The Curious Case of the Careless Detective: Two Approaches to The Problem of Forgotten Carelessness

Margot Witte

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree in Bachelor of Arts with Honors
Department of Philosophy
Brown University
April 15, 2019
For Jim Whitta, who set me on this path
Introduction

We are imperfect epistemic agents, and we form many of our beliefs carelessly. We are eager to believe that the rival team cheated or that our favorite politician's newest policy proposal will be effective. Sometimes, we are simply lazy, and we store carelessly formed beliefs in memory before we can appropriately evaluate them. We find ourselves in cases of forgotten carelessness when we retain the carelessly formed belief but forget our own carelessness. In such cases, our justification is lower than it would have been if we had formed the belief carefully and then forgotten about our own carefulness. My primary interest is what I call the “problem of forgotten carelessness:” Why are we less justified in cases of forgotten carelessness than in cases of forgotten carefulness? Before I approach the question of forgotten carelessness, I will first consider the seemingly simple “problem of remembered carelessness:” Why is our justification lower when we remember that we formed a belief carelessly than when we remember we formed a belief carefully? That is to say, how does the memory at time $t$ of having formed a belief carelessly in the past lower justification for that belief at time $t$?

In answering the questions posed by cases of remembered and forgotten carelessness, I set aside short-term memory, including what Hill (forthcoming) calls “working memory,” which holds information for a short period of time in order to accomplish a specific task, and “iconic memory,” which holds inaccessible visual information for a few milliseconds. I focus instead on long-term, semantic (or, to put it in epistemological terms, propositional) memory. This includes my memory of

---

1 This project would have been impossible without the support of many more people than I can list here. My deepest thanks to Josh Schechter, who made this year-long process of groping in the dark not only fruitful but fun. I am deeply grateful to him for his generosity. Also to David Christensen, for his constant kindness and confidence, and to Zach Barnett, for his helpful feedback and encouragement. Thank you to my parents, Rebecca Schnier and Phil Witte, for their often unreasonable certainty of my success. Most of all, to Lucas Smolcic Larson, who made us a home for me to think in.
particular concepts and conceptually based propositions. Beliefs like, “A cat is a small, hairy, aloof creature,” “The neighbors’ cat is named Mona” and “Gilbert Harman has quite a lot to say about cats” are all long-term semantic memories. In contrast to semantic memories are procedural memories\(^2\), like my remembering how to ride a bike and tie my shoes, and visual or otherwise experiential memories, like my memory of the layout of my childhood home or the taste of oatmeal, which I will not consider here. I will further limit myself to \textit{a posteriori} memories in order to avoid certain tricky questions surrounding the debate about naturalized epistemology.\(^3\) When I say that we might form such a belief “carelessly,” I use the term in the normal sense: roughly, that one failed to take the necessary actions and precautions to ensure they form the belief on the basis of appropriate reasons or evidence.

The term “justification” also requires some definition – though, I hope not too much. When I say that a carelessly formed belief is less “justified” than a carefully formed one, I again use the term in the intuitive sense, synonymous with “rational” or “reasonable.” Generally, we take an agent to be justified, rational, or reasonable in holding a belief if we think they did the best they could do in forming and maintaining the belief.\(^4\) It is helpful here to consider the intuitive distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. We think a belief is propositionally justified if the subject has sufficient evidence or reasons for the belief, and doxastically justified if the subject holds the belief appropriately. A belief must be propositionally justified in order to be doxastically justified, but not the other way around. For example, consider a student who believes that she is going to

\(^2\) Again, to put it in epistemological terms, procedural memory corresponds to “knowledge how.”

\(^3\) The concern here is that it might be impossible to have a justified false belief if the belief is \textit{a priori}. Thank you to David Christensen for this point.

\(^4\) My use is similar to the sense of “justification” Feldman and Conee (2001) employ. Lowy (1978) helpfully adds that “[a] person is justified in believing a proposition when no more can reasonably be expected of him with respect to finding out whether that proposition is true” (1978, p. 106).
have a bad day. If she knows she has an exam she hasn’t studied for but only thinks she is going to have a bad day because a black cat crossed her path, she is propositionally but not doxastically justified. The sense in which I use “justification” corresponds to our intuitive understanding of doxastic justification. Because my focus is on doxastic justification, I won’t make use of the linguistic shorthand distinction between “S is justified in believing that \( p \)” for doxastic justification and “S has a justified belief that \( p \)” for propositional justification; I will use “S is justified in believing that \( p \)” and “S has a justified belief that \( p \)” interchangeably.

There is at least one objection to using “justification” in this way, which I’ll address – though not answer. One might contend that “justification” is a technical term, and therefore we don’t have intuitions about whether or not an agent is more or less justified in a particular case. If “justification” is merely a technical term, our putative intuitions about justification aren’t really intuitions at all, and certainly, are no starting point for a theory of justification. A full answer to this objection is well beyond the scope of this paper, but I will gesture at a possible response. It seems unlikely that “justification” is only a technical term, if by “technical term” we mean a term about whose application we have no intuitions. We have evaluative mental states about “justification” that look an awful lot like intuitions, and non-philosophers readily provide epistemic evaluations they identify as “intuitions” about cases.\(^5\) At least in that sense, “justification” isn’t a technical term in the way “rigid designator” or “tensor” are technical terms.

To answer these questions, I’ll look at two general theories of justification: foundationalism and virtue epistemology (VE). I make use of the foundationalist position I call “memory

---

\(^5\) My robust empirical evidence for this claim is that over the last year, I have asked friends, classmates and the occasional stranger for their intuitions about an agent’s level of justification in various examples. Although people’s intuitions occasionally differed about particular cases, no one said anything to suggest they didn’t have intuitions about justification generally.
foundationalism,” which holds that there is a characteristic phenomenology of memory which *prima facie* justifies the belief it accompanies. Memory foundationalists describe this phenomenology differently: a “seeming” (Chisholm, 1980, p. 15-17), a “past tinge” (Plantinga, 1993, p. 59), an “appearance of familiarity” (Audi, 1995, p. 36), or simply a “feeling” (Schroer, 2008, p. 75). You can experience this phenomenology yourself by comparing the phenomenological difference between reading the sentence “George Washington was the first president of the United States,” which you already know and therefore remember, and the sentence “George Washington’s favorite breakfast was hoecakes and honey,” which you likely didn’t already know and therefore don’t remember. The first sentence should evoke some sense of familiarity which the second lacks. However we define the phenomenology of memory, it is the phenomenology itself that justifies the belief. This means that apparent, but inauthentic memories (i.e. beliefs that have the characteristic phenomenology of memory but are not actually memories) also provide *prima facie* justification and that legitimate memories without the characteristic accompanying phenomenology do not provide justification. All memory foundationalists hold that the phenomenology of memory provides *prima facie* justification, but, as we will see, they differ in what sorts of reasons count as defeaters for the *prima facie* justification. In what follows, I use “foundationalism” to refer to this particular version of memory foundationalism.

The second theory I consider is virtue epistemology (VE). “Virtue epistemology” includes a wide range of positions, but virtue epistemologists agree that (i) epistemology is a normative

---

6 This is distinct from, though quite similar to, the position that the phenomenology of memory gives an agent *direct access* to the content of the memory. Audi (1995) takes this sort of position.

7 A hoecake is a type of spongy, flat cake made with corn flour, similar to a pancake. ([https://www.mountvernon.org/the-estate-gardens/food-culture/](https://www.mountvernon.org/the-estate-gardens/food-culture/))

8 For a particularly vivid and often-cited example of the latter, see Martin and Deutscher’s (1966) example of an artist who unknowingly paints a scene from his childhood. Martin and Deutscher’s case involves a visual memory, but I take it that it is also possible for one to have a semantic memory without the characteristic phenomenology.
discipline with significant parallels to ethics, and (ii) the primary object of inquiry should be the agent, not the belief. Within VE, the primary division is between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism. Virtue reliabilists like Sosa (1980, forthcoming) and Greco (2003) hold that virtues are instrumentally valuable for their ability to produce true beliefs. In general, they tend to focus on natural faculties like well-functioning vision and reliable memory. On the other hand, virtue responsibilists like Code (1987), Zagzebski (1996), and Roberts and Wood (2007) hold that virtues are intrinsically as well as instrumentally valuable. Responsibilists tend to focus on traits of character like intellectual courage, open-mindedness, and epistemic conscientiousness. I am concerned here with virtue responsibilism, and I use “VE” to refer to virtue responsibilism.

My general aim is to outline and evaluate how foundationalism and VE can explain the problem of forgotten carelessness. Though this project takes the form of an exploration of explanatory possibilities rather than a directed argument, the theoretical upshot is that VE offers a more unified and comprehensive picture than foundationalism. In Chapter 1, I consider a foundationalist approach to the problems of both remembered and forgotten carelessness. While the standard account of foundationalism can solve the problem of remembered carelessness, it strains to accommodate cases of forgotten carelessness because it evaluates justification synchronically. I propose a diachronic version of foundationalism, which accommodates at least some cases of forgotten carelessness but appears somewhat less principled than we might hope. Chapter 2 begins with a diachronic theory, VE. I start with a version of VE that accommodates the cases in Chapter 1 and develop it in response to several new cases. In the Conclusion, I suggest that our study of VE in the narrow context of forgotten carelessness might point us towards answers to some of the difficult questions any theory of VE will have to face.
Chapter 1: A Problem for Foundationalism

Consider two detectives, Susan and Audie, who are often assigned to cases together. In general, they tend to be equally careful and reliable when it comes to investigating these cases. This time, they’re investigating the murder of Mr. Brown. Susan – call her Slapdash Susan – reviews the evidence quickly and forms the belief that Fred is the murderer. Audie – call her Attentive Audie – is extra careful in considering the evidence, and she also arrives at the belief that Fred is the murderer. At t1, they both form the belief that Fred is the murderer. Later, they both recall their beliefs that Fred is the murderer. In the following chapter, I look at two versions of this case: In one version, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie both remember how they formed their beliefs (carelessly and carefully, respectively) when they recall them. In the second version, both Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie forget how they formed their beliefs when they recall that Fred is the murderer.

