University of Alberta

Moral Virtues Require Intellectual Virtues:

A Case for Intellectual Virtues in Ethics

by

Andrew R. Contreiras

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

Fall 2010
Edmonton, Alberta

Examining Committee

Adam Morton, Philosophy

Jenny Welchman, Philosophy

Howard Nye, Philosophy

Karyn Ball, English and Film Studies

Abstract

Moral virtues need intellectual virtues. I support this claims by (1) proposing a response in terms of intellectual virtues and other psychological factors to situationalist critiques against moral virtue, (2) arguing that intellectual virtues must assess moral contexts for proper manifestation of moral virtue, and (3) showing that interrelations between moral and intellectual virtues deem them inextricable in moral behavior. These arguments--(1), (2), and (3), respectively—are designed to show the function, the prescriptive advantage and the descriptive accuracy of intellectual virtues in virtue theory. Further, I argue that supplementing virtue theory with intellectual virtues yields more subtle characterological assessments of agents in moral action. Finally, I demonstrate the function of intellectual virtues to fill the theoretical gap revealed by the problem of moral luck.

Acknowledgements

For his dedicated advisement throughout the writing process, and helpful comments and conversation along the way, I'd like to express my gratitude to Adam Morton. Another debt of gratitude is owed to Jenny Welchman for her helpful suggestions, her detailed comments, and being an invaluable source for the ethics portion of this thesis. I could not have asked for a better pair of professors to supervise the overlapping interests represented in this thesis. Additional thanks goes to Howard Nye for useful comments on the final draft. And an overall thanks to the philosophy department at the University of Alberta.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 -- Virtue and Virtue Theory

1.1. Outlines of Virtue

There is no shortage of definitions in philosophy of moral virtue and no shortage of definitions of the ethical act in terms of moral virtue. Nonetheless, there are elements of the definition of virtue common to most accounts. For our purposes, we can define it generally, and with relative universality, using Christine Swantan's definition: " a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way."[1] Swanton's definition " . . . is intended to be neutral with respect to a variety of virtue theories and virtue ethics: pluralistic, monistic, eudaimonistic and non-eudaimonistic." The idea, then, is that a moral virtue is a character trait or disposition which manifests positive moral behavior *within its 'fields'*. What counts as a character trait's 'field' is its scope of people, objects, psychological structures or situations with which it is concerned. Additionally, character traits are generally required to be robust, to some (usually very strong) degree, in that if a person possesses a virtue, that person will engage in virtue-relevant behaviors in virtue-relevant eliciting conditions.[2] In other words, an individual must consistently display a given character trait for that character trait to be considered a virtue.

On the surface these conditions may appear simple enough. However, which virtues are relevant to a given situation (or, what counts as its field) is often

[1] Swanton, Christine. Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View. Oxford UP. 2003. P. 19. Future references to Swanton are also taken from this work.

[2] Doris, John. Lack of Character: Personality & Moral Behavior. Cambridge UP. 2002. P. 19.

less clear. These less obvious and straightforward scenarios are where good, virtuous people can be seen committing bad, non-virtuous, even vicious acts. While this general definition is useful, there is more to be said about the detailed account I will be using here. The details, however, which distinguish this virtue theory from others, are not necessary for my central claim that intellectual virtues should be included in moral virtue theory. Intellectual virtues, no matter your ethics, can take the place, or at least supplement, practical reason or phronesis for the practical use of virtue in action.

The view of virtue I take here is both pluralist and consequentialist. However, neither of these features of my view are as straightforward as their names may suggest. I do not intend to expound a full account of what defines a virtue. My primary argument for intellectual virtues is compatible with many views on virtue. However, I am sympathetic to pluralistic and consequentialist views. I take a pluralistic view in the following senses. First, traits can be morally beneficial for some individuals but not for others, baed upon environmental or (and mainly) psychological factors. So a particular virtue realized in me might be undesirable, but desirable realized in you. Second, a virtue is considered a virtue for a plurality of reasons--external, behavioral results, or internal, psychological results depending on the virtue under consideration. Third, virtues rightly apply to a plurality of 'fields'. So what counts as virtuous behavior is not simply based on whether act A arises from *a* (any) virtue. Trait-relevance is significant and requires that we consider the complex of virtues, not

any single one.

I take a consequentialist view in that I consider virtues to be virtues because they tend to bring about morally good behaviors and results. But I distinguish between assimilated and unassimilated virtue. An assimilated virtue is an instance of a virtue as a psychological construct within the context of a wider character. An unassimilated virtue is the theoretical concept of a specific virtue. So, for instance, *compassion* can be used to describe the theoretical concept of *the virtue related to caring for others*. Compassion can also be used to refer to a specific individual's compassion as it is within the context of his character--that is, as it is assimilated within that person's psychology. By default we speak of virtues as unassimilated virtues. The distinction is important just because an (unassimilated) virtue should typically promote morally good behavior and consequences, but a virtue assimilated in a particular individual's character might typically promote morally bad behaviors and consequences. A virtue that promotes morally bad behaviors in a particular individual S does not threaten its status as a virtue as long as it tends to promote morally good behaviors within people generally. This is a result of having a both pluralist and consequentialist view of virtue.

I take a consequentialist view of virtue somewhat reluctantly because an in depth consequentialist theory of what defines a virtue would require far more careful distinctions than are suitable here. I nonetheless use it because it is the far more plausible *starting point*, and despite not working to provide a full, coherent

and in depth definition of virtue, it is necessary to state this assumption as it will inform arguments and distinctions to follow. I do not deny that virtues can have intrinsic value, just that this is the defining feature of virtue. We consider compassion a virtue because compassionate behavior is generally better than apathetic behavior. A world full of compassionate people is preferable to a world full of apathetic people. I also take a consequentialist view of virtue reluctantly because it has the immediate danger of resulting in a consequentialist ethical theory. But the consequentialism stops at the definition of virtue. Actions are assessed based on their characterological origins, and the status of a virtue is not compromised by an unfortunate result. So, in other words, an action is assessed based on the traits or dispositions that motivated the action, but the traits or dispositions themselves are assessed based on consequentialist grounds. Actions are assessed by *input*, not *output.* Traits or dispositions are assessed by output, not input.

