

## CURIOSITY AND INQUISITIVENESS

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Curiosity and inquisitiveness are subjects of emerging interest in contemporary epistemology. Curiosity, in particular, has attracted attention from epistemologists in recent years (Mišćević 2007; Brady 2009; Whitcomb 2010; Inan 2012; Kvanvig 2012). This is notable given the limited attention paid to both curiosity and inquisitiveness in philosophical history. The most frequent (and more or less only) references to curiosity can be found in the context of early empiricism. Thomas Hobbes describes curiosity as the ‘lust of the mind’, comparing it (favourably) with base desires such as hunger and other sensory pleasures (*Leviathan*, 1998, Chapter 6, p.35). John Locke projects an exalted view of curiosity, arguing that “[C]uriosity should be as carefully cherished...as other appetites suppressed” (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1989, section 108). David Hume concludes Book II of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1986) with a discussion of curiosity endorsing it as “the first source of all our enquiries” (section 2.3.10). The flattering light in which curiosity is presented within this Enlightenment context would suggest it a topic worthy of philosophical scrutiny. Yet, beyond these minimal comments, little has been said of curiosity. Inquisitiveness has received less attention still. Plausibly this is because curiosity and inquisitiveness have typically been regarded as synonymous. Given this, and the limited attention that curiosity has received, it is not surprising to find even fewer mentions of inquisitiveness in the philosophical canon. At any rate, neither curiosity nor inquisitiveness has been the subject of sustained philosophical investigation.

Ilhan Inan observes the lack of attention paid to curiosity in philosophical history in his recent book *The Philosophy of Curiosity* (2012). In particular, Inan highlights this deficiency within epistemology: “the history of epistemology is guilty of having ignored it [curiosity] until very recently” (p.184). Yet, as he emphasises, “[I]t is difficult even to imagine how our intellectual achievements would have been possible without the basic motivation of curiosity” (p.1). It is indeed surprising that so little philosophical resource has been expended on understanding this ‘basic motivation’. Inan’s comprehensive discussion of curiosity represents perhaps the first extended treatment of curiosity in philosophical literature. Naturally, however, this treatment cannot cover the topic from all angles and Inan explicitly limits the discussion to questions concerning the relationship between curiosity and language. Notably, he says, “I will have little to say on whether curiosity is a virtue” (p.xiii). Given the relative dominance of virtue epistemology in contemporary epistemology, however, one might expect any discussion of curiosity within epistemology to arise precisely from its treatment as an intellectual virtue. Indeed, curiosity appears regularly on lists of the intellectual virtues and is a natural companion to virtues such as open-mindedness, attentiveness and intellectual humility (Alfano 2012; Baehr 2011; Zagzebski 1996). Inquisitiveness can also be found on these lists, albeit less often (Baehr 2011; Watson 2015). Arguably, curiosity and inquisitiveness can be and are viewed as key components of the intellectually virtuous life. With this in mind, a discussion of curiosity and inquisitiveness is both timely and apt. In addition, a discussion of the largely overlooked distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness is, I will argue, of significance for virtue epistemology; particularly when considered in light of the emerging impetus towards intellectual character education advocated by prominent virtue epistemologists and educational theorists (Baehr 2011; Kotzee 2013; Pritchard 2013).

In the following, I offer characterisations of curiosity and inquisitiveness and argue that they are distinct, albeit closely related intellectual virtues. They should not be regarded as synonymous. The

difference is revealed by highlighting the distinct relationships that curiosity and inquisitiveness bear to the practice of questioning: the inquisitive person must ask questions while the curious person manifests her curiosity in a broader range of activities and behaviours, including, but not limited to, questioning. Inquisitiveness emerges as a restricted form of curiosity. By drawing a relatively fine-grained distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness we can distinguish two important aspects of intellectually virtuous inquiry.

### **Preliminaries**

To characterise any of the individual intellectual virtues, like curiosity or inquisitiveness, it will be helpful to take account of the structure of the intellectual virtues, in general. I draw on Linda Zagzebski's (1996) account of the virtues which identifies two components: *motivation* and *success*. The motivation component picks out the motivation that drives intellectually virtuous inquiry. The success component demands a degree of success or skill in the realisation of that motivation. More specifically, drawing on a recent observation by Jason Baehr (2013a), one can distinguish between the *common* and *distinctive* motivations of the virtues. The common motivation is the motivation that drives *all* of the intellectual virtues. The distinctive motivations are the motivations that are particular to each of the *individual* intellectual virtues. The success component is also understood according to this distinction: a person can skilfully realise the common motivation of all the intellectual virtues, or they can skilfully realise the distinctive motivation of an individual intellectual virtue, or neither of these, or both.