This chapter analyzes the extent to which foundationalist theories of justification can accommodate our justificatory intuitions about Susan and Audie. According to the version of memory foundationalism discussed in the Introduction, memory beliefs are foundationally justified by the characteristic phenomenology of memory. But within memory foundationalism, there is a wide range of views. I limit myself to discussing two versions: one described by Robert Schroer, which I will call “robust foundationalism,” and a more modest version of foundationalism called phenomenal conservatism developed by Michael Huemer. While these two versions certainly exhaust the range of views encompassed by foundationalism, they provide benchmarks that help us understand the range of possible foundationalist approaches: Schroer presents a particularly strict version of foundationalism with little room for defeaters, while Huemer’s phenomenal conservatism defines defeaters more broadly and is, therefore, more moderate.
In Section I, we will see that robust foundationalism fails to accommodate the justification-compromising effect of remembered carelessness. Huemer’s phenomenal conservatism, however, can accommodate remembered carelessness. In Section II, we find that even phenomenal conservatism cannot accommodate cases of forgotten carelessness. In Section III, I ask whether and to what extent the problem of forgotten carelessness generalizes to other foundationalist approaches. I find that the case of forgotten carelessness evokes intuitions that are in opposition to a central element of memory foundationalism: time-slice epistemology. Any version of foundationalism that is based on time-slice epistemology will strain to accommodate cases where there are factors that affect justification – j-factors – outside the particular time-slice. I discuss the sorts of moves foundationalism could make to reject time-slice epistemology and evaluate the cost of these moves.

I. The Problem of Remembered Carelessness

Let’s first clarify the sorts of cases we’re looking at. Consider this variant on the Slapdash Susan/Attentive Audie case:

REMEMBERED: Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are two detectives who are often assigned to cases together. In general, they tend to be equally careful and reliable when it comes to investigating these cases. This time, they’re investigating the murder of Mr. Brown. They’ve already collected the evidence, and now they sit down to review the case and draw their conclusions separately. Slapdash Susan glances through the evidence quickly and carelessly. On the basis of her cursory examination, she forms a belief that $f$, Fred was the murderer. She forms the belief that $f$ at $t_1$, knowing full well that she arrived at the belief carelessly. Simultaneously, Attentive Audie reviews the evidence carefully and methodically. At $t_1$, Audie also forms the belief that $f$ on the basis of her careful study. Unfortunately, $f$ is false, and despite Attentive Audie’s best efforts, she formed a false belief about who killed Mr. Brown. Later at $t_2$, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie both recall their beliefs that $f$.

---

9 Nothing central to the discussion that follows rests on $f$ being false. But if $f$ is true, we can explain the epistemic difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in terms of knowledge (i.e. Audie knows that $f$; Susan does not
They both remember how they formed their beliefs: Slapdash Susan remembers she rushed and was careless, while Attentive Audie remembers she was careful.

The most natural reading of the situation is that, at t2, Attentive Audie is more (doxastically) justified in her belief that \( f \) than Slapdash Susan is.\(^{10}\) A carelessly formed belief is less justified than a carefully formed one, at least when one remembers that one was careless.

How might foundationalism explain the difference in justification between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie at t2? Recall that the core idea of memory foundationalism is that seeming to remember that \( p \) gives a subject defeasible justification for believing that \( p \). According to memory foundationalism, then, both Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie have defeasible justification for believing that \( f \) by virtue of their experience as of remembering that \( f \). According to a general theory of memory foundationalism, the feeling or “seeming” that both detectives have as of remembering that \( f \) is sufficient for (at least) defeasible justification for believing that \( f \). If Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are on the same footing in terms of defeasible justification, foundationalism must distinguish between them on the basis of defeaters. If it fails to do so, Slapdash Susan will have gone from having an unjustified belief to having a justified belief merely by storing the belief in memory, which looks like a counterexample to foundationalism. So, the question is whether foundationalism can – in foundationalist terms – accommodate Slapdash Susan’s remembered carelessness as a defeater.\(^{11}\)

---

\(^{10}\) This intuition might be partly explained by the fact that Slapdash Susan exhibits not only an epistemic failure but also a moral failure when she carelessly forms her belief about murdered Mr. Brown. I think it is clear, though, that she exhibits an epistemic failure which lowers our epistemic evaluation of her. For now, we can bracket the question of her moral failure.

\(^{11}\) There’s an interesting question here about whether foundationalism can classify carelessness as the right type of defeater. Traditionally, we distinguish between rebutting defeaters, which give a subject reason to think that the content of their belief that \( p \) is wrong, and undercutting defeaters, which give a subject reason to think that whatever they took to know that \( f \). For the purposes of this paper, I’m interested in isolating the justificatory difference between the detectives, so I will bracket the issue of knowledge by stipulating that \( f \) is false.
Now we can turn our attention to how particular versions of foundationalism might try to accommodate Slapdash Susan’s carelessness. First, let’s look at robust foundationalism. The version of foundationalism Schroer describes is so strong that no one I know of holds such a position. It’s worth looking at, though, to understand what motivates the modesty in more nuanced foundationalist theories, including Huemer’s phenomenal conservatism. According to the robust version of foundationalism sketched by Schroer, memory beliefs are defeasibly justified by the phenomenology of memory. To use Audi’s (1996) language, memory is a “generative” capacity with respect to justification. That is to say memory, by itself, can generate defeasible justification. Recall that this is the central element of any memory foundationalism. What makes “robust” foundationalism robust is its account of defeaters. According to Schroer, only a very specific type of undercutter can defeat the justification granted by the phenomenology of memory.

Phenomenological justification can only be undercut by reasons that “cast doubt on the memory process itself” (i.e. the cognitive move from experiencing the phenomenology to forming the belief) (Schroer 2008, p. 80). Anything that happened before the agent experienced the memorial evidence for $p$ isn’t actually good evidence for $p$. A more recent addition is the third category of the higher-order defeater, which gives a subject reason to think that their belief-formation process is unreliable (Kelly, 2010; Christensen, 2010; Lasonen-Aarnio, 2014). We naturally think of remembered carelessness as a higher-order defeater. When Slapdash Susan recalls that she was careless, she has a reason to think that her belief-forming process was unreliable. But according to foundationalism, if the remembered carelessness is a defeater at all, it’s an undercutting defeater. Foundationalism says that the memory-seeming that $f$ is the evidence Susan has for believing that $f$. Slapdash Susan’s remembered carelessness actually gives her reason to think that her evidence for $f$ isn’t good evidence for $f$, making it an undercutting defeater. So, counterintuitively, even if foundationalism can account for carelessness as a defeater, it can only account for it as an undercutting defeater, not a higher-order defeater. This probably is not a significant problem for foundationalism, though. The distinction between undercutting defeaters and higher-order defeaters is a technical one, so “miscalcategorizing” a defeater might just be a technicality. Moreover, there is disagreement whether higher-order defeaters are actually a type of undercutting defeaters (Christensen, 2010). If Christensen is right, then there is no miscalcategorization. So, even if this miscalcategorization is an argument against foundationalism, it’s not a particularly powerful one.

Schroer doesn’t endorse this view but uses it as a launching pad for his own version of foundationalism. He attributes the position to Russell (1921), Audi (1996), and Pollock and Cruz (1999), though I find it difficult to read any of them as endorsing such a robust view. Descartes comes the closest in terms of robustness, but his foundationalism is deductivist, not perceptual or memorial.
phenomenology is not an undercutting defeater. This means that reasons that cast doubt on the reliability of the memory phenomenology do not compromise justification since they are neither rebutters (they don’t say anything about the content of the belief) nor undercutters (they don’t cast doubt on the cognitive move from experiencing the phenomenology to forming the belief).

To establish this surprising conclusion, Schroer draws a comparison to a case of robust *perception* foundationalism:

> If \( S \) originally believes that \( p \) carelessly and then later seems to see that \( p \), his previous carelessness is not an undercutting defeater to his current (perceptual) justification for believing that \( p \). This holds true even if he seems to remember his previous carelessness. This is because perceptual experience, according to the perceptual foundationalist, is a foundational (or generative) source of justification. (Schroer, 2008, p. 79)

In other words, \( S \)'s carelessness is only a defeater for his initial (presumably, but not necessarily, non-perceptual) justification. Now that he has new perceptual justification, the only relevant defeater would be one that undermines his perception that \( p \). On robust *memory foundationalism*, a similar principle will hold true. The robust memory foundationalist must maintain that a defeater to \( S \)'s original (i.e. not memorial) justification for believing that \( p \) is irrelevant to \( S \)'s justification for believing that \( p \) once \( S \) has the experience of remembering that \( p \) “for the same reason it would be irrelevant to the justification provided by his visual experience in the perceptual case” (Schroer, 2008, p. 79). For robust memory foundationalism, memory is generative with respect justification just like perception. Robust memory foundationalism has some intuitive pull. It is easy to see how the phenomenology of seeming to remember that \( p \) is what justifies a belief that \( p \). If this is the case, as robust foundationalism claims, reasons that cast doubt on the link between the phenomenology of remembering and reality shouldn’t affect justification. If the phenomenology *itself* is the justification, then any reasons to think that the phenomenology is or is not reliable are irrelevant.
According to Schroer’s articulation of robust foundationalism, to count remembered carelessness as a defeater is to give up on a central aspect of foundationalism:

If an undercutting defeater for the justification of the original belief that \( p \) [i.e. the carelessness] is also an undercutting defeater for the justification provided by the apparent memory that \( p \), then it appears that at least some of the justification provided by the apparent memory belief that \( p \) is coming from the justification that [the careless agent] \textit{originally had} in believing that \( p \). And that [...] is not the position of the memory foundationalist” (Schroer, 2008, p. 83-4).\(^{14}\)

One’s original justification for believing that \( p \) is distinct from one’s memorial justification for believing that \( p \). This means that, according to robust foundationalism, Susan’s situation in REMEMBERED does not involve a defeater, and she and Audie have equal justifications for their beliefs that \( f \).\(^{15}\)

While Schroer is surely right that robust foundationalism isn’t the correct account of memory justification, Schroer presents remembered carelessness as a particular problem for memory foundationalism. But it’s not. A similar problem generalizes to other foundationalist approaches. If we apply the principles of this robust memory foundationalism to perception, we can evaluate a robust perception foundationalism which also delivers unintuitive results. According to robust memory foundationalism, the only defeaters are evidence that cast doubt on the memory process.