However, in claiming that actions are assessed based on traits or dispositions I do not intend to imply that right action is necessarily defined in these terms. For present purposes, I am not concerned with conditions for right action. Certainly, my account of moral and intellectual virtues will have implications for how virtue ethics can define right action, but to the issue of right action I remain uncommitted. Even more, there is no reason that right action cannot be defined in non-virtuous terms. Here, *assessing actions* refers to the assessment of an individual's action in characterological terms. However one

defines the right act, it is important to understand the characterological origins of actions, and which types of origins tend to lead to the good, the right or the best results. Judgments ensue from these assessments, but not necessarily judgments of right action. So the purpose here is to defend and advance *virtue theory*, not necessarily *virtue ethics*.[3]

1.2. Virtue Pluralism

So let's look at moral virtue a little more closely. Discussion of intellectual virtue will follow in later sections as the solution to well-known problems in virtue theory that are often approached using practical reason. Swanton has a pluralistic account of moral virtue, which is useful because its essential features are similar to mine, and the differences are illuminative. While Swanton intended to present a neutral definition of virtue in the preceding quote, her detailed account is not necessarily in step with traditional definitions of virtue. Swanton outlines five ways in which virtue is pluralistic. It is beyond present purposes to argue against these specifics, so I will instead outline the pluralistic features that will underly the ensuing analysis of virtue. Some of these are shared with Swanton's, and I will make note of these shared features along the way.

First (A), virtue is pluralistic in that there is no single condition that deems a trait a virtue. I hold, with Swanton, that it is "a threshold concept." There are

[3] Driver, Julia. Ed. Crisp, Roger. *Virtues and Human Nature*. How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues. Oxford UP. 1998. P. 111 f. 1. Here Julia Driver writes: "Virtue ethics is the project of basing ethics on virtue evaluation. I reject this approach. This is an essay in virtue theory, since what I am trying to do is give an account of what virtues *are*." I agree with Driver's position. The primary aim here is to give an account of moral virtues and how they relate to intellectual virtues, while arguing for the inclusion of intellectual virtues in virtue theory.

two parts to this: (1) there is a plurality of considerations that meet this threshold (these may include both consequentialist and intrinsic considerations), and (2) virtue is relative to an agent's complex of other virtues, personality, situation and even society. Second (B), any particular virtue X can relate to a plurality of features in the world. As we will see further, one can be courageous towards military affairs, while being cowardly in social affairs. Later, this feature will result in the use of sub-virtues (or, to use Doris's term, *local traits*). An example, then, of a sub-virtue would be military courage, social courage, arachnid courage, etc.. It is possible to have one or more sub-virtue, while neglecting others. To have a full virtue is, like in (A1), to reach a threshold in the sub-virtues, and the discourse of sub-virtues is to provide a more subtle characterological analysis.

The final two pluralistic features are related to the contextuality of virtue *in action*. These are the subject of section three, but I will outline them here. First, the application of moral virtue is dependent on the context of other psychological factors--namely, intellectual virtue, but also other moral virtues and non-virtuous psychological factors. Second, since virtues relate to a plurality of features in the world, the application of a virtue is sensitive to contextual factors in the real world. One implication here is that virtues can motivate conflicting actions. A situation can exhibit features related to virtue X and features related to virtue Y, and the action correlated with X can be different from the action correlated with Y. For example, loyalty relates to features of implicit obligations within relationships, honesty relates to the feature of standing to gain from lying, while

compassion relates to features of human suffering. But situations can exhibit all of these features simultaneously, and the action evinced by loyalty can very easily conflict with the action of, say, honesty. Virtue is pluralistic in definition and action.

Let's return to issues of (A1). Should virtue be defined in consequential terms, or as an intrinsic good to the agent's flourishing? The value of virtues, and the primary reason to cultivate them, is that they generally result in a better state of affairs. We see that compassionate acts generally lead to the amelioration of suffering, that courageous acts generally lead to necessary actions being taken to improve a situation, that temperance generally leads to a greater regularity in behavior, that honesty allows us to act in harmony with the reality of a situation, and that cooperation means we can delegate and split up responsibilities. We also see that malicious acts generally result in a victim's suffering, that dishonesty generally leads to lies that manipulate people to act against their own interests, that cowardice generally leads to easier, more immediately comfortable, but ultimately degenerative acts, and that selfish acts disregard the interests of others and only incidentally result in a better state of affairs. Of course, this does not mean that virtues are not valuable to the agent, or even that this value is not intrinsic. Rather, my account of virtue assumes that what makes a trait a virtue is its tendency to promote a better state of affairs.

This does not, however, imply that an action originating partly from an (unassimilated) virtue is a virtuous action. The pluralistic account of virtue

outlined above means that a trait's effectiveness is partly determined by the complex of other virtues, vices, traits and personality features. The attribution of a virtuous act should be based on complexes of virtues (and vices and non-virtues), rather than being based merely on a single trait with generally positive results among the population that partly led to one's action. For example: Tim is loyal and courageous, but is also rather malicious and sadistic. His loyalty, as a result, leads him to be loyal to the wrong people--poorly intentioned politicians or a friend who is fun due to his utter disregard for others. His courage manifests in the ability to do horrendous acts to others despite (moral) pressure to do otherwise. Loyalty and courage may be virtues, but Tim's act arose from a vicious complex of virtues and vices.

One conclusion of this could be that Aristotle was right. One must have all the virtues to have any--and the virtuous act is the act that the perfectly virtuous person would do. With Swanton, I resist this conclusion because basing virtue theory around ideas of ideal virtuous agents impedes us from relating virtue theory to the concrete world. Further, real-life agents do not benefit from taking ideal virtuous agents as a model. First, such a model can only be represented in the abstract. Second, to the extent one can glean concrete elements from the ideal model, cultivating virtues that would be virtuous within the ideal agent are not necessarily virtuous for the real-life agent. We non-ideal human agents are forced to cultivate virtues one-by-one, or in tightly interrelated collections, partly based on the context of our psychology. Defining the virtuous act as the act that the

ideally virtuous agent would do, while perhaps abstractly satisfying, is actually meaningless. It leads to an unnecessary circularity that requires ad hoc theoretical constructs to remove. Which act *would* the ideally virtuous agent complete? The one that evinces the relevant virtues? Which ones are those? And we are led back to where we began. So rather than succumbing to the Aristotelian conclusion, we could define the virtuous act in terms of complexes of virtues specific to an agent, including, as we will see later, intellectual virtues. It is worth working out what this approach will entail.[4] But more on this later.