I characterise the common motivation of the intellectual virtues as that of *improving epistemic standing*: the intellectually virtuous person is motivated to improve epistemic standing. An individual's epistemic standing encompasses all of her true beliefs, knowledge, understanding, and information. An improvement in epistemic standing can be understood intuitively as an improvement in the breadth, depth or accuracy of an individual's true beliefs, knowledge, understanding, or

information. Such an improvement may occur in one's own, or another person's, epistemic standing.<sup>1</sup> The motivation to improve epistemic standing gives rise to the intellectual virtues; it is this that motivates the intellectually virtuous inquirer. Accepting this characterisation of the common motivation, the task when characterising the individual intellectual virtues, is to identify their *distinctive motivations*, and the *distinctive skills* involved in the realisation of these. The following two sections will identify the distinctive motivations and skills required of the intellectual virtues of curiosity and inquisitiveness.<sup>2</sup>

### **What is curiosity?**

I begin with the distinctive motivation of virtuous curiosity. Firstly, I take the following to be an intuitively central feature of the virtue of curiosity: the virtuously curious person values *epistemic goods*. This is as opposed to other goods such as money, property or health, for example. Imagine a person who valued only wealth, fame or, as Hobbes (1998) puts it, “the short vehemence of any carnal Pleasure” (Chapter 6, p.35). Such a person could not be described as curious (virtuously or otherwise) and it is the lack of value that she places on epistemic goods that determines this. More specifically, the virtuously curious person shows that she values epistemic goods by being motivated to *acquire* them. This is as opposed to other ways in which a person can value a thing: one can value something without being motivated to acquire it, after all. Compare the butterfly preservationist with the butterfly collector. The butterfly preservationist values butterflies but he is not motivated to acquire them. The butterfly collector, in contrast, shows that he values butterflies precisely by being motivated to acquire them. The collector is akin to the curious person. The latter values epistemic goods and this value is revealed by her motivation to acquire them. The virtuously curious person is *characteristically motivated to acquire epistemic goods*.<sup>3</sup>

In support, consider the following case. A philosophy student waits at the end of a lecture and tells the lecturer that he is curious about something she said. The lecturer offers to expand. The

philosophy student has nowhere to be and nothing preventing him from hearing what she has to say. Despite this, he declines. In this case, we would be disinclined to describe the philosophy student as genuinely curious. He does not acquire the information that he claims to be curious about despite the fact that it is readily available and there is nothing preventing him from doing so. As such, he reveals a lack of sufficient motivation for acquiring the information. It is this that stops us short of describing him as curious. If he were in fact curious he would accept the lecturer's offer. Given that he does not we might say that he is mistaken when he claims to be curious or be tempted to explain his behaviour by suggesting that he has some alternative reason for telling the lecturer that he is. In general, it is misplaced to ascribe curiosity about X to someone who, when offered information about X, at no cost to themselves, nonetheless declines it. This is because, by declining the readily available information, they are failing to demonstrate the motivation to acquire it that is required for the attribution of virtuous curiosity.

In fact, the virtue of curiosity requires slightly more than this. In order to demonstrate sufficient motivation for acquiring an epistemic good, in the case of virtuous curiosity, one must be willing to acquire that good at some marginal cost, if necessary. Willingness to accept an apple when it is offered reveals merely that one has no all-things-considered reason not to do so. But, if when asked to exchange the penny in one's hand for the apple, one declines the apple, it would be fair to surmise that one is not sufficiently motivated to acquire the apple. Likewise with epistemic goods. The philosophy student must be willing to sacrifice, say, ten minutes in the pub in order to hear what the lecturer has to say. If, when faced with this small sacrifice, he declines, we would be disinclined to describe him as genuinely curious. If he is willing to make the sacrifice, then he demonstrates sufficient motivation for acquiring the epistemic goods on offer. The virtuously curious person is characteristically motivated to acquire epistemic goods.<sup>4</sup>