According to perception foundationalism, the only defeaters are evidence that cast doubt on the

---

\(^{14}\) Schroer gets around this counterintuitive conclusion that remembered carelessness isn’t a defeater by offering a “recast” foundationalism according to which seeming to remember that \( p \) doesn’t justify the belief that \( p \) itself, but justifies \( Q \), the belief that \( S \) was, at some point, justified in believing that \( p \). \( Q \) is justification for \( p \), such that the perception that \( p \) offers indirect justification for the belief that \( p \) (Schroer, 2008, p. 80). This does seem to get around the problem of remembered carelessness but at the cost of being only indirectly foundationalist. Either way, it’s not the sort of foundationalism I’m interested in here.

\(^{15}\) One possible defense for robust foundationalism is that even if known defeaters for the original justification (e.g. remembered carelessness) don’t affect one’s \textit{memorial} justification, they might still affect one’s \textit{all-things-considered} justification. This is not the position that Schroer lays out, though. Schroer doesn’t distinguish between memorial and \textit{ultima facie} or all-things-considered justification. Even if he did, a robust theory of memory foundationalism suddenly seems much less robust if it distinguishes between memorial and all-things-considered justification.
perceptual process. Let's consider how this analogous version of robust foundationalism handles a perceptual case.

**HAT:** Phoebe walks into a room and seems to see that there is a hat sitting in the corner. She forms the belief that \( h \), that there's a hat sitting in the corner. Phoebe's friend tells her that he slipped her a pill that causes her to see hats where there aren't any. Phoebe's friend is highly reliable if a bit mischievous.

Intuitively, this new evidence is a defeater for Phoebe's belief. It's not a rebutter because it doesn't tell Phoebe anything about whether \( h \) is actually true or not – there may well be a hat in the corner. Rather, it is a rebutting defeater because it gives Phoebe reason to think that her perceptions don't track the way the world is.

But robust perception foundationalism fails to count this new evidence as an undercutting defeater. On robust perception foundationalism, what justifies Phoebe's belief that \( h \) is her phenomenology of seeming to see a hat in the corner. Like in REMEMBERED, anything that gives Phoebe reason to doubt that her phenomenology is reliable is irrelevant to her justification. The only undercutting defeater would be a reason that casts doubt on Phoebe’s cognitive step from perceiving that there is a hat in the corner to believing that \( h \). Since finding out about the pill does not cast doubt on this step, it is not an undercutting defeater. And if it’s not an undercutting defeater, it’s no defeater at all, and Phoebe's belief that \( h \) is undefeated even after she learns about the pill. This is analogous to REMEMBERED, where Susan knowing that she was careless is evidence that her belief that \( f \) was badly formed, despite the fact that her memory might be functioning perfectly normally. Schroer tells us that Susan knowing she was careless is irrelevant to her memorial justification for the same reason Phoebe learning of the pill is irrelevant her to perceptual justification. But as HAT shows us, these sorts of defeaters are *not* irrelevant to perceptual justification. So, we should have
doubts not only about robust memory foundationalism but also about robust perception foundationalism.

Let’s consider phenomenal conservatism, which is a more modest variant of memory foundationalism supported by Michael Huemer (2001, 2007). Phenomenal conservatism is a theory about prima facie justification. It says that if it seems to S that \( p \), then S has some degree of defeasible justification for believing that \( p \) (Huemer, 2007, p. 30). In the context of memory, this means that if it seems to S that \( p \) based on the phenomenology of memory, S has defeasible justification for believing that \( p \). To avoid the problems of robust foundationalism discussed above, Huemer lists three ways a belief can be unjustified. The first is when an agent has prima facie justification from seeming to remember something and also has a reason that “ought to, but doesn’t, cause her to revise her belief” (Huemer, 2001, p. 108). Huemer doesn’t offer a fleshed out definition of a defeater but rather appeals to our intuitive understanding of what defeaters are (Huemer, 2001 p. 101, 108). Secondly, a belief can fail to be justified if the believer “adopts it for reasons other than the proposition believed seems to be the case” (Huemer, 2001, p. 108). Huemer gives the example of forming a belief on the basis of faith or self-deception, which prevents a subject from having justification, even if she seems to remember it. Third, a prima facie justified belief can be all-things-considered unjustified if the believer has reason to think their belief-forming method was unreliable, where negligence in investigating the subject counts as unreliability (Huemer, 2001, p. 110). Slapdash Susan’s case of remembered carelessness is rendered unjustified on the grounds of both the first and the third factor. Slapdash Susan has a reason that “ought to, but doesn’t” cause

---

It looks to me like this third reason a belief can be unjustified is really an instance of the first. One reason someone might have that “ought to, but doesn’t, cause her to revise her belief” is that she has reason to believe her belief-forming process was unreliable. We will see when we apply phenomenal conservatism to a case in Section IV that this is exactly what happens.
her to revise her belief. Namely, she has evidence that her belief-forming method was unreliable. So we can be confident that phenomenal conservatism, a type of foundationalism, can accommodate cases of remembered carelessness. Note, though, that foundationalism doesn’t adjust its evaluation of Slapdash Susan’s justification because of the carelessness itself, but because of her memory of being careless. This will create a problem for phenomenal conservatism in the following section.

II. The Problem of Forgotten Carelessness

What about cases in which the subject forgets that they were careless in forming a belief? Consider an alternative version of the Slapdash Susan/Attentive Audie case:

FORGOTTEN: Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are two detectives who are often assigned to cases together. In general, they tend to be equally careful and reliable when it comes to investigating these cases. This time, they’re investigating the murder of Mr. Brown. They’ve already collected the evidence, and now they sit down to review the case and draw their conclusions separately. Slapdash Susan glances through the evidence quickly and carelessly. On the basis of her cursory examination, she forms a belief that Fred was the murderer. She forms the belief that at t1, knowing full well that she arrived at the belief carelessly. Simultaneously, Attentive Audie reviews the evidence carefully and methodically. At t1, Audie also forms the belief that on the basis of her careful study. Unfortunately, is false, and despite Attentive Audie’s best efforts, she formed a false belief about who killed Mr. Brown. Later at t2, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie both recall their beliefs that . At t2, neither of them remember how they formed their beliefs that . With respect to their beliefs that , they are mentally identical at t2.

There is room for disagreement about FORGOTTEN that there wasn’t about REMEMBERED. According to the intuitive, doxastic sense in which I’ve been using “justification,” Slapdash Susan is less justified in her belief that than Attentive Audie is. This is a relatively modest idea: It’s not that Slapdash Susan is fully unjustified whereas Attentive Audie is fully justified, only that there is some difference in justification between the two at t2. Some philosophers will differ on this, but it is
difficult to deny that there is some epistemic difference between Slapdash Susan’s and Attentive Audie’s epistemic situations. It is most natural to describe the difference in terms of justification. The primary alternative is to describe the difference in terms of knowledge, but we’ve already stipulated that $f$ is false, so neither Slapdash Susan nor Attentive Audie has knowledge that $f$. For now, I will assume that there is an epistemic difference between the two detectives and that the difference is one of justification. If it turns out that the difference is not one of justification, memory foundationalism – which is, after all, a theory about justification – certainly won’t have the tools to explain the difference. There are other theories that can explain this difference, and I’ll explore one of them, virtue epistemology, in the following chapter.

Can foundationalism accommodate forgotten carelessness as easily as remembered carelessness? I will consider first robust foundationalism and then phenomenal conservatism and argue that both version of foundationalism strain to do so. Again, all versions of memory foundationalism will say that both Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie have at least defeasible justification for their beliefs that $f$ at $t_2$ because both have the phenomenology of remembering that $f$. So, again, it comes to a question of whether carelessness – this time, forgotten carelessness – qualifies as a defeater.

Schroer is explicit that forgotten carelessness is not a defeater for robust foundationalism. It is by seeming to remember that $f$ that Slapdash Susan is justified, and Susan lacks any reasons to doubt her memory process. Recall that on robust foundationalism, the justification one gets from seeming to remember that $p$ can only be defeated by an agent having reason to doubt their memory process. And Slapdash Susan has no reason to doubt the process of her memory. According to robust foundationalism, this shouldn’t strike us as an issue, and we ought to bite the bullet and claim
that Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are equally justified at t2. But this leaves foundationalism without any way to explain the difference between Slapdash Susan’s and Attentive Audie’s beliefs that \( f \).