There is also a broader, real-world, point to be made about the use of ideally or traditionally virtuous agents in ethics, and it also points to another reason for a pluralistic account of moral virtue. We should respect that we require and value variations in individuals, which includes variations in personality and character. If one does not immediately agree that one should value variations in *character*, it is enough to accept that we value variations in *personality*. Different personalities require different virtues or different strengths of virtues to ultimately promote good moral behavior (more on this in section 3). For now, suffice it to say that since an important role of character is to balance other psychological factors for moral behavior, different personalities require different characters. So the notion of the ideally virtuous agent does little to instruct which virtues are good for a particular agent's psychological context.

[4] If one is skeptical or curious about the type of reasoning assumed here generally, or moral reasoning specifically, see Philip Johnson-Laird for the cognitive psychology from which I draw. See especially his work on moral reasoning, which incorporates previous psychological research:
Bucciarelli, M., Khemlani, S., and Johnson-Laird, P.N. *The Psychology of Moral Reasoning*. Judgment and Decision Making, 2008. Vol. 3. Iss. 2, 121-139.

1.3. Virtues, Traits, Dispositions

So what distinguishes virtues from the slew of other habits and tendencies people exhibit? There are many habits, traits, skills, for instance, that may easily meet the criteria outlined thus far, but are not considered virtues: Tact, a good memory, charm, driving ability, mathematical ability, being expressive or communicative, musical talent, etc.. All of these things can be said to lead to positive results on account of one's tendency to act with them. Some have moral features, some are aspects of personality, but are not directly moral, while others are intellectual. Let's first consider those more closely aligned with morality than intellect. The difference between traits we consider potential moral-virtues and traits we consider merely aspects of one's personality is based on (1) moral relevance or value, and (2) the level of description. There are many traits and habits which, while having tendencies towards good results, are not primarily moral. They may even be said to be incidentally moral. In short, they are not *character traits*, but *personality traits*. Character traits are potential virtues, while personality traits are not. The question, then, is what distinguishes a character trait from a personality trait, which leads us again to (1) and (2). But I do not suppose there are any strict conditions which will cleanly delineate these two categories.

Personality traits are often distinguished from character traits in terms of innateness. Personality traits are not acquired traits, but are features of a person

'naturally', whereas character traits are acquired traits that are cultivated often for the purposes of good moral behavior. It is easy to see the origins of this idea in Aristotle, who considered the virtues to be habits one engrains in oneself by mimicking others. Distinguishing traits based on innateness is, at best, shaky and not very useful for the purposes of virtue theory. All traits are essentially native in that some proto-form of the them are innate and then cultivated and grown based on other psychological and environmental factors. And innateness is not useful for virtue theory because it defines the traits in terms of origin, not their present features. Their origins are not particularly relevant to their current import or application.

So, at any rate, this is not the distinction I am using when I say that potential virtues are character traits not personality traits. There are more intuitive notions of personality and character traits--notions which I think are used in common discourse. While, as I pointed out, I do not wish to claim there are any strict conditions delineating character and personality traits exactly, they can be described with enough precision. Personality traits are generally less (if at all) moral; they describe more superficial aspects of a person such as cheery, relaxed, shy, stressed, etc.; namely, they describe *how* one acts, rather than *what* one will do. Character traits are more (always) moral; they describe deep aspects of person such as courageous, compassionate, generous, responsible, etc.; namely, they describe *what* one will do, more than *how* will act. The last feature is most precise.

Take honesty, courage, compassion or loyalty. All of these are used to predict *what a person will do* or *how a person will respond*. Now take some uncontroversial personality traits: cheeriness, nervousness or shyness. All of these are used to predict *how a person will do those acts*. A courageous person will go into battle despite inherent dangers, but that same person might do so cheerily, nervously, in a relaxed manner, or with much energy. From the other direction, a shy person might be less talkative or avoid eye contact, but act that way while helping a stranger or heroically saying the truth. There are, of course, correlations between specific personality traits and character traits. However, as we have seen (and will see), these correlations merely provide evidence for the plurality of virtue and for a virtue's relativity to the complexity of an agent. It is easier for an energetic person, and harder for a shy person, to be courageous; it is harder for a stressed person, and easier for a relaxed person, to be compassionate. I think the best we can do is operate on descriptions of these two types of traits, and accept that some of our descriptors have some overlap. Some ambiguity is to be expected in our everyday language of traits. Traits that might seem like character traits might not be sufficiently moral, so while it is useful to distinguish between personality and character, it is not enough to ignore (1) and (2).

So with those distinctions, let's return to (1) and (2). (1) is a graded condition. Of course, traits are not simply morally relevant or morally irrelevant. They are more, or less, morally relevant. Traits must meet a threshold of moral relevancy whereby they may be said to be *primarily moral*. It is not necessary to

define this threshold definitively. Such a definition is likely too elusive. Where borderline cases result in dissent, (1) provides one condition around which to argue. So when I argue for the inclusion of a contentious trait, my argument will be based partly on the trait's similar moral relevancy as compared to virtues with consensus. (2) is a condition based on levels of description--namely, causal description. Descriptions of the causal story leading to an agent's behavior can be either shallow or deep. For example, we might explain a person's kind behavior by appealing to his politeness. But the polite trait is itself caused by underlying (more deeply engrained) traits such as care and respect. Virtue theory is, and should be, concerned with the deeply engrained traits. They are virtues partly due to their ability to regulate many different types of behavior. Virtues have this characteristic due to their ability to promote traits at a higher level of description.

Let's take, for example, "being expressive or communicative." This trait or skill, while having some moral relevance and tending to promote clarity between individuals, is not normally considered a virtue itself. It is not a virtue for both reasons, (1) and (2). First, while having moral relevancy, abilities of expression are more strongly associated with creative pursuits. It is relevant to morality incidentally in that, like any trait, it has some moral implications. Further, due to this loose relation to morality, it can be argued that communicative abilities are no more correlated with good behavior than negative behavior. Any extent to which it is more strongly correlated to good behavior would be, again, incidental to the trait itself. The good moral behavior is not caused by the

communicative abilities. Rather, the ability to communicate is a tool used for good or for bad purposes. This bring us to (2). Descriptions of an agent's moral act should not stop at his ability to communicate effectively. Moral assessments are based on deeper causal descriptions: Why did he communicate what he did, or Why was it important for him to express himself well? We are looking for deep causal descriptions because they more fundamentally explain an individual's behavior, and can offer a wider range of predictive capabilities due to the more robust nature of the trait.