Note here the close alignment between this central feature of the virtue of curiosity and the common motivation of all the intellectual virtues. The intellectually virtuous person is characteristically motivated to improve epistemic standing. The virtuously curious person is characteristically motivated to acquire epistemic goods (according to the characterisation so far). The motivation to acquire epistemic goods is not identical with the motivation to improve epistemic standing because acquiring epistemic goods is not the only way to improve epistemic standing. The rigorous inquirer, for example, at times improves epistemic standing by carefully scrutinising the epistemic goods that she already has, rather than by acquiring more. The intellectually humble inquirer improves epistemic standing by ‘owning her intellectual limitations’ (Whitcomb et al. 2017). Nonetheless, the motivation to acquire epistemic goods is closely aligned with the common motivation of the intellectual virtues in that one cannot be motivated to acquire epistemic goods (in the full sense required for virtuous curiosity, discussed below), without being motivated to improve epistemic standing.

This close alignment between the virtue of curiosity and the common motivation of the intellectual virtues accords with a plausible view of curiosity as a ‘fundamental’ or ‘basic’ intellectual virtue; a view which emerges in the literature. Nenad Mišćević (2007), for example, describes curiosity as the “mainspring of motivation” and identifies it as “the *core motivating* epistemic virtue” (p.246, emphasis original). Similarly, Baehr (2011) places curiosity in the first of his categories, labelled ‘initial motivation’ (p.21), when offering a taxonomy of the intellectual virtues, and regards curiosity as a key intellectual virtue to educate for. Inan (2012) refers to curiosity as a ‘basic motivation’ for inquiry (p.1). This treatment of curiosity as a core or basic motivating intellectual virtue suggests a characterisation that places curiosity at the heart of intellectually virtuous inquiry. Identifying the characteristic motivation to acquire epistemic goods as a central feature of the virtue of curiosity does just that. It is no accident that this central feature of the virtue of curiosity is closely aligned with the common motivation of the intellectual virtues.

The characterisation so far captures something intuitively central to the intellectual virtue of curiosity. One may reasonably contend, however, that it is still too broad. Specifically, the virtuously curious person is not motivated to acquire *any and all* epistemic goods. With this in mind, we can refine the characterisation of virtuous curiosity by examining *which* epistemic goods the virtuously curious person is motivated to acquire. Firstly, over and above a motivation to acquire epistemic goods, the virtuously curious person must also have recognised, or at least believe, that she is missing the epistemic goods in question. I value knowing my true date of birth, for example, but I'm not curious about it because I believe that I already know it. If my mother were to tell me that it is different from what I think it is, then I would become very curious, very quickly. I certainly do value knowing my true date of birth, even though I'm not currently curious about it, and it is precisely because I believe that I already know it that I am not curious. The virtuously curious person must have recognised, or at least believe, that she is missing epistemic goods, in order to be curious about them. This requirement - in essence, that one must be aware of one's ignorance in order to be curious - is developed comprehensively by Inan (2012). He states, "when... an awareness of ignorance is coupled with an interest in the topic, it motivates curiosity" (p.1). This neatly captures the core of the characterisation developed so far. The virtuously curious person must believe that she is missing some epistemic good and be motivated to acquire the good, in light of that fact. The virtuously curious person is *characteristically motivated to acquire epistemic goods that she lacks, or believes that she lacks*. This is the distinctive motivation of virtuous curiosity.<sup>5</sup>

We may now consider the distinctive skill required of the virtuously curious person in order for them to realise the distinctive motivation, just described. Here again, we can refine the characterisation of virtuous curiosity by examining *which* epistemic goods the virtuously curious person is motivated to acquire. Specifically, the virtuously curious person is not motivated to acquire *any and all* epistemic goods that she lacks, or believes that she lacks. A final modification is required: the virtuously curious person is characteristically motivated to acquire *worthwhile* epistemic

goods that she lacks, or believes that she lacks. This final constraint provides a success condition for curiosity. Notably, this success condition demands, not that the virtuously curious person *must acquire* worthwhile epistemic goods, and thereby actually improve epistemic standing, but that the epistemic goods she is motivated to acquire *must be worthwhile*; they must be goods that would improve epistemic standing, were she to acquire them. It is the virtuously curious person's skilful identification of worthwhile epistemic goods that renders her virtuously curious. This is so even if she fails to acquire the worthwhile epistemic goods that she seeks, and in turn, fails to improve epistemic standing.<sup>6</sup>