The phenomenal conservative is also forced to say that forgotten carelessness itself doesn’t compromise justification. Recall Huemer’s three conditions under which a belief’s justification can be (at least partially) defeated at time \( t \): (i) if the agent has a known defeater for their belief at time \( t \), (ii) if a belief was adopted for reasons other than that it seemed to be the case, or (iii) if the agent has reason at time \( t \) to think their belief-forming mechanism was unreliable. Slapdash Susan’s belief that \( f \) doesn’t meet any of these conditions. At t2, Slapdash Susan has no evidence that ought to, but doesn’t, cause her to revise her belief. One could object that the fact that she doesn’t know how she formed her belief that \( f \) lowers her justification for believing that \( f \), but then Attentive Audie would be in the same position with regard to her belief that \( f \). For that matter, I would be in the same position with regard to my belief that “George Washington was the first president of the United States.” I don’t remember how I formed this belief, but that by itself doesn’t affect my justification. In response to Huemer’s second justification-barring factor, Slapdash Susan adopted her belief that \( f \) because \( f \) seemed to be true to Susan on the basis of the criminal evidence, even though she knows she was careless. Slapdash Susan did not deceive herself into believing that \( f \), nor did she form her belief on the basis of blind faith. Third, Slapdash Susan has no reason at t2 to think her belief-forming mechanism was unreliable – she’s forgotten that she formed the belief carelessly. So we find that phenomenal conservatism fails to accommodate forgotten carelessness as a defeater.

---

17 Schroer himself, who is not a robust foundationalist, agrees that we ought to bite this bullet.
18 There might be some argument here that Slapdash Susan formed a belief on the basis of self-deception or blind faith, but it could not be her belief that \( f \). Had Slapdash Susan held the belief that \( \epsilon \), “I was careful in forming my belief that \( f \),” such a belief would have been formed on the basis of self-deception. But Slapdash Susan need not believe \( \epsilon \) to believe \( f \). She formed her belief that \( f \) because it seemed to her that \( f \).
The most robust version of foundationalism struggles to accommodate even remembered carelessness, though Huemer’s more modest phenomenal conservatism succeeds. But even phenomenal conservatism strains in cases of forgotten carelessness. For those who don’t see any justificatory difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie at t2 in FORGOTTEN, this isn’t a point against foundationalism. But if we see any difference in justification between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in FORGOTTEN, something is missing from the foundationalist picture.

III. Diagnosing and Generalizing the Problem

What is it that Schroer’s robust foundationalism and Huemer’s phenomenal conservatism have in common that makes it difficult for them to account for Slapdash Susan’s justificatory situation in FORGOTTEN? Does this problem generalize to other (all?) foundationalist theories of memory?

We might initially think the two theories share some evidentialist basis that makes them strain in cases like FORGOTTEN. Evidentialism, most famously supported by Richard Feldman and Earl Conee (1985), tells us that the justification of a belief is determined by the quality of evidence an agent has for the belief. Specifically, evidentialism holds that the justification one has at time $t$ is determined by the evidence one has at time $t$ (Feldman and Conee, 1985, p. 1). Both robust foundationalism and phenomenal conservatism – and other versions of foundationalism in the relevant ballpark – have evidentialist leanings. On memory foundationalism, a memory belief is justified by evidence: the phenomenology of remembering that $p$. If we're trying to explain what foundationalism gets wrong about Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in FORGOTTEN, we might think that evidentialist underpinnings are the root issue. Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie have
the same evidence for \( f \) at \( t_2 \) (the phenomenology of remembering that \( f \)), and yet they have different levels of justification. Evidentialism seems to give us the wrong answer.

But it’s not evidentialism itself that gets foundationalism into trouble. We can imagine an evidentialism that takes into account evidence an agent doesn’t have at a particular time \( t \) – call it diachronic evidentialism – for which cases like FORGOTTEN aren’t a problem.\(^{19}\) According to such a theory, the justification of a belief would be determined by the evidence one has or had in the past.

This admittedly unconventional version of evidentialism can explain the difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in FORGOTTEN: In the past, Slapdash Susan had evidence that she was careless, and this evidence still affects her justification, even though she’s forgotten it. No evidentialist that I know of takes such a position, and it might well face other problems, but it shows us that evidentialism is not the source of foundationalism’s problems.

We can give a better diagnosis of foundationalism’s trouble in terms of time-slice epistemology (TSE). Brian Hedden and Sarah Moss give a helpful account of TSE, though they use the term “rationality” as opposed to “justification,” although they mean something very similar to what we’ve been calling “justification.” For our purposes, we can interpret their view in terms of justification. The core position of TSE is that a belief’s degree of justification at time \( t \) is exclusively determined by the attitudes and beliefs one has at time \( t \). Everything that determines justification is synchronic and internal to the agent (Hedden, 2015, p. 451; Moss, 2015, p. 174). Moss writes: “What is rationally permissible or obligatory for you at some time is entirely determined by what mental states you are in at that time” (Moss, 2015, p. 174).

---

\(^{19}\) Phenomenal conservatism includes at least one element of diachronic evidentialism. According to phenomenal conservatism, a belief is unjustified if it is formed for reasons other than because the proposition seems to be true to the agent (Huemer 2001, p. 108-110). This is true even if an agent fails to remember that they formed a belief for bad reasons.
FORGOTTEN, however, shows us that there are some cases in which factors outside an agent’s mental states at time $t$ can affect her justification for a belief at time $t$. According to TSE, if two individuals have identical mental states at time $t$, then they are identical in terms of justification at time $t$. In FORGOTTEN, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are mentally identical with respect to their beliefs that $f$ at $t_2$. And yet there are not identical in terms of justification at $t_2$. FORGOTTEN is an example of a case in which there are justification-relevant factors outside the particular time-slice.

Here we can distinguish between two sorts of epistemic evaluations. There is some sense in which Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are epistemically identical with regard to their beliefs that $f$ at $t_2$. This is the sort of epistemic evaluation that asks whether an agent has any reasons at time $t$ to hold different beliefs than the ones she holds. This is the way in which TSE understands justification. But there is an important sense in which Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are not identical with respect to their beliefs that $f$. Slapdash Susan didn’t form her belief that $f$ as she should have, and this affects some aspect of our epistemic evaluation of her – what I’ve been calling “justification.” As I’ve said, even if one hesitates to call this second sort of epistemic evaluation “justification” for theoretical reasons, we still need an account of this evaluation, and foundationalism doesn’t give it to us. Foundationalism’s trouble comes from the fact that, like TSE, it fails to account for this sense of epistemic evaluation.

The natural question, then, is what sort of moves foundationalism would have to make to give a natural-looking account of justification, and whether the resulting theory is in keeping with the foundationalist spirit. At the bare minimum, foundationalism must give up its TSE basis and take into account factors outside a particular time-slice. I’ll call this “diachronic (memory) foundationalism” to distinguish it from the varieties of memory foundationalism already discussed.
In order to account for the above cases, diachronic foundationalism will need to introduce at least three anti-defeater clauses. But these anti-defeater clauses create some problems for diachronic foundationalism. They pull diachronic foundationalism away from its foundationalist roots, and it’s not clear how diachronic foundationalism can specify these anti-defeater clauses in a way that appears principled.

Let’s begin by considering three cases that require diachronic foundationalism to introduce anti-defeater clauses. First, diachronic foundationalism must preserve the difference in justification between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in FORGOTTEN. In order to do so, the theory must give some account of what goes wrong at T1, when Susan and Audie each form their beliefs. I will call this a failure of “due caution,” a term I borrow from Huemer (Huemer, 2001, p. 110), who acknowledges that the concept could be fleshed out in a number of ways. I will not attempt to define “due caution” myself, but I use the term as place-holder to capture whatever goes wrong in Slapdash Susan’s belief-formation. Diachronic foundationalism must provide some definition of “due caution” (or an analogous term) that, at minimum, includes paying appropriate attention to gathering and evaluating evidence.

Second, diachronic foundationalism must account for a case Brian Hedden discusses (2015, p. 22): Someone with a racial bias selectively forgets new evidence against a racist proposition $b$ such that she ends up with a set of evidence that wholly supports $b$. By selectively forgetting new evidence against $b$, she fails to exercise due caution and is thereby unjustified in her belief that $b$. To account for this case, the theory must consider whether an agent continued to exercise due caution – or something like due caution – in maintaining the belief.
To understand the third anti-defeater clause, consider the difference between Slapdash Susan in REMEMBERED and FORGOTTEN. Although Susan isn’t perfectly justified in either case, the fact that she remembers that she formed her belief that $f$ carelessly but maintains the belief anyway makes her less justified than merely holding a belief that – unknown to her – was formed carelessly. Chapter 2 will consider this difference in more detail, but for now, it’s enough to recognize that there is some difference between Slapdash Susan’s justification in the two cases. In order to accommodate this difference, diachronic foundationalism would have to stipulate that known defeaters at time $t$ compromise justification at time $t$. In addition to these three anti-defeater clauses, there may well be others that diachronic foundationalism would need to add in order to address additional counterexamples. This becomes particularly concerning if we consider that some of these factors will bar a belief from being even prima facie justified, despite having the appropriate phenomenology. For example, if an agent failed to exercise due caution when a belief was formed, it’s plausible that the belief fails to be even prima facie justified, despite the fact that the agent has the appropriate memory phenomenology.