These are not the sort of conditions we usually hope for in philosophy. It would be more ideal to present strict necessary and sufficient conditions for which traits count as character traits. But any such conditions, if they were to work, would be axiomatic to the point of theoretical and practical uselessness. They would turn out to be either trivially true or obviously false. We could begin by stating that character traits are those traits which reside or arise from one's character, and then leave the work to the definition of character. But we find a similar sliding, blurry scale between character and personality. All that would be gained is asserting that traits reside in two different areas, which is a dubious assumption not worth pursuing without a real benefit. But clarifying the distinction in this way does show us that it is a psychological problem to be tackled psychologically.

1.4. Concluding Remarks

I have attempted here to briefly explicate the account of virtue that will underly the following. The significant features are that virtues are pluralistic and defined primarily consequentially. It is important to consider these features together because, as we have seen, specifics in each inform the other. I have concentrated on moral virtue. As you will see, I argue for the integrated inclusion of intellectual virtues. So I will leave discussion of intellectual virtues to what follows. Nonetheless, a few preliminary points should be made here. Some contentious traits are contentious because they resemble skills at least as much as they resemble character traits. For intellectual virtues there are much stronger resemblances between these two. Again, we must consider levels of description. I present *empathy* as a virtue, but recognize this is far from a consensus. However, if we accept the strong relationship between intellectual and moral virtue I will be advocating, we will find virtues at the borderline between intellect and moral. Empathy, I will argue, is one of them. It resembles a skill because mental simulation resembles a mere skill. However, as I will argue, in the moral domain it constitutes a coherent trait of character with both moral and intellectual dimensions. The guiding argument in what follows is that a person's quality of thinking is deeply relevant to conclusions about how well they are acting. The specific account of virtue is less important than this central argument, and I suspect that many other accounts of virtue are consistent with my arguments. So I wish to stress that the account of moral virtue in this chapter elucidates my view

of virtue, but is not necessary or central to my primary argument regarding the relation between intellectual or moral virtue. These arguments in the next chapters constitute my primary aim.

Chapter 2. Variability in Action

2.1. The Predicament of Moral Virtues

Situationalist research on personality and character has led to some philosophical skepticism about the existence of virtue as, at least, it is commonly defined. John Doris has perhaps been the most successful proponent of the view that robust character traits do not exist and ethical theory should not be based in these concepts. Citing a strong background of research suggesting that insignificant situational factors have a crucial effect on an agent's action, Doris, and others, argue that virtue is an outmoded concept refuted by psychological research. Thus, ethical theories should base themselves on a more accurate psychology. This line of argument, however, has not been without its critics. Research cited by situationalists lends itself to different interpretations, and, while it might force us to consider specific conceptions of virtue, it may not necessitate a rejection of virtue altogether. I do not intend to insert myself into this debate to any great degree. However, the view I present on moral and intellectual virtue has strong implications for this debate. If I am right about the relationship between moral and intellectual virtue, situationalist research can be read, not as an attack on virtue, but a support of it. In other words, rather than renouncing moral virtues in ethical theories, we should incorporate intellectual virtues into a more complete theory. We need more virtue, not less.

It is worth presenting one quintessential study to show the type of evidence situationalists use since I will make reference to it in this section. In a famous

study by Isen and Levin[5] one group of pay-phone users found a dime in the phone's coin return slot. Another group did not. Isen and Levin found a significant correlation between those who found a dime and those who helped Alice, an actor in the study who had dropped papers along the caller's path. Doris argues that this kind of study suggests that slight changes in mood have strong correlations to compassionate behavior. If such a variation in mood can so profoundly affect one's compassionate behavior, the virtue itself cannot be very robust. It seems that mood has a stronger affect on behavior than character. If we accept this as a plausible interpretation of the data, the proponent of virtue has some explaining to do. Certainly the mere finding of a dime should not be determinative of whether a situation is care-relevant.

An implication of incorporating intellectual virtues into moral virtue theory is a solution to the problems presented by situationalist research that strengthens the role of virtue, rather than diminishing it. But why should one who is bothered by the research favor not only retaining the importance of moral virtue, but asserting the importance of intellectual virtue? Will we merely exacerbate the problem? Put in terms of an answer to the research, it might seem counter-intuitive. After all, if the problem is the reliance upon dubious virtue mechanics, how can increasing the reliance solve it? The answer, curtly, is that the implementation of moral virtue is not simple or without situational impact. More on this later. First, it is worth considering a few immediate explanations for

[5] Levin, P.F., Isen, A.M. *Further Studies on the Effect of Feeling Good on Helping.* Sociometry. 1975, Vol. 38, No. 1. P. 141-47

the research threatening moral virtue. There are, broadly, three possible explanations: (1) there are no virtues (or at least as commonly defined as "robust character traits"), (2) virtues are highly specific or (3) virtues are contextual and apply to restricted types of situation based on degrees of relevance between virtue and situation. [a note or more on "comment on relevanve of sit. evidence on IV here?]

The difference between (1) and (3) seems stark. However, considered more closely, it is quite subtle. To deny the existence of virtue as commonly defined in the literature is not to deny the existence of traits. [6] Nor is it, as Doris points out, to deny that individual traits lead to some tendency in behavior, or play some role in moral behavior. It denies just that there are traits of character such that some conditional like Doris's holds: "If a person possesses a trait, that person will engage in trait-relevant behaviors in trait-relevant eliciting conditions with markedly above probability p."[7] 'Probability p' stands for a suitably high--ideally 1, but approaching it--probability that warrants virtue ascription. While (3) certainly states no such claim, the difference may be attributed to a psychological interpretation. By claiming that virtues are contextual and applicable to a constrained type of situation, one concedes that to have virtue X will not always--

---

[6] "Trait", here, just refers to a characteristic of an individual's psychology which may or may not meet the conditions for virtue. For instance, one might have X as a trait but not a virtue if X does not meet the requirement of being sufficiently robust. One might have trait Y, but not virtue Y, because Y is not an eligible virtue (for example, positivity or introversion). Traits that are not eligible for virtue status tend to be morally neutral. "Trait," then, can be used as a term that is neutral to attacks on virtue since it need not meet the conditions for virtue some claim to be descriptively dubious.