In support of this final modification, consider the following cases. A philosophy student is attending a lecture on the philosophy of time. She has a keen interest in the topic, is aware that she knows very little about it, and is motivated to acquire all the information she can. Unfortunately, her lecturer believes (falsely) that he arrived at the lecture hall through a loophole in space-time from the year 3017. Consequently, he has a series of deeply mistaken beliefs about the philosophy of time and proceeds to lecture on these. The philosophy student thereby fails to acquire the worthwhile epistemic goods that she seeks, despite the fact that she is genuinely motivated to learn about the philosophy of time and recognises her relative ignorance on the topic. Nonetheless, in this case we would still be inclined to describe the philosophy student as virtuously curious. In contrast, imagine another student, also signed up for a course on the philosophy of time and not at the mercy of an epistemically unfriendly lecturer. This student, however, instead of being motivated to acquire information about the philosophy of time, is obsessed with the number of blades of grass in the courtyard outside the lecture theatre. As a result, she spends her philosophy of time lecture meticulously counting and recording blades of grass. Under these circumstances, we would be disinclined to describe the second student as virtuously curious. This is despite the fact that, as in the first case, the student is motivated to acquire epistemic goods that she lacks.

The difference between these cases lies not in the students' motivations to acquire epistemic goods, nor in the successful or unsuccessful acquisition of those goods. Rather, the difference lies in the *kinds of epistemic goods* that the students are motivated to acquire. Unlike her virtuous counterpart, in the first case, the blades-of-grass student, in the second case, is motivated to acquire the *wrong kind* of epistemic goods; goods that will not improve her epistemic standing in the sense required for intellectual virtue. She chooses to acquire trivial information about blades of grass whilst forgoing worthwhile information about the philosophy of time. The blades-of-grass student's failure is thereby due to a fault in her intellectual character, as opposed to her epistemic environment. This is significantly different from the first case in which the student is prevented from acquiring worthwhile epistemic goods, and so improving epistemic standing, due to her epistemically unfriendly circumstances. Actually acquiring worthwhile epistemic goods, and so improving epistemic standing, is not a requirement of the intellectual virtue of curiosity, provided that the goods one is motivated to acquire are indeed worthwhile. Identifying worthwhile epistemic goods is the distinctive skill required of the virtuously curious person. It is now possible to offer a characterisation of the intellectual virtue of curiosity. The virtuously curious person is *characteristically motivated to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods that she lacks, or believes that she lacks*.

### **What is inquisitiveness?**

Inquisitiveness is not synonymous with curiosity. As such it requires a distinct characterisation. I have presented an extended characterisation of the virtue of inquisitiveness in previous work (see Watson 2015) and will offer a shortened version below. Notably, virtuous inquisitiveness will emerge as a restricted form of virtuous curiosity, defined, unlike curiosity, by its relationship to questioning. As with the characterisation of virtuous curiosity, I begin with the distinctive motivation of virtuous inquisitiveness. Firstly, I take the following to be intuitively central to the characterisation of the virtue of inquisitiveness: the virtuously inquisitive person is *characteristically motivated to ask questions*. This identifies questioning as a defining feature of inquisitiveness from the

outset. In support of this, imagine a philosophy student who, despite sitting through numerous lectures and having access to a range of philosophical resources, fails to ask a single question relating to philosophy. It seems clear that such a student could not be described as inquisitive. It is her *failure to ask questions*, in the absence of any barriers to doing so, that exposes her lack of inquisitiveness.<sup>7</sup> The inquisitive person asks questions; without doing so she cannot possess the virtue of inquisitiveness.

