvan and Peels (2016, p. 14).

value, the investigation of these points could be helpful for a better understanding of reflection's epistemic value<sup>5</sup>.

## List of References

BERGMANN, M. *Justification Without Awareness: a defense of epistemic externalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

BONJOUR, L. Externalist Theories of Knowledge. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5: 53–73. 1980.

MORVAN, P. Le; PEELS, R. The Nature of Ignorance: two views. In: *The Epistemic Dimensions of Ignorance*. Peels, R.; Blaauwn, M. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 12-32.

PAPPAS, G. (2014) Internalist vs Externalist theories of knowledge and justification. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fri Aug 8, 2014)*, EDWARD, N. Zalta(ed.). Available in <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justep-intext/>> Access in: 09/03/2018

PRITCHARD, D. Ignorance and Epistemic Value In: *The Epistemic Dimensions of Ignorance*. Peels, R.; Blaauwn, M. (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 132-143.

SOSA, E. The Raft and the Pyramid: coherence versus foundations in the theory of knowledge. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 5: 3-26, 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Virtue Epistemology: apt belief and reflective knowledge, volume I*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Virtue Epistemology: apt belief and reflective knowledge, volume II*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Judgment and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

5 I would like to thank all participants of the SELF at UFSC during the three presentations in which they listened to me patiently, giving me valuable suggestions during the first semester of 2017. I also would like to thank professor Scott Aikin, who helped me concluding the paper in the first semester of 2018, during my time as a Fulbright visiting graduate student at Vanderbilt University.