The question of what counts as “due caution” makes this worry especially salient. It seems difficult to give a principled account of “due caution” generally, since what counts as exercising due caution will vary from case to case. But foundationalism will have a particularly difficult time defining “due caution” is a way that coheres with the general position. Consider a five-year-old whose friend tells her that eating snow off the ground is a safe and fun activity. The five-year-old might be exercising due caution when she forms the belief that eating snow off the ground is a safe and fun activity on the basis of her friend’s testimony. But the children’s teacher who overhears this testimony is not exercising due caution if he forms the belief that eating snow off the ground is a
safe and fun activity based on the child’s testimony. What counts as “due caution” in this case doesn’t bear on factors that are wholly external – that would be a serious problem for an internalist theory like foundationalism – but they’re certainly not factors about what “seems to be the case,” either. Phenomenology, which is so central to the general theory of memory foundationalism, is relegated to a minor character in diachronic foundationalism, while the mysterious “due caution” takes a central position. While diachronic foundationalism solves some of the problems of synchronic foundationalism and is internally consistent, it appears somewhat unprincipled. In Chapter 2, we will see one theory that accounts for synchronic foundationalism’s problems in a way that appears more theoretically unified.

• • •

In this chapter, we have seen that foundationalism can account for the justificatory effects of carelessness not by looking at the carelessness itself, but by considering the memory one has of being careless. But FORGOTTEN showed us that carelessness itself affects justification even if one doesn’t remember that they were careless. Foundationalism’s TSE-style understanding of justification means that it cannot account for justification-relevant factors – j-factors – that aren’t in play at a particular time-slice. As a solution, I propose diachronic foundationalism. Diachronic foundationalism is promising if one can tolerate moderate theoretical disunity and is willing to somewhat loosen their grip on the core elements of foundationalism. In the following chapter, I’ll consider an approach that might be able to address cases like REMEMBERED and FORGOTTEN by including a wider range of potential j-factors.
Chapter 2: A Virtue Epistemology Explanation

In Chapter 1, we learned that foundationalism strains to account for cases in which some of the factors that determine justification – the j-factors – are outside the time-slice in question. This difficulty is explained by foundationalism’s time-slice epistemology (TSE) understanding of justification. To account for cases like FORGOTTEN, we need to look beyond TSE for a diachronic theory of justification. Foundationalism makes for a coherent, though perhaps unprincipled, diachronic theory. This chapter develops an alternative diachronic theory, virtue epistemology (VE), that can account for cases like FORGOTTEN in a more unified manner.

I begin in Section I by revisiting FORGOTTEN and motivating a VE analysis of the case. Section II starts by presenting VE in the simplest possible terms and goes on to develop a more nuanced version of VE in response to various counterexamples. Finally, in section III, I suggest that by avoiding the problems foundationalism ran into in Chapter 1, VE offers a promising solution to the problem of forgotten carelessness.

I. Revisited The Case of Forgotten Careless

Let’s return to the case of FORGOTTEN. First, a refresher of the case:

FORGOTTEN: Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are two detectives who are often assigned to cases together. In general, they tend to be equally careful and reliable when it comes to investigating these cases. This time, they’re investigating the murder of Mr. Brown. They’ve already collected the evidence, and now they sit down to review the case and draw their conclusions separately. Slapdash Susan glances through the evidence quickly and carelessly. On the basis of her cursory examination, she forms a belief that \( f \), Fred was the murderer. She forms the belief that \( f \) at t1, knowing full well that she arrived at the belief carelessly. Simultaneously, Attentive Audie reviews the evidence carefully and methodically. At t1, Audie also forms the belief that \( f \) on the basis of her careful study. Unfortunately, \( f \) is false.

---

20 In what follows, I refer to synchronic memory foundationalism simply as “foundationalism.”
and despite Attentive Audie’s best efforts, she formed a false belief about who killed Mr. Brown. Later at t2, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie both recall their beliefs that \( f \). At t2, neither of them remember how they formed their beliefs that \( f \). With respect to their beliefs that \( f \), they are mentally identical at t2.

In Chapter 1, we saw that both robust foundationalism and the more modest phenomenal conservatism struggle to explain the justificatory difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie at t2 because Susan’s carelessness at t1 affects her justification at t2. This means that there is a j-factor that is not in play at t2 that affects her justification at t2, and since foundationalism can only account for factors that are in play at the time-slice in question, the theory fails to account for Susan’s carelessness at t1.

Epistemology offers a number of avenues to explain why Slapdash Susan’s justification is compromised at t1: Maybe her belief is unjustified because she failed to form her belief on the basis of good evidence, or maybe because her belief fails to cohere with her background beliefs. But these stories can’t explain why what happens at t1 continues to affect Susan’s justification at t2. For this, we require a diachronic theory of justification. We learned in Chapter 1 that we can make a synchronic theory of justification into a diachronic theory by adding defeaters, but we also learned that doing so can look \textit{ad hoc}. We might do better to consider a theory that is designed to function diachronically.

Before diving into VE, it’s worthwhile to briefly contrast VE with another diachronic theory of justification, reliabilism. In the roughest terms, reliabilism holds that justification is determined by factors about the way the belief in question was formed; specifically, whether it was formed via a belief-forming process that is reliable in these sorts of circumstances. According to reliabilism, Slapdash Susan’s justification for believing that \( f \) is compromised at t2 because it was formed by
quickly and carelessly glancing through complicated evidence, and beliefs that are formed in such a way are often false. The second diachronic theory, VE, more or less holds that justification can be understood in terms of epistemic virtues and vices. According to this oversimplified version of VE, Slapdash Susan’s belief that $f$ is unjustified at t2 because she acted carelessly when she formed the belief, and carelessness is an epistemic vice.

Both reliabilism and VE offer explanations of how something that happens at t1 can affect Susan’s justification at t2. Of the two, reliabilism has more support, but I contend that VE deserves a second look. When we reflect on FORGOTTEN and ask why we intuitively think that Susan is less justified at t2 than Audie is, the natural explanation is much closer to “Susan was careless” – an answer along VE lines – than “Susan formed her belief via an unreliable method” – an answer along reliabilist lines. Of course, this is not an argument against reliabilism or the reliabilist account of FORGOTTEN, but I hope it at least gives us some reason to take VE seriously.

II. Towards a Virtue Epistemology Explanation

As families of epistemological theories go, VE is particularly heterogeneous. A wide range of theories fall under the VE umbrella, and most VE theories seek to explain a wider range of epistemic phenomena than traditional theories of justification. Like foundationalism and other traditional epistemological theories, some forms of VE – including the version I consider in this chapter – offer a definition of justification, but it also tries to answer other questions: When is a belief knowledge? What makes someone a good epistemic agent? In addition, some versions try to answer ethical, as well as epistemic questions. Such a wide range of questions produce a wide range

---

21 In the context of virtues and vices, I use “epistemic” and “intellectual” interchangeably.
22 I use “traditional” to refer to the sorts of views that have dominated Anglo-American epistemology for the last century.
of answers. In this section, I briefly review the characteristic features of VE, then turn to the project of developing a version of VE that helps us make sense of FORGOTTEN and other cases of epistemic carelessness.

Despite their many differences, all VE theories are unified by their agreement that (i) epistemology is a normative discipline with significant parallels to ethics, and (ii) the primary object of inquiry should be the agent, not the belief. For our purposes, we can largely set aside the first claim. But the second claim is crucial to understanding VE’s responses to the cases discussed in Chapter 1. In traditional epistemology, the foundational object of evaluation is the belief which we assess in terms of justification, reasonableness, and knowledge. In VE, the foundational object of evaluation is the agent, whom we assess in terms of epistemic vices and virtues. Some virtue epistemologists, helpfully dubbed by Battaly (2008) “virtue theorists,” hold that we can analyze the traditional epistemic concepts of justification, rationality, and knowledge in terms of the virtues. Others, “virtue anti-theorists,” claim that the virtues offer no “easy calculus,” to borrow Lorraine Code’s term, for assessing knowledge or justification (Code 1987, p. 63). Since we are interested in questions of evaluating individual beliefs, we need a “virtue theory.”

Before we dive into a VE theory account of FORGOTTEN, we can begin with a similar case, FORGOTTEN*. FORGOTTEN* is almost identical to FORGOTTEN, with the modification that Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie have different epistemic characters.

FORGOTTEN*: Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie are two detectives who are often assigned to cases together. In general, Attentive Audie tends to be more careful than Slapdash Susan when it comes to investigating these cases. This time, they’re investigating the murder of Mr. Brown. They’ve already collected the evidence, and now they sit down to review the evidence and

---

23 Some VE theories also pay close attention to epistemic communities. See Kvanvig (1992) and Kawall (2002).
24 Notable proponents of virtue theories include Zagzebski (1996, 2000), Sosa (1980, forthcoming), and Greco (2003), although the last two are in the virtue reliabilist camp.
draw their conclusions separately. As is her habit, Slapdash Susan glances through the evidence and quickly forms a belief $f$, that Fred was the murderer. She forms the belief that $f$ at t1, knowing full well that she arrived at the belief carelessly. Simultaneously, Attentive Audie reviews the evidence carefully and methodically, as is her habit. At t1, Audie also forms the belief $f$, that Fred is the murderer. Unfortunately, $f$ is false, and despite Attentive Audie’s best efforts, she formed a false belief about who killed Mr. Brown. Later at t2, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie both recall their beliefs that $f$. At t2, neither of them remember how they formed their beliefs that $f$. With respect to their beliefs that $f$, they are mentally identical at t2.

In order to account for the justificatory difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie at t2 in FORGOTTEN*, a maximally simple version of VE – what I’ll call “Simple VE” – will suffice. Simple VE isn’t even a toy version of VE. The view is obviously wrong from the outset, but it’s a helpful starting point in constructing a reasonable version of VE. Let’s say that Simple VE holds that the justificatory evaluation of a belief will reflect the epistemically virtuous or vicious character of the believer. A full explanation of what qualifies someone’s epistemic character as virtuous or vicious is well beyond the scope of this paper, but we can generally speak of an agent having a virtuous character if they possess certain praiseworthy character traits like curiosity, creativity, open-mindedness, and, most importantly for us, carefulness.