In addition, not only is virtuously inquisitive person characteristically motivated to ask questions but her questioning must be *sincere*. A sincere question is one in which the questioner genuinely wants to improve epistemic standing with respect to the subject matter; she genuinely wants to know or understand the answer. To see this, imagine a second philosophy student who regularly asks questions during lectures. However, unbeknownst to his lecturer he is earning money from a group of rich and lazy classmates for every question asked. The student has no genuine interest in finding out the answers to his questions and is motivated purely by the prospect of financial gain. In this case, it again seems misplaced to attribute the virtue of inquisitiveness to the student. Although he exhibits a characteristic motivation to ask questions he is not motivated to do so in order to know or understand the answers given; his questions are not sincere. It is the student's insincerity that stops us short of attributing the virtue of inquisitiveness to him. The virtuously inquisitive person is *characteristically motivated to engage sincerely in questioning*. This is the distinctive motivation of virtuous inquisitiveness.

We may now consider the distinctive skill required of the virtuously inquisitive person in order for them to realise the distinctive motivation, just described. Here we can refine the characterisation of virtuous inquisitiveness by examining the *type of questioning* that the virtuously inquisitive person is motivated and able to engage in. Specifically, the virtuously inquisitive person is not motivated to engage in questioning of any unskilled sort regarding any arbitrary subject matter, however

sincerely. A final modification is required: the virtuously inquisitive person is characteristically motivated and able to engage sincerely in *good questioning*. This final constraint provides a success condition for inquisitiveness. Notably, this success condition demands, not that the virtuously inquisitive person *must acquire correct answers* to her questions, and thereby improve epistemic standing, but that in attempting to improve epistemic standing, the questioning she engages in must be *good*; it must be questioning that is likely to improve epistemic standing, if the correct answers are forthcoming. It is the virtuously inquisitive person's ability to engage in good questioning that renders her virtuously inquisitive. This is so even if she fails to acquire correct answers to her questions, and in turn, fails to improve epistemic standing.<sup>8</sup>

In support of this final modification, we can return to our unfortunate philosophy of time student, at the mercy of an epistemically unfriendly lecturer. Imagine that this student not only attends her philosophy of time lectures in order to acquire information about the topic but also asks good questions throughout the lectures and in discussion with the lecturer afterwards. Given the lecturer's deeply mistaken beliefs about the philosophy of time, however, the student fails to acquire correct answers to her questions and so fails to improve epistemic standing, despite her characteristic motivation to engage sincerely in questioning. Nonetheless, in this case we would still be inclined to describe the philosophy student as virtuously inquisitive. In contrast, return to our blades-of-grass student, also signed up for a course on the philosophy of time but not at the mercy of an epistemically unfriendly lecturer. Imagine that this student takes a break from counting blades of grass outside the lecture theatre to attend one of her lectures. However, instead of focusing on the philosophy of time, she asks persistent questions, throughout the lecture and in discussion with the lecturer afterwards, about the number of blade of grass outside the lecture theatre. Despite their sincerity, the questions are badly articulated, irrelevant, and asked in an inappropriate context, about a trivial subject matter. Under these circumstances, we would be

disinclined to describe the philosophy student as virtuously inquisitive. This is despite the fact that, as in the first case, the student is characteristically motivated to engage sincerely in questioning.

The difference between these cases lies not in the students' motivations to engage sincerely in questioning, nor in the successful or unsuccessful acquisition of correct answers to their questions. Rather, the difference lies in the *type of questioning* that the students are motivated and able to engage in. Unlike her virtuous counterpart, in the first case, the blades-of-grass student, in the second case, is employing a faulty question-asking strategy; she is engaging in *bad questioning* that will not improve her epistemic standing in the sense required for intellectual virtue. Once again, the blades-of-grass student's failure is due to a fault in her intellectual character, as opposed to her epistemic environment. This is significantly different from the first case in which the student was, again, prevented from acquiring correct answers to her questions, and so improving epistemic standing, due to her epistemically unfriendly circumstances. Actually acquiring correct answers, and so improving epistemic standing, is not a requirement of the intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness, provided that the questioning one engages in is good. Good questioning is the distinctive skill required of the virtuously inquisitive person. It is now possible to offer a characterisation of the intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness. The virtuously inquisitive person is *characteristically motivated and able to engage sincerely in good questioning*.

### **The distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness**

Curiosity and inquisitiveness are closely related virtues, both arising in the initial stages of intellectually virtuous inquiry. They are, however, not synonymous and warrant distinct characterisations in the context of virtue epistemology. Virtuous inquisitiveness emerges as a restricted form of virtuous curiosity; a form of virtuous curiosity in which the agent must engage in questioning. If a person does not engage in questioning she may still be virtuously curious in other ways but cannot be described as inquisitive (virtuously or otherwise). Characteristically

engaging sincerely in good questioning is a restricted form of virtuous curiosity. It is a restricted form of the characteristic motivation to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods that one lacks or believes that one lacks. Virtuous inquisitiveness is virtuous curiosity manifested as good questioning.