[7] Doris, John. Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior. Cambridge UP. 2002. P. 19

or even with a very high probability--entail engaging in X-relevant behaviors in X-relevant conditions where 'X-relevant behaviors' are extrinsic, end-result actions. Other factors, (3) claims, issue into the end-result action.

Character traits, (1) and (3) agree, are not the whole story. But (3) can claim that "robust character traits," or virtues, are nonetheless descriptively accurate because when one has virtue X, X reliably plays a significant part in the psychological story leading to action. So the difference between (1) and (3) is either (a) a difference in psychological interpretation, or (b) a difference in what is considered 'behavior'. The difference in psychological interpretation would be in the psychological role of a virtue. For (3), a single virtue's place in the psychological story would be systemic in that it is one important element in a system which ultimately acts as a whole. The difference in what counts as behavior turns on whether we include both external and internal behavior. In other words, (1) might say that only external, observable behavior relevantly counts as behavior, whereas (3) says that a virtue's internal behavior can count. So it is not particularly important whether we retain the language of virtue, or move to language of traits. But the distinction, however it is to be drawn, proves useful because it draws an important line between traits that have reached some threshold of robustness, and traits which are unreliably active.

Doris's conditional gives us another reason to consider (3) closely. It is easy to talk abstractly about trait-relevancy, and there are certainly examples of trait-relevant conditions and behaviors that seem clear and indisputable, but there

is scarcely an example which really admits of such clarity. It is this problem of relevancy that plays a strong role in virtue application. The result is that defining virtue in terms of trait-relevant behaviors and situations is meaningless without some account of what makes a behavior or situation trait-relevant. Otherwise we are left with behaviors that may or may not be indications of a trait in situations which may or may not be relevant to that trait. Where one sees a situation as courage-relevant, another might see it as care-relevant. If the subject's behavior is seemingly courageous, one will see deviant behavior where another sees virtuous behavior. Theoretically, once we have such an account, we can assess an act as virtuous depending on whether the relevant virtue was enacted to the situation. No such account, however, comes easy. And it is the question of relevancy that makes other factors essential. Should one be caring, and tell a friend what he wants to hear, or courageous and say the truth? There is no general answer to these questions as they will turn on subtle contextual differences.

In the above example we appear to have two virtues that yield conflicting courses of conduct. One can behave either primarily out of care or courage, but not both. Previously, I have presented the conflict between loyalty and honesty as well, since there are many situations where being loyal entails lying (being dishonest). In these scenarios, an agent with both virtues will be conflicted until she decides which virtue is more relevant to the context. She might consider the explicitness of the lie versus the type of relationship she has with the person (how much loyalty is warranted). She might categorize more finely the type of lie her

loyalty is requesting (i.e. a white lie, a manipulative lie, a protective lie, etc.). She will then examine her loyalties, and ultimately balance these factors to determine which virtue is most relevant to the situation.[8] This process is decidedly cognitive, but other psychological factors should not be ignored.

So how might we accommodate the situationist's claim that virtues do not reliably determine external behavior? Let's quickly consider the possibilities. First, we might grant that that virtues do not really exist, that character traits are no where near robust enough to meet the conditions for virtue. This would amount to a fundamental change to how we understand others and morality. To warrant such a fundamental change, then, the evidence should be compelling. However, the research in question is restricted almost exclusively to single-case scenarios. As it is argued, single-case studies do not offer very clear evidence either way.[9]

Imagine similar studies were done on academic ability. A study of a group of subjects taking a single test would reveal a wide range of results. And interesting results might result from a study in which half of the subjects were given an insignificant but surprising piece of information prior to taking the test.

---

[8] Using language like "decide, ""examine" and "apply" is a little misleading, though. One benefit of virtue theoryis that it allows that much of this process goes on in the background. These can be almost immediate reactions of character and personality, and so they should be. In common scenarios decisions can exhibit this immediacy. Nonetheless, more complex scenarios demand that virtuous agents examine consciously their intuitive weights on virtues. So while these three words generally suggest that they are done consciously, this is not necessarily the case.

[9] For examples see Doris's own discussion of some skepticism about the relationship between single-case studies and trait-relevant behavioral regularity. (Doris, John M. Lack of Character. Cambridge UP: 2002. Page 72-3.) See also Sreenivasan on why failing to act on a particular virtue in a particular case does not contra-indicate the virtue in the person. (Sreenivasan, Gopal. *Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution.* Mind. January 2002,Vol. 11. P. 53-62)

Such a study, however, would hardly seriously question *academic ability*. On a long-range study significant tendencies would emerge despite single-case aberrations. Aggregative studies of personality have shown such tendencies and Doris, perhaps the strongest proponent of situationalism and the lack of virtue, accepts this: "Let it be granted that aggregation reveals some determinative role for personality and behavior--the situationalist does not claim otherwise--but it must also be granted, given the problem of the particular, that this role is rather weaker than either characterological moral psychology or . . . everyday thinking on personality leads one to expect."[10] Reconciling the particular with the tendency should not undermine one or the other. To suppose, however, that virtues simply do not exist is to ignore the tendency in favor of the particular. Of course, this is not enough to show that virtue should not be abolished. But it does point in the direction of a more subtle solution.