Simple VE: A belief is justified to the degree that the agent has a virtuous character.27

---

26 In the virtue ethics and virtue epistemology literature, “vicious” is merely the adjective form of “vice,” the analog of “virtuous.” It does not mean “cruel” or “violent” (although a morally vicious character or action may be both cruel and violent).

27 This view appears outlandish in our context, but it is in the spirit of the picture that Roberts and Wood (2007) present. Their view is explicitly anti-theory in that it provides the reader with a “strongly practical and social” map of the intellectual virtues without attempting to solve traditional puzzles of epistemology (Roberts and Wood, 2007, p. 21). If forced to give an evaluation of atomistic beliefs, their view might produce something like Simple VE, but Roberts’ and Wood’s particular theory is certainly not designed to assess beliefs for justification.
We can say a belief is simply “justified” (that is to say, “fully justified”) when the believer has a perfectly virtuous epistemic character, and simply “unjustified” (that is to say, “not fully justified”) when the believer does not have such a character.\(^{28}\)

Simple VE can explain the justificatory difference between Susan’s belief that \(f\) and Audie’s belief that \(f\) in FORGOTTEN*: Susan has a vicious epistemic character and Audie has an epistemically virtuous one – at least in this context. Therefore, Susan’s beliefs are going to be more justified than Audie’s. For Simple VE, there is nothing special about either detectives’ beliefs or behaviors in FORGOTTEN* that causes the justificatory difference; it’s merely the difference in their epistemic characters.

We can already anticipate that there will be many places where Simple VE will run into trouble (not least because the theory bizarrely holds that every belief an agent holds will have the same level of justification), but let’s return to the original case of FORGOTTEN. In FORGOTTEN, Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie have the same epistemic character. They both tend to be equally careful and reliable in their work. Simple VE depends on differences in epistemic character to explain differences in the justification of individual beliefs, so the theory will be forced to say that Susan and Audie are equally justified in their beliefs that \(f\) at \(t_2\). Simple VE will fail in cases where an agent forms a belief uncharacteristically, such that we judge their epistemic character and their particular belief differently. One way this can happen is when two agents with comparable epistemic characters form beliefs that we evaluate differently, as in FORGOTTEN. The other type of case in

\(^{28}\) In certain contexts (e.g. when we compare two beliefs that have less than perfect justification), it may make sense to say one is simply “justified” and the other is “unjustified,” even though the putatively justified belief is not “fully justified.” This doesn’t come up in the cases discussed in this chapter, and I will only say a belief is “justified” if it is fully justified.
which Simple VE will fail is when two agents have different epistemic characters, but they form beliefs that we evaluate as epistemically equivalent. Consider an example of the latter:

**BOB AND BROOKE:** Bob and Brooke are two detectives who are often assigned to cases together. This time, they're investigating the murder of Ms. Blue. Brooke has a deep desire to form true beliefs on the basis of good evidence, especially when it comes to her work. This desire has led her to cultivate skills that allow her to be particularly discerning when she reviews evidence, such that she’s generally successful at actually forming true beliefs only on the basis of good evidence. Bob has some desire to form true beliefs on the basis of good evidence, but it’s often overridden by other desires, like the desire to go fishing on the weekend instead of doing work. As a result, he hasn’t cultivated Brooke’s exceptional skills, and he’s not quite as reliable as she is. But in Ms. Blue’s case, Bob has a very strong desire to solve the murder by forming the true belief about Ms. Blue’s murderer. Although his skills aren’t perfect, with extra effort he is able to review the evidence just as carefully as Brooke does, and they both form the belief that \( n \), Nina was the murderer. Unfortunately, Nina has been framed, and \( n \) is false.

Intuitively, we think that Bob’s and Brooke’s beliefs that \( n \) are equally justified. But, again, Simple VE departs from our intuitions. Simple VE must hold that Bob’s and Brook’s beliefs are not equally justified. On Simple VE, justification is a function of the believer’s epistemic character, and Brooke’s epistemic character is much better than Bob’s. Therefore, Brooke’s belief that \( n \) is more justified than Bob’s. But this is the wrong answer. Of course, there is some sense in which Bob is epistemically worse off than Brooke, but our judgment of their epistemic characters is independent of our evaluation of their beliefs in this situation. When we evaluate the agents’ beliefs, we find them equivalent with respect to justification.

In order to determine what causes Simple VE to misfire in the cases of FORGOTTEN and BOB AND BROOKE, we ought to ask what the two cases have in common. When Simple VE attempts to determine justification in both cases, it runs up against “misleading” \( j \)-factors about an agent’s character. In FORGOTTEN, the agents’ identical epistemic character misleads Simple VE,
causing the theory to evaluate the beliefs equivalently. Similarly, In BOB AND BROOKE, Bob’s poor epistemic character misleads Simple VE to judge Bob’s belief more harshly than Brooke’s, even though they formed their beliefs in the same manner.

The cases of FORGOTTEN and BOB AND BROOKE expose a weakness in Simple VE: the theory fails to account for cases in which there is a disconnect between our evaluation of the agent’s epistemic character and our evaluation of her particular belief. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is quite common.\textsuperscript{29} VE needs some way to accommodate cases where an agent forms their belief uncharacteristically, such that our judgment of their epistemic character and our judgment of their belief’s justification come apart. Let’s call this updated version of VE “VE*.” As a theory of VE, VE* must explain justification in terms of intellectual virtues, but not the actual intellectual virtues of the particular agent. The natural step for VE is to explain justification in terms of modalities.

VE*’s account of justification: A belief is \textit{justified} to the degree that the believer operates as the virtuous agent would characteristically operate when forming the belief in the circumstances.\textsuperscript{30}

I use the term “operation” in an unconventionally broad sense, to include processes like collecting and evaluating evidence, as well as forming beliefs. Something needn’t be voluntary or intentional to qualify as an “operation,” as I use the term. For example, if I am crossing the street and look up to see a truck speeding towards me, I might unintentionally form the belief “There’s an oncoming truck(!).” I intend to include such belief formations as operations. VE* considers operations involved in the belief-formation process, primarily operations like collecting and evaluating new evidence, evaluating background beliefs that might serve as evidence, and actually forming a belief.

\textsuperscript{29} Anyone who has ever been disappointed by a respected family member’s political views will be familiar with this sort of situation.

\textsuperscript{30} I use the term “circumstances” broadly to include the accessible evidence and background beliefs of agent.
Again, we can say a belief is simply “justified” (that is to say, “fully justified”) when the believer formed it exactly as the virtuous agent would form it, and “unjustified” (that is to say, “not fully justified”) when the believer failed to form their belief as a virtuous agent would.

VE* can account for both FORGOTTEN and BOB AND BROOKE. In FORGOTTEN, Attentive Audie formed her belief that f by combing through the evidence, just as the virtuous agent – in particular, one who possesses the virtue of carefulness – would in the circumstances. Therefore, she is justified in her belief. Slapdash Susan, on the other hand, didn’t operate as the virtuous agent would, and is therefore unjustified. VE* also accounts for BOB AND BROOKE. Both Bob and Brooke operated as the virtuous agent – again, the careful agent – would when they formed their beliefs, so they are both (equally) justified. This opens up the question of the general structure of a virtue and individuation of carefulness as a particular virtue. Both questions are too fraught to answer here, but just to ensure we have a shared idea of “carefulness,” I will say that someone who possesses the virtue of carefulness tends to dedicate appropriate time and effort to evaluating the sources and quality of evidence, tends to do so accurately, and tends to form beliefs only on the basis of good evidence.31

Let’s look at another contrast, this time one that challenges VE*. Consider the difference between Slapdash Susan’s belief that f in REMEMBERED versus her belief that f in FORGOTTEN. In REMEMBERED, Susan – call her Susan, – formed her belief that f carelessly and remembered at t2 how she formed her belief. In FORGOTTEN, Susan – call her Susan, – formed her belief that f carelessly and, by t2, forgot how she formed her belief. Susan, and Susan, are identical until t2. They have the same epistemic dispositions, tendencies, and entrenched motivations, and both formed

31 I will leave open whether possessing the virtue of carefulness also requires the agent to have a certain desire or motivation. I tend to agree with Zagzebski (1996) in thinking that some such motivation is required for a virtue, but the question doesn’t bear directly on any of the cases I discuss. I return to the topic briefly in the Conclusion.
their beliefs that \( f \) carelessly. While neither Susan\(_r\) nor Susan\(_f\) are fully justified in their beliefs that \( f \), we intuitively think that Susan\(_r\) is in a better epistemic position with regard to her belief that \( f \) than Susan\(_f\) is at \( t_2 \).\(^{32}\)

VE\(^*\) can explain why both Susan\(_r\) and Susan\(_f\) have imperfect justification for their belief that \( f \) by appealing to the fact that they both formed their belief viciously, but can it account for the difference between them at \( t_2 \)? Unfortunately not.\(^{33}\) Because Susan\(_r\) and Susan\(_f\) formed their beliefs in an equally vicious manner, they are equally unjustified according to VE\(^*\), despite the fact that Susan\(_r\), unlike Susan\(_f\), maintained a belief she knew to be carelessly formed.

We can make an additional adjustment to VE\(^*\) to account for this case. The new theory – call it VE\(^**\) – needs to explain the difference between Susan\(_r\)’s and Susan\(_f\)’s justifications at \( t_2 \). The best way to do this is to expand the kinds of operations that bear on justification. Rather than only considering operations that pertain to belief-formation, as VE\(^*\) does, we must also consider how the agent operates with regard to their belief more generally, particularly how the agent maintains the belief. Operations that pertain to belief maintenance include functions like remaining open to new evidence, maintaining internal coherence among beliefs, and revising or rejecting old beliefs as necessary. I won’t preclude other cognitive “operations” (again, in the loosest possible sense of the

\(^{32}\) There is reason to think that this sort of case will be a problem for process reliabilism and virtue reliabilism. Susan, and Susan, both formed their beliefs through an equally unreliable method, but Susan,’s memory is better than Susan,’s. Generally, a better memory is conducive to more reliable beliefs, and, according to a simple version of reliabilism and virtue reliabilism, more justified beliefs. But in this case, it appears that Susan,’s reliable memory is what sets her up for her compromised justification. Any sensible version of reliabilism or virtue reliabilism should be able to account for this sort of case by appealing to a defeater in Susan,’s case, but it will require some maneuvering.