One may wonder if this relatively fine-grained distinction collapses under further scrutiny. Doesn't all curiosity manifest itself as questioning of one sort or another? If so, the two terms should indeed be regarded as synonymous. To address this, it will be illuminating to provide a defence of the claim that one can be curious without engaging in questioning. The curious (but not inquisitive) philosophy of time student demonstrates this well. Recall that this student was deemed virtuously curious on the basis of her keen interest in the philosophy of time coupled with an awareness of her ignorance on the topic resulting in her motivation to acquire information about it by attending philosophy of time lectures. At no point was it argued that she must, in addition, engage in questioning about the philosophy of time in order to be deemed virtuously curious. This would, I think, be too demanding. Significantly, it is not a motivation to question that renders the philosophy of time student curious but her motivation to acquire information about the philosophy of time. Consider the many different ways in which this could be manifested. The student may, for example, buy a book on the philosophy of time, watch a documentary on the subject or attend a philosophy of time conference. In all these ways she is exposing herself to further information about the philosophy of time revealing her motivation to acquire such information (as well, we can assume, as a recognition of her ignorance on the topic). These actions do not, in themselves, amount to questioning and yet it seems highly plausible that the student could be accurately described as curious on the basis of this behaviour. In general, virtuous curiosity can be identified through a variety of behaviours and actions, all arising from the motivation to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods, which a person lacks or believes that she lacks. The virtuously curious person may, if given the opportunity, expose herself to reliable sources of

information on her topic of interest, monitor her epistemic environment for such information, and seek out environments that are conducive to acquiring it. Again, these behaviours do not need to amount to questioning in order to be deemed the actions of a virtuously curious person. Of course the curious person often will engage in questioning, in which case, provided it is good questioning, she will also be exhibiting virtuous inquisitiveness. Unlike inquisitiveness, however, curiosity is not *defined* either by the activity of questioning or by a motivation to question; one can be curious without asking questions.

With this in mind, we can see that the virtue of curiosity allows for a more passive characterisation than the virtue of inquisitiveness. Inquisitiveness is characterised in terms of an activity; the activity of questioning. Curiosity is characterised in more passive terms; as the motivation to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods, rather than in terms of the actions and behaviours associated with that motivation. It is this that positions virtuous curiosity so close to the common motivation of all the intellectual virtues and at the heart of intellectually virtuous inquiry. Interestingly, these characterisations are echoed in the etymology of the terms. ‘Curiosity’ derives from the Latin ‘*cūra*’ meaning ‘care’ or ‘concern’. ‘Inquisitiveness’ derives from the Latin ‘*inquirere*’ meaning ‘seek after’, ‘search for’, ‘examine’ or ‘investigate’. Beyond this purely etymological point (and perhaps because of it), the distinction appears to track subtle differences in the way the two terms are commonly employed in ordinary language. ‘Idle curiosity’, for example, is permitted whilst ‘idle inquisitiveness’ sounds oxymoronic. Notably, Inan (2012), perhaps unintentionally, reflects this usage when commenting on the ancient Greek notion of wonder, ‘*thauma*’; “it had to include a kind of inquisitiveness, *a way of questioning* things unknown; it had to involve a *form of curiosity* to serve as the driving force for philosophy” (p.2, emphasis added). Inquisitiveness, rather than curiosity, is directly associated with questioning and is described as a form of curiosity, rather than curiosity itself.