Secondly, there is the possibility that virtues are much more specific than commonly thought. It might be wrong to categorize virtues in general terms, such as care, courage, honesty, etc.. Rather, it might be necessary to categorize them more specifically, such as familial care, community care, political care, military courage, insect courage, arachnid courage, etc.. Doris has a similar concept—

[10] Doris, John. Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior. Cambridge UP. 2002. P. 75

local traits.[11] This possibility might be accurate on its own terms, but it is not enough to account for either the tendency or the particular case. Studies designed in very particular situations show little uniformity and with significant correlations to insignificant external factors. Specificity of virtue cannot explain away these particular deviations from a relevant virtue since they are themselves very specific and still show deviations. Moreover, there can still be long-term tendencies for a general virtue to a high probability. Studying long-term tendencies in single individuals is difficult, and the evidence is sparse to non-existent. Specificity of virtue might, nonetheless, be useful for more specific and subtle character assessments, as it is possible, at least for a great number of virtues to indicate one 'sub-virtue' but not another. For example, to be courageous in the military but not at sea. But that is not to make general virtues illegitimate. There may merely be a broader category of virtue which one can have entirely or only in subtypes. A subtype, or 'sub-virtue', is a specific form of a general virtue. For

[11] Doris, John M. Lack of Character. Cambridge UP: 2002. P. 115, 62-5. Doris argues that one adequate explanation for situational variability is to define traits more *locally* (or, specifically). For Doris, these local traits are situationally defined: "This discourse would be revisionist, replacing general attributions like "compassion" and "courageous" with local attributions like "dime-finding-dropped-paper compassionate" and "sailing-in-rough-weather-with-one's-friends courageous." (P. 115). As Doris notes, this kind of discourse will become "unwieldy." It is also not very explanatory. It is not necessary, however, to move to unwieldy attributions. When we say someone is a loyal friend despite being a disloyal husband, we should not think that we are attributing two different traits (husband-disloyalty and friend-loyalty), although these descriptions may be used behaviorally when real explanations are the issue. There is more subtlety and complexity than just greater specificity. For instance, an astute friend could point out that while he is generally loyal, he does not apply this trait to his wife because he has a deeply engrained disrespect for women due to his relationship with his mother. Thus, behaviorally, he has the local trait without the global trait (or the sub-virtue, but not the virtue), but psychologically, he might have the global trait, but it is not applied to some situations due to other psychological factors. While these inconsistencies must certainly be accounted for in any virtue theory, the explanation should not merely be in a switch to local trait discourse, but--what we will see in the next option--a recognition that there are additional factors to behavior. No one should expect a loyal person to always be loyal, and for 100% cross-situational consistency. Sometimes *actually more important factors* will trump a virtue. Sometimes the more important factor is another virtue.

example, on the general level there is *courage*. Sub-virtues of courage might be *military courage, social courage,* etc.. Another virtue on the general level is honesty. Sub-virtues of honesty might be epistemic honesty (stating what one takes to be true of the world), emotional honesty (expressing one's internal emotions accurately), pertinent honesty (volunteering information one recognizes as pertinent), or personal honesty (being honest to oneself).

While it is possible to have only sub-virtues of a general virtue (i.e. social courage, pertinent honesty and familial care), it is also possible to have full virtues. Categorizing virtues as types and sub-types allows for more subtle character assessments, but sub-types do not in any way oppose the general type. Sometimes it makes sense to say that a person is "militarily courageous, but does not exhibit courage elsewhere," whereas at other times it makes sense to say that a person "is courageous, but does not exhibit this virtue at sea." The former states that the person has a sub-virtue, but does not at all have the general virtue. The latter says that the person has the general virtue despite lacking one of its sub-virtues. Having a general virtue does not necessarily entail having every one of its sub-virtues. Rather, it entails meeting a threshold requirement where behavior deviating from virtue-relevant behavior is aberrational. So the language of sub-virtues should supplement, not supplant, the language of general virtues.

Finally, there is the possibility that virtues are context sensitive. There could be many factors leading to the application of a virtue. This would respect the difficulty of trait-relevant conditions discussed earlier. Outside of very simple

theoretical examples, situations are relevant to more than one virtue and the expressions of these virtues might conflict. It is also often unclear which virtues are relevant to a situation. The context sensitivity of virtues would explain the particular evidence against virtue since contextual factors will affect which virtues, if any, a person applies to a situation. Seemingly insignificant factors might alter the context enough to silence one virtue or inflate another. It also respects long-term tendencies. For any virtue X, an agent will apply X to situations he/she *considers, or sees as* X-relevant, which will result in the long-term tendency outsiders will observe. Where X is then not applied to a seemingly relevant context, we issue other explanations. We might say "he is generally honest--we've seen that--but I think he was just trying to be loyal to his friend."

This explanation, as suggested earlier, does not amount to a rejection or reduction of virtue because it still allows that the virtue was active. In this way, it respects the difference between the dishonest man who lied because he has no concern for being honest and the man who lied because loyalty seemed more important. The latter person, it is reasonable to suppose, struggled with his dishonesty. If it is important to be descriptively accurate, then we should accept these differences even if they do not change our ethical assessments (both were, after all, dishonest, and if the results are both negative the consequentialists in many of us will be concerned with those results). Notice that this explanation has the power to explain attributions of sub-virtues rather than full virtues. By accounting for factors which may lead to behaviors inconsistent with a full virtue,

it can explain the behavior of evincing only sub-virtues. These other factors will certainly have some regularity. A disrespect or contempt towards women will lead to behaviors of disloyalty towards women. Again, I should stress that this does not undermine the possibility that some general virtues are in fact invented categories of a group of more specific virtues. This, however, is a separate issue that would require a case-by-case analysis. The point here is that for any virtue, or even sub-virtue, aberrations in behavior will be found, and this requires us to look at how virtues are applied.

2.2. Moral Virtue: Not the Whole Story

So what are these factors affecting our behaviors besides moral virtue? There are many, but let's consider the most pervasive. Most of these are common in everyday explanations of behavior. These include: (1) intellect, (2) emotion, (3) other psychological factors (associations, memories, other proclivities), and (4) context. This list is not exhaustive. Other factors might be said to include ideology, upbringing, culture, mental or physical discomfort etc.. Some of these could fall under (3), but others certainly do not. These, however, do not have the strong effect seen in (1)-(4). Ultimately, our focus will be (1), since, as I will argue, it can subsume or reject much of the others. The important element of (1) for these purposes is *intellectual virtue*. More on this later, but the reasons for concentrating on (1), particularly intellectual virtue, should be mentioned.