\(^{33}\) Note that phenomenal conservatism can account for this difference. Even though Susan, and Susan, have the same \textit{prima facie} justification for believing that \( f \) by virtue of seeming to remember that \( f \), Susan, has a defeater at \( t_2 \), and Susan, doesn’t. Susan, has evidence that ought to but doesn’t cause her to revise her belief that \( f \). She knows that she was careless in forming her belief that \( f \), and therefore her belief-forming process was unreliable. Robust foundationalism, however, cannot account for the difference because it says that both Susans are justified at \( t_2 \).
word) that might be relevant to justification, like holding certain higher-order attitudes or possessing certain motivations.34

VE**’s account of justification: A belief is justified to the degree that the believer operates as the virtuous agent would characteristically operate with respect to the belief in the circumstances.

Once again, we might say a belief is simply “justified” when the believer operates exactly as the virtuous agent would, and simply “unjustified” when the believer fails to operate as the virtuous agent would.

Like VE*, VE** can explain the difference between Slapdash Susan and Attentive Audie in FORGOTTEN, but it can also explain the difference between Susan, and Susanr. VE** accounts for FORGOTTEN in much the way VE* does. In FORGOTTEN, Susan failed to operate as the virtuous agent would at t1, and even though she succeeded at t2, she is less justified in her belief that f than Audie is, who operated as the virtuous agent would at both t1 and t2.

In the Susanr/Susanf case, Susan and Susanr both failed to operate as the virtuous agent would at t1 when they formed their beliefs, but Susan, also failed to operate as the virtuous agent would at t2. When Susanr maintains her belief that f at t2, she does not operate as the virtuous agent would in her circumstances: A cognitively well-integrated agent who recalled that she formed a belief carelessly would characteristically revise that belief. In contrast, although Susanr operates viciously when she forms her belief that f, she operates virtuously at t2 when she recalls her belief. Ceteris

34 We might worry about including multiple types of j-factors into our evaluation. If one forms the belief as the virtuous agent would but doesn’t maintain it virtuously, exactly how justified is their belief? One approach to this problem comes from Huemer (1999), who offers an account of justification that is structurally similar to VE** in that it also relies on different categories of factors that may come apart. He suggests assigning each factor a number on a scale from 0 (conducive to being unjustified) to 1.0 (conducive to being justified) and multiplying the numbers to calculate the justification for the belief. I don't think such a calculus is necessary for the cases I discuss here, but Huemer’s calculus demonstrates that there are ways around this kind of problem.
Witte

*paribus,* a virtuous agent will characteristically maintain a belief that she seems to remember. So, according to VE**, Susan, is more justified in her belief that *f* at t2 than Susan, is.

Let’s consider one last challenge to our working VE theory, another variant on FORGOTTEN:

**TERRY:** Terry is a third detective who works with Susan and Audie, and she has a similar epistemic character to the other two detectives. All three detectives are assigned to the murder of Mr. Green, and they sit down to evaluate the evidence separately. Audie is careful, closely considering every piece of evidence, and forms the belief that *f,* Fred is the murder. Susan glances through the evidence quickly and also forms the belief that *f.* Terry acts just as carelessly as Susan, and she just skims the case file. She doesn’t form the belief that *f,* though. Instead, she forms the belief that *a,* Ari is the murder. *Both f and a are false.*

We judge both Susan’s belief that *f* and Terry’s belief that *a* more harshly than Audie’s belief that *a,* but that’s not all there is to the story. We can also compare Susan’s belief that *f* and Terry’s belief that *a.* When we do, we find that there is some sense in which we evaluate Susan’s belief as epistemically better than Terry’s belief. Why? Because Susan, despite her carelessness, ends up with the belief that the virtuous agent would hold in the circumstances, and Terry doesn’t.

VE** can explain the difference between the beliefs formed by the careless detectives, which are unjustified, and the belief formed by the careful detective, which is justified. But it fails to distinguish between Susan’s belief that *f* and Terry’s belief that *a.* Neither Susan nor Terry operated as the virtuous agent would with regards to their beliefs, so they are equally unjustified according to VE**. But there’s some sense in which we think that Susan’s belief is epistemically better than Terry’s. Susan’s believes what someone (i.e. Audie) who forms their belief virtuously would believe, and Terry’s doesn’t. This fact affects our epistemic evaluations even though we know that both Susan’s belief that *f* and Terry’s belief that *a* are false and carelessly formed. To account for the
difference between Susan’s belief that \( f \) and Terry’s belief that \( a \), we must introduce add a new
distinction to the VE** picture.

Let’s call this the “right belief” distinction. In order to be the “right belief,” a belief doesn’t
have to be true, nor does it have to be formed or maintained in an epistemically virtuous manner.
What distinguishes Susan’s belief from Terry’s is just that Susan ends up with the belief the virtuous
agent would form in the circumstances.\(^{35}\)

Rightness: A belief is \textit{right} if it the belief a virtuous agent would characteristically hold in the
circumstances.\(^{36}\)

“Rightness” accommodates the difference between Susan’s belief that \( f \) and Terry’s belief that \( a \):
Susan holds the right belief, and Terry doesn’t. Our updated version of VE** has to axes of
evaluation:

Justification: A belief is \textit{justified} to the degree that the agent operates as the virtuous agent
would characteristically operate with respect to the belief in the circumstances.

Rightness: A belief is \textit{right} if it the belief a virtuous agent would characteristically hold in the
circumstances.

“Rightness,” as I’ve defined it here, is a binary. Either one holds the belief that a virtuous
agent would hold in the circumstances, in which case the belief is right, or one doesn’t hold the
belief a virtuous agent would hold, and it is not. But there are some cases in which we might want to
say one belief is more right than another, even though neither are the fully right belief. For example,
Terry’s belief that \( a \), Ari was the murder, is more right than that belief that \( b \), Smokey the Bear was

\(^{35}\) We might be tempted to say that Susan got epistemically lucky, but this isn’t a case of epistemic luck in the typical
sense. Susan doesn’t end up with a \textit{true belief} by luck: \( f \) is false. She merely ends up with the belief that the virtuous agent
would hold.

\(^{36}\) I borrow the term “right belief” from Zagzebski (1996), who uses the same term for a similar concept, although it
functions very differently in her VE theory.
the murderer (assuming Ari is somehow involved in the case, or even just a real person). Smokey the
Bear is not a real person, and certainly is not capable of killing anyone, so believing that he is the
murderer seems even further from the right belief than Terry’s belief that a. There are two ways to
explain why believing that a is more right than believing that b. One avenue is to say that the agent
who would characteristically form the belief that a is more virtuous than the agent who would
characteristically form the belief that b. The other is to say that the belief that a is closer in its
content to the right belief (i.e. the belief that the virtuous agent would characteristically hold) than
the belief that b is. Both avenues of explanation would need to be fleshed out more, but nothing
about the concept of “rightness” prevents us from talking about rightness in terms of degrees. But
we don’t need to do so to account for the cases I discuss here, and I’ll continue to use it as a binary.

We might wonder why the TERRY case requires us to introduce a new distinction, rather than
simply to update VE**’s definition of justification. There are two reasons for this. First, what would
happen to the VE theory if we replaced “justification” with “rightness”? It would lose some of its
explanatory power. “Rightness,” by itself, cannot accommodate the difference between Susan and
Audie in REMEMBERED, FORGOTTEN, or FORGOTTEN*. In all three cases, Attentive Audie and
Slapdash Susan hold the same belief: the belief that the virtuous agent would characteristically hold
in the circumstances. We know this because in all three cases, Attentive Audie operates as the
virtuous agent would, and therefore her belief is the one the virtuous agent would characteristically
hold. Both Susan and Audie hold the “right belief” in all three cases, so we need the epistemic tool
of “justification” to account for the differences.

A second reason to maintain both “rightness” and “justification” is that the two axes of
evaluation track our intuitive distinction between propositional justification and doxastic
justification. We understand a belief to be “propositionally justified” when the agent has sufficient reason or evidence for the belief and “doxastically justified” when the agent holds the belief appropriately. Recall that a belief is right if it’s the belief a virtuous agent would hold in the circumstances, where circumstances include things like the evidence available to the agent.

“Rightness,” then, corresponds with “propositional justification,” because a belief will only be “right” if the agent has sufficient evidence to hold it because virtuous agents don’t characteristically hold beliefs without sufficient evidence. Similarly, what our theory of VE calls simply “justification” corresponds to “doxastic justification.” Our general understanding of doxastic justification is that a belief is doxastically justified when it is appropriately held, and one way to cash out “appropriately held” is “the belief that a virtuous agent would characteristically form in the circumstances.”

The rightness/justification distinction mirrors the propositional/doxastic distinction in another way. A belief can only be doxastically justified if it is propositionally justified, so doxastic justification implies propositional justification. A belief cannot be appropriately held if the agent does not have sufficient evidence for it. The rightness/justification distinction has the same dependency. It’s impossible for an agent to operate exactly as a virtuous agent would and not hold the belief the virtuous agent would hold. Just as “doxastic justification” implies “propositional justification,” VE**’s “justification” implies “rightness.”

Note that while “rightness” roughly corresponds to our intuitive understanding of propositional justification and “justification” to our intuitive understanding of doxastic justification, the common “basing” relation doesn’t hold here. We often cash out the intuitive propositional/doxastic distinction in technical terms by saying that a belief is propositionally justified if the agent has sufficient evidence to support it, and a belief is doxastically justified if the
agent is propositionally justified and *bases* their belief on the sufficient evidence. In the VE distinction we have laid out, though, the agent’s *virtuous operations* (beyond holding the specific belief in question) distinguish a justified belief from one that is merely right.

In the final section, we turn to a comparison between diachronic foundationalism and VE.

**III. Evaluating Virtue Epistemology’s Success**

We have seen that one version of VE, VE**, can accommodate the cases of forgotten carelessness that gave synchronic foundationalism so much trouble in Chapter 1. But does VE offer a better explanation than diachronic foundationalism? I’ll gesture at some reasons to think so. None of them are alone sufficient, but I hope that together they offer a helpful explanatory picture.

First, let’s return to our initial motivation to consider VE. In general, we find that VE’s theoretical explanations closely parallel the way we intuitively explain our epistemic evaluations. In FORGOTTEN, our intuitive explanation for Slapdash Susan’s compromised justification at t2 will be something roughly like, “Susan formed her belief badly at t1, and that continues to affect her justification at t2” or “Susan’s carelessness at t1 continues to affect her justification at t2.” Our intuitive explanations are loaded with exactly the sort of epistemically evaluative language that makes up VE’s explanations. Compare this with foundationalism’s emphasis on Susan’s phenomenology of memory, which plays no role in our intuitive explanations. But diachronic foundationalism includes anti-defeater clauses about “failing to exercise due caution.” Is that not epistemically evaluative language, too? It is, but we still lack a coherent understanding of what “due caution” is. This chapter suggests that one option for the diachronic foundationalist is to define “due caution,” in terms of what an epistemically ideal (i.e. virtuous) agent would do, but if the diachronic foundationalist moves
in that direction, they might as well go whole hog for VE. The fact that VE explanations mirror intuitive explanations suggests that VE is successful at locating the most salient j-factors, the real “source” of the justificatory failure or success. “Operating with due caution” is plausibly a placeholder for “operating as the virtuous agent would in the circumstances,” and foundationalism’s emphasis on phenomenology might be a proxy for the more salient j-factor of responding appropriately to phenomenology, as a virtuous agent would.

Second, VE is also more unified than diachronic foundationalism. The basic premise of foundationalism is that the characteristic phenomenology of memory justifies memory beliefs. This means that in cases where an agent has the characteristic phenomenology but lacks justification, foundationalism needs to introduce anti-defeater clauses that have nothing to do with the agent’s phenomenology. In our version of diachronic foundationalism, we use the placeholder “due caution,” but foundationalism needs some philosophical concept to do this work. But for VE, the single question is whether the agent operated as the virtuous agent would. There’s no need for defeaters when VE evaluates justification. In short, the single concept of a virtuous agent does all the heavy lifting in VE, whereas foundationalism relies on two concepts, phenomenology and “due caution.”

VE is not only more unified than diachronic foundationalism, but it is also more comprehensive in that it answers a wider range of questions. Because VE has two axes of evaluation, justification and rightness, it can accommodate a wider range of cases and intuitions than diachronic foundationalism. As a theory of doxastic justification, diachronic foundationalism fails to explain the difference in propositional justification (or “rightness”) in TERRY between Terry’s belief that $a$ and Susan’s belief that $f$. This isn’t exactly a fault of diachronic foundationalism – the theory simply
doesn’t presume to address propositional justification – but VE does offer a more comprehensive
theory by explaining two types of epistemic judgments. Between VE’s alignment with our intuitive
explanations, its internal coherence, and its explanatory scope, there are good reasons to hold that
VE provides a better answer to the problem of forgotten carelessness than foundationalism,
diachronic or otherwise.
Conclusion

I began this project with two observations. The first was the unfortunate empirical fact that we are flawed epistemic agents. One of the many ways in which our epistemic imperfection manifests is that we form a belief carelessly, store the belief in memory, and later recall the belief without remembering that we formed it carelessly. The second observation was that in such cases – cases of forgotten carelessness – we’re worse off with respect to justification than we would have been if we had formed the belief carefully and then forgot our carefulness – cases of forgotten carelessness. I set out to explain this second observation: the problem of forgotten carelessness.

In Chapter 1, I first addressed the simpler problem of remembered carelessness. Robust foundationalism struggles to accommodate even this simple case, but phenomenal conservatism, a more modest version of foundationalism, succeeds. But when we tried to apply phenomenal conservatism to the problem of forgotten carelessness, we found that the theory isn’t up to the task. Phenomenal conservatism addresses the problem of remembered carelessness by appealing to the memory of being careless, not the carelessness itself. This approach does not work in the case of forgotten carelessness, where there was no memory of being careless: the belief is defeated by the carelessness itself, not any memory of being careless. In response, I presented a theory of diachronic foundationalism, which addresses the problems of remembered and forgotten carelessness, but is somewhat unprincipled in that it required two concepts, the phenomenology of memory and the mysterious “due caution,” to do the heavy lifting on determining justification.

One of the upshots of Chapter 1 was that forcing synchronic theories into diachronic boxes produces awkward results, so we began Chapter 2 with a diachronic theory, virtue epistemology (VE). I presented the simplest possible version of VE and developed a more sophisticated version in
response to various cases of carelessness, including the problem of forgotten carelessness. Even as we added nuance to our working version of VE in order to accommodate new cases, it didn’t lose its theoretical virtue of simplicity. VE did not have to compromise its principled focus on virtues and virtuous agents to evaluate justification. At the end of Chapter 2, we discussed two reasons to favor VE over foundationalism. First, VE is more unified. VE can determine justification with one simple question: Did the agent operate as the virtuous agent would in the circumstances? Unlike foundationalism, there is no need to ask about defeaters and the multiple questions they introduce. Second, VE is more comprehensive. Unlike foundationalism, which is a theory only of justification, VE can answer questions about both justification and rightness. That is to say, it can accommodate our intuitions about both doxastic and propositional justification. The upshot is that synchronic foundationalism failed to solve the problem of forgotten carelessness because the problem requires a diachronic solution. Diachronic foundationalism solved the problem of forgotten carelessness but at the cost of synchronic foundationalism’s theoretical simplicity. VE, on the other hand, offered a simple and principled answer to the question of forgotten carelessness.

But the theory of VE I outlined in Chapter 2 is vague. I bracketed the most pressing questions for VE: questions about what makes some quality a virtue, what the general structure of a virtue is, and what qualities count as virtues. By way of conclusion, I'll suggest that our study of VE in the context of forgotten carelessness may offer a direction in which the dedicated virtue epistemologist might look to find answers to some of these questions.

First, we might wonder what an epistemic virtue actually is. What are the structural properties characteristic of a virtue? Recall that our version of VE holds that an agent is justified in

---

37 Many of these general questions are mirrored in the virtue ethics literature, where answer to them are better developed. The virtue epistemologist may be able to answer some general questions by appropriating answers from virtue ethics.
some belief to the degree that she operates as a virtuous agent would with regard to the belief. This suggests that a virtue must be something that manifests in the kind of operations that tend to produce intuitively justified beliefs. Of course, this isn’t anything like a definition of a virtue. To begin, it would be circular to define justification in terms of virtue and virtue in terms of justification. In addition, there are certainly non-virtue qualities that manifest in the kind of operations that tend to produce intuitively justified beliefs, so manifesting in such a way won’t be sufficient for being a virtue. The quality of having a particular skill, for instance, tends to manifest in virtuous operations (i.e. operations that tend to produce intuitively justified beliefs), but it is not a virtue. Nevertheless, the relationship between virtues and justification gives us some guidance in thinking about what sort of functional role a virtue needs to fill.

If the functional role of a virtue is that it tends to manifest in characteristically virtuous operations, the natural place to look for the realizer of that role is a motivation or desire, as other virtue epistemologists have. “Motivation” plays a central role in Code’s (1987), Montmarquet’s (1993), and Zagzebski’s (1996) definitions of a virtue. Motivations or desires tend to manifest in specific operations, so it reasonable to think that a virtuous motivation will be the sort of thing that tends to manifest in virtuous operations. But what about skills? It’s not enough to just have the virtuous motivation or desire. An agent requires certain skills to operate “as the virtuous agent would.” I see two possible accounts of the role of skills in having a virtue. The first is that skills are an additional component of a virtue. Each virtue might be made up of two parts: the motivation and the required skills. For example, the virtue of being open-minded might be composed of (i) the desire to hear differing points of view (maybe with some particular end in mind, say, the end of

---

38 For example, the skill of accurately reading water meters manifests in the operations of accurately reading water meters, which tends to produce justified beliefs about the amount of water a building uses, but we wouldn’t want to count the ability to accurately read a water meter as an epistemic virtue.
holding true beliefs or having knowledge), and (ii) skills like seeking differing opinions and evaluating the reliability of sources. The second possible account of the role of skills in possessing a virtue is that the characteristic motivation of the virtue manifests not only in the agent operating virtuously but also in the agent cultivating the necessary epistemic skills. The virtuous motivation will lead the agent to actually use these acquired skills in the appropriate manner, and they will, therefore, hold beliefs that we intuitively take to be justified.

For all its apparent vagueness, VE can provide the narrow problem of forgotten carelessness with a coherent and satisfying answer, which might, in turn, point us towards a more complete picture of VE.
Bibliography


https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.


Hill, Christopher. forthcoming. “Consciousness and Memory.”

https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0114.00088.


https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9329.00190.