In line with this ordinary language usage, I believe that this more passive characterisation of virtuous curiosity likewise accords with real-world attributions of curiosity, both to ourselves and to others. I consider myself curious about many things: quantum gravity, car engines, power dynamics in the Roman Empire. At the same time, I am acutely aware of the limited time and intellectual resources that I have to expend on these topics of interest. My failure or inability to actively seek and acquire information about these things, by engaging in questioning or otherwise, does not, I think, preclude me from claiming to be (and in fact being) genuinely curious about them. Likewise, when my ninety-nine year-old grandfather recently told me that he was disappointed he wouldn't be around to see what world events will unfold over the next one hundred years, I took him to be expressing his (insatiable) curiosity; in the simple act of articulating its very insatiability. No more, I think, is required for the attribution of virtuous curiosity. Again, this distinctively passive characterisation further emphasises the close alignment that exists between virtuous curiosity and the common motivation of the intellectual virtues. The motivation to improve epistemic standing concerns the inner states of the intellectually virtuous inquirer. Virtuous curiosity, as characterised above, also concerns these inner states. In its most passive forms virtuous curiosity may amount to no more than these. Consequently, more so than with any of the other intellectual virtues, the question of what it means to 'act virtuously' in the case of curiosity is potentially misleading. 'Acting virtuously', in this case, may sometimes, perhaps often, manifest itself entirely as an inner state; one reflecting the fundamental motivation underpinning the intellectually virtuous life.

**Why does the distinction matter?**

The distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness is of significance for virtue epistemologists concerned with the project of characterising the individual intellectual virtues (Roberts and Wood 2007; Riggs 2010; Battaly 2010, 2011; Baehr 2011). This project, termed 'autonomous' virtue epistemology (Baehr 2011), has developed significantly over the past decade with increasingly

sophisticated treatments of the individual intellectual virtues. The present discussion contributes to this project by offering characterisations of two commonly cited intellectual virtues which may at first glance appear to be one and the same. The more nuanced treatment of these as distinct, albeit closely related intellectual virtues, contributes to an increasingly refined understanding of curiosity and inquisitiveness within the context of autonomous virtue epistemology. Similarly, the distinction should be of interest to those working on either of the virtues independently, particularly where the distinction between these closely aligned terms has not been made explicit or they have been treated, either implicitly or explicitly, as synonymous (Mišćević 2007; Whitcomb 2010; Inan 2012; Kvanvig 2012).

Beyond this contribution to contemporary analytical projects in epistemology, however, the significance of marking a distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness can be seen within applied virtue epistemology. The case for intellectual character education that has emerged in recent years, at the intersection of virtue epistemology and educational theory, places the cultivation of intellectual virtues at the heart of an effective education (Baehr 2011, 2013b; Kotzee 2011, 2012; MacAllister 2012; Pritchard 2013). Curiosity has received notable attention within this setting. One of the movement's most prominent advocates, Jason Baehr, for example, places curiosity first on a list of nine intellectual virtues that comprise the 'master virtues' at the Intellectual Virtues Academy (IVA); a unique charter school in Long Beach, California, founded on the philosophical principles of intellectual virtues education. The academy aims to provide an education which fosters "meaningful growth in intellectual character virtues" and "equip[s] students to engage the world with curiosity and thoughtfulness, to know themselves, and to live well" (<http://www.ivalongbeach.org/about/mission-and-vision>). Curiosity is seen to play a central role in the intellectual character education offered at the IVA. I think this can be explained by the close relationship that curiosity bears to the common motivation of the intellectual virtues

and its status as a 'fundamental' or 'basic' motivating virtue. Curiosity is, to some extent, a defining feature of intellectual character itself.

Significantly, the characterisation of virtuous curiosity, in more passive terms than virtuous inquisitiveness, may help to inform the project of educating for both these virtues in a context such as the IVA. Characterising virtuous curiosity in terms of the characteristic motivation to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods, highlights the sense in which educating for this virtue concerns nurturing the inner drive of a student to learn and explore the world; *to care* about seeking out information, knowledge, and understanding. The significance of this inner drive has long been identified in educational theory, perhaps most prominently in the first instance, by John Dewey (1916, 1933), and subsequently in the progressive education movement of the late 20th century (Cremin 1959; Dearden 1967; Shulman 1987). Educating for virtuous curiosity, understood in these terms, requires focusing on the subjective and affective aspects of the virtue as it manifests in students through a wide variety of activities and behaviours. Moving beyond the somewhat narrower aim of encouraging student questioning, this characterisation of virtuous curiosity draws attention to the many ways in which it serves as a fundamental motivation for intellectually virtuous inquiry. This opens up a space for cultivating the motivation itself, apart from a set of skills or behaviours, recognising the sense in which one's intellectual character comprises not only one's intellectual capacities but the motivation to acquire epistemic goods in the first place. Taking this seriously within a classroom setting allows education practitioners to facilitate, encourage and nurture this motivation, even in its most passive manifestations.