It can be seen from the four factors listed that two of them, (2) and (3),

are, prescriptively, non-moral factors that should be quelled. They rarely represent appropriate reasons for a moral decision. Some of these are readily apparent. To illustrate: Anger is not a good enough reason for violence. Associating a facial resemblance to an abusive step-father is not a good enough reason to warrant rudeness. One rightly expects such responses to be checked and controlled. Intellectual virtues are ways to help cope with these irrelevant, undue factors. Further, the difficulty of determining (4)--context--is an intellectual process that involves intellectual character. A moral scenario is constituted by objective features of the actual situation. Acquiring knowledge, or an accurate representation of this situation to determine its relevant contextual features, is epistemic. Intellectual virtue is the best theoretical tool we have to account for this epistemic process. These roles of intellectual virtues to check and control emotions, and assessing a situation, provide good reasons for ethical theory to incorporate intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtue describes a similar psychology as moral virtue and is well equipped to handle irrational factors in need of intellectual control.

There are nuances here, though, to be explored more fully later. At this point I mean only to point to some reasons for considering (1) closely. First, we should look briefly at (2) and (3). Their similarities, for our present purposes, are more important than the differences. They represent different psychological elements, but they operate in the same place in the theoretical structure. They both affect an agent's behavior, but are not themselves normative reasons for

action. They both complicate moral prescriptions and point to an intellectual role beyond practical reason or decision theory alone. So the following discussion of emotion follows structurally for (3), other psychological factors, with only minor differences specific to the factor itself.

Nearly everyone has experienced the power of an emotion to incite otherwise uncharacteristic behavior. In the extreme cases, the effects are clear. We say "I just lost control," or "I really can't believe I did that." It could be as a result of a bad breakup, unacceptable actions of a friend or just someone 'working your last nerve'. It could be a result of a string of singly less striking events: You could be in a rush to a job interview because you woke up late and your roommate was using the bathroom. In your now frantic state of mind, you forget where you left your keys. Then, having already left late, you get a flat tire, and when no one stops to help, you lash out at an innocent bystander. There is no shortage of such examples. Nonetheless, in most cases we do not retract our assessments of ourselves or others based on them. Instead, we might say "It was understandable."

Now in these more extreme cases, these aberrant effects are clear. But even more importantly, they show the way in which the emotions can fundamentally change one's thinking--a change which occurs in everyday decisions as well, albeit more subtly. In other words, it is not that rational decision making continues lucidly while a powerful emotion acts separately to sway one's behavior. Rather, at the time of action, the action often seems

reasonable. It might be that, as someone 'works your last nerve', you reason that that person deserves your response. It might be that as you lash out at an innocent bystander you recognize he/she does not deserve it, but that it is nonetheless worth it to eject your frustration. The moral implication, here, is that emotional intelligence[12] can play an important role. In the language of virtues, we might use *introspective astuteness* to describe the ability and tendency to identify and thus prevent the undue force of emotional responses. Introspective astuteness is the intellectual counterpart to self-control. It includes the intellectual capacity to observe, parse and understand one's own psychological forces and structures so one can control them effectively. This intellectual virtue, together with self-control and temperance, are central in the family of virtues related to retaining clarity and character despite emotional or otherwise undue psychological forces.

The extremes of emotional response, while illustrative, are again not the end of the story. They are not even the most significant part of the story. Far weaker emotional responses also have an immediate impact on moral action in the same way, but to a lesser degree than the previous examples. Again, these factors are largely known intuitively. Anger or frustration tends to lead to rash decisions. Preoccupied worry or stress can often result in apathy. Mere differences in mood can alter the degree to which we evince compassion. These various emotional states act to change the way we think and the very things we consider. For

[12] *Emotional intelligence* is a psychological term that, in general terms, describes the ability to identify one's emotions, assess them and even understand their psychological origins. In this way, it it similar to introspective ability, but applies specifically to emotions. So I use this term only with its basic definition. I am not concerned with dispute in psychology about how to characterize it.

instance, frustration and stress can spur one to ignore a person in need. These observations about emotions should compel us to expect some aberrational behavior in even the most virtuous people. In other words, virtue theory should not imply or claim that an actually possible virtuous agent will be immune to these basic emotional forces. Nonetheless, these forces lie largely outside the theoretical scope of virtue theory. So while they (i.e. the emotional factors) should be recognized so as to not lead the theorist to expect impossible results, we should accept that some factors of moral behavior will necessarily lie outside the scope of the theory itself.

With that said, virtues are still not totally disconnected from emotions. Virtues are meant (as we have especially seen with the family of virtues around self-control and introspective astuteness) to incite the right kind of emotional reaction. This connection does not conflict with the observation that emotions have an effect outside of the scope of virtue. Some emotions are non-virtuous. They may be too deeply biological (i.e. sexual desire) or too universal (i.e. frustration, anger or love) to attribute to a virtuous or vicious cause. One way to encapsulate the (sometimes) loose relation between virtue and emotion is to say that virtues incite emotions, but sometimes emotions are caused by non-virtuous factors. One element of care or compassion is that the caring person *will* consider, in care-relevant situations, a person in need. There are limits, however, to the power of moral virtue in itself. There is a sufficiently horrendous ordeal when even the most caring individual will ignore the needy because stress or

frustration overpowers the caring emotions. There is a sufficiently fearful situation for even the most courageous individual where the danger is so imminent that fear overpowers courage. The important question to ask is when such factors are really sufficient to turn an otherwise courage-relevant situation into a fear-relevant situation. Variations in trait-relevant behavior resulting from emotional factors does not undermine the concept of virtue, but demands a more subtle analysis of what makes an X-relevant situation. It also demands a conceptual apparatus to account for one's control over these factors--namely, the family of virtues related to self-control and introspective astuteness.

2.3. Deviations from Virtue

Consider the study presented at the beginning of this chapter. (One group of pay-phone users found a dime in the phone's coin return slot. Another group did not. Isen and Levin found a significant correlation between those who found a dime and those who helped Alice, an actor in the study who had dropped papers along the caller's path.) There is, of course, the obvious explanation: Some virtues are rare and perhaps none, or very few, of the participants had them. So their moods determined their behavior for lack of *their* virtue. This explanation is offered by Doris, but then rejected because the degree of compassion required to help Alice was so low. But there is an important observation lacking here. The degree of compassion required to help Alice was low in this scenario because the amount of effort to help was low. The amount of effort required to help was

exactly the same as the amount of effort it would take for Alice to clean up her own mess. That does not mean one should be apathetic. Rather, it means that the amount of perceived embarrassment for Alice was arguably more significant than the amount of help the participant would provide to her. The default care-related behavior, at least in North American societies, in situations such as this is to ignore. It is no less compassionate. Nonetheless, the significant correlation still holds between those who found the dime and those who helped.

So the question should be *why did those people help*, as opposed to *why did the others not help*. There are any number of possibilities here. Many people have the intuitive belief that when one gets something good, one should give something good. Being in a good mood can lead one to ignore considerations of another person's bad mood, or embarrassment. Either way, the broader question here is *how can seemingly insignificant events alter behavior so significantly*?

Insignificant events and weak emotional responses can alter virtue-relevant behavior so significantly partly because they can go undetected. It is easy to recognize and balance stronger emotional responses to significant events because they are easily detected and measured. Slight discomfort, the presence of foul scents, or even one's own cleanliness might provoke deviations in exhibiting a virtuous behavior because a person is not aware of their effects.[13] When trait-

[13] Various psychological studies have taken interest in these subliminal effects. Studies here suggest that stimuli can have a profound impact on moral behavior and judgment despite an individual's being unaware of a stimulus's effect. I argue that one's lack of awareness means that an agent cannot balance or reject the effect, which increases its impact relative to more obvious influences. For some research into this, see:
Schnall, Simone., Benton, Jennifer., Harvey, Sophie. *With a Clean Conscience: Cleanliness Reduces the Severity of Moral Judgments.* Psychological Science. December 2008. Vol. 19., Iss. 12. Pp. 1219-1222.,

relevant behavior varies around a researcher's control of odor, for instance, the subject might not recognize the odor as a behavior altering factor. As a result, he does not reject this factor. That does not undermine virtue theory. Rather, it demands more virtue, and an account of the relations between these virtues. Namely, as I shall argue, it demands intellectual virtues like *introspective astuteness*. The emotional factor, and its sometimes profound affects, means we must account for the application of virtue and how it can go awry in otherwise virtuous agents.

So the dime study suggests that insignificant changes in a subject can have a significant effect on the subjects' behavior. But it does not plausibly suggest, as Doris claims, a lack of virtue. Helping Alice is not obviously the compassionate behavior. It is at least equally arguable that ignoring Alice is the compassionate behavior. Isen and Levin's study should be interpreted merely as showing that some insignificant emotional changes can have significant behavioral effects in highly ambiguous situations. My suggestion is that this does not weaken moral virtue, but begins to show the role of intellectual virtue. This suggestion is further supported by Clark and Wood's study (1974). On this study (and others), Nichols writes:

> For it turns out that if subjects perceive unambiguously serious distress cues

Schnall, Simone., Jonathan, Haidt., Clore, Gerald., Jordan, Alexander. *Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment.* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin . August 2008. Vol. 34, No. 8. Pp. 1096-1109.,
Baron, Robert. *Olfaction and Human Social Behavior: Effects of Pleasant Scents on Physical Aggression.* Basic and Applied Social Psychology . June 1980. Vol. 1., Iss. 2. Pp. 163-172.,
North, Adrian., Tarrant, Mark., Hargreaves, David. *The Effects of Music on Helping Behavior*. Environment and Behavior. 2003. Vol. 36., No. 2. Pp. 266-275.,
Li, W., Moallem, I., Paller, K.A., Gottfried, J.A.. *Subliminal Smells Can Guide Social Preferences* . Psychological Science . December 2007. Vol. 18., Iss. 12. Pp. 1044-9

> and there are no bystanders, virtually everyone helps. For instance, in one study, Clark and Wood had each subject engage in a distracter task and as the subject left the experiment, he passed a room in which a man (the experimenter's accomplice) made a sharp cry of pain and then feigned unconsciousness apparently as a result of being shocked by an electric probe. The researchers found that when the accomplice was no longer touching any of the electronic equipment, all of the subjects offered help. And even when the accomplice was still touching electronic equipment (thus presenting potential danger to the helper), over 90 percent of the subjects offered help. [14]

Doris uses Isen and Levin's study to suggest that moral virtues are too contingent to be considered virtues. His treatment of these types of studies at least begs us to question the prevalence of virtue in actual agents. Clark and Word's study, however, suggests that the same virtues are extremely prevalent--found in 100 or 90 percent of subjects. Thus, the problem cannot plausibly be attributed to moral virtue itself. The difference between these two studies is in the ambiguity of the situation, not the relevant moral virtues. A plausible explanation, then, is that the higher degree of ambiguity results in a greater role of other, non-moral factors. One of these factors, I have suggested, is the intellect. As the ambiguity of the situation increases, a greater degree of intellect is required to detect virtue-relevant factors. In Isen and Levin's study, the degree of ambiguity is so great that it is hardly clear when analyzing it from a far distance. It is I think an open question whether helping Alice was really the compassionate act. These studies together, then, further suggest the role of intellectual virtue in moral affairs, rather

---

[14] Nichols, Shaun. Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment . Oxford UP. 2004. P. 34-35

than the discrediting of virtue altogether.

I have been referring to a family of virtues partly constituted by self-control, introspective astuteness, temperance. This family, by including both intellectual and moral virtues, anticipates my central claim that intellectual virtues are essential to a thorough virtue theory. It also suggests that self-knowledge is helpful for moral actions. It may seem that virtues of self-control, or especially introspective astuteness (I-A), are closely linked to knowledge of self. While a certain degree of self-knowledge is necessary for any worthwhile use of I-A, it is not unqualifiedly helpful. Nietzsche famously argued against self-knowledge as a virtue, and instead argued for self-becoming. Self-knowledge can be detrimental by preventing this *becoming*. Nietzsche also argued against the very coherency of self-knowledge, since it is necessarily fragmented and mediated by the very self one is attempting to know.

The relevant concession here is that self-knowledge is not always worthwhile. It can indeed self-propagate undesirable qualities. David Velleman provides a useful example of this self-propagation from Lecky's *Self-Consistency:*

> Let us take the case of an intelligent student who is deficient, say, in spelling. In almost every instance poor spellers have been tutored and practiced in spelling over long periods without improvement. For some reason such a student has a special handicap in learning how to spell, though not in learning the other subjects which are considered more difficult. This deficiency is not due to a lack of ability, but rather to an active resistance which prevents him from learning how to spell in spite of the extra instruction