By contrast, educating for inquisitiveness requires an explicit focus on the active skill of questioning. This focus is also key to an effective education, incorporating the aims of both skills and virtues-based educational models (Watson 2016). No others of the intellectual virtues, including curiosity, are *defined* by their relationship to questioning. Inquisitiveness, thereby, not only

often leads to intellectually virtuous inquiry but is defined by its role in the active initiation of such inquiry. Insofar as nurturing intellectually virtuous inquiry is a central aim of the project of educating for intellectual virtue, this places virtuous inquisitiveness, alongside virtuous curiosity, centre-stage. Educating for virtuous inquisitiveness, understood as a restricted form of virtuous curiosity, demands dedicated approaches and techniques, distinct from those required for nurturing a virtuously curious disposition. These will concentrate on the skills involved in raising and pursuing a line of inquiry by engaging in good questioning. Such techniques are not yet fully developed in educational theory and practice and deserve dedicated attention. By drawing a distinction between virtuous curiosity and virtuous inquisitiveness we can distinguish between two aspects of intellectually virtuous inquiry; that in which a person's motivation to know and understand the world is awakened, and that in which they begin to master a fundamental skill required in order to achieve this. In the context of educating for intellectual virtues recognising this distinction provides an enhanced opportunity to dedicate time and resources towards developing pedagogy and designing curriculum that speaks to both of these critical aspects of an individual's intellectual character.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to serve as the common motivation of the intellectual virtues some constraints on the notion of improving epistemic standing must be admitted. Given the finite intellectual resources available to us, the mere acquisition of true beliefs, knowledge or information will not always be sufficient to satisfy the goal of improving epistemic standing in the sense required for intellectual virtue. The acquisition of a large number of so-called 'trivial truths' will not usually be sufficient, for example, even though epistemic standing is in some sense broadened, given that the intellectual resources spent on such activity could be more fruitfully employed elsewhere. Similarly, one may improve one's epistemic standing, in the sense required for intellectual virtue, by becoming aware of one's ignorance.

<sup>2</sup> Note that both inquisitiveness and curiosity are treated here as character-based virtues, as opposed to faculty-based virtues such as good memory or keen eyesight. This distinction is drawn by Greco and Turri (2011).

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<sup>3</sup> I introduce ‘characteristic’ here to ensure that, when treated as a virtue, curiosity cannot be attributed on the basis of a single instance of the motivation to acquire epistemic goods (Zagzebski, 1996). Rather this motivation represents a stable feature of the curious person’s character.

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Stephen Ryan for a useful discussion of this point.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, this requirement suggests a close connection between the intellectual virtues of curiosity and intellectual humility, at least insofar as the latter is characterised in terms of a person’s willingness and ability to recognise their intellectual limitations (Whitcomb *et al.* 2017). If awareness of one’s ignorance is a form of recognising one’s intellectual limitations, then the virtuously curious person exhibits a restricted form of intellectual humility.

<sup>6</sup> There are two senses in which epistemic goods may be considered worthwhile in this context. In the first sense, worthwhile epistemic goods must be *non-trivial*. In the second sense, acquiring worthwhile epistemic goods requires the virtuously curious person to exercise judgement with respect to the most *relevant or significant* epistemic goods available. The issue of which epistemic goods can be deemed non-trivial, relevant, or significant, in any given case, is, of course, complex and potentially contentious. Nonetheless, if one grants that some epistemic goods are indeed worthwhile, whilst others are not, then this constraint on virtuous curiosity is required.

<sup>7</sup> Questioning here refers to both articulated and non-articulated questioning.

<sup>8</sup> The notion of good questioning is rich and complex. Firstly, good questioning requires targeting worthwhile information in the two senses of worthwhile discussed above. Secondly, good questioning requires identifying the appropriate context for one’s questions; one must ask at the right time and place, and identify the right person or source of information. Thirdly, good questioning requires the ability to formulate questions well; one’s questions must be well-articulated and appropriately communicated. With these parameters in place the good questioner will meet the conditions required for virtuous inquisitiveness (Watson *forthcoming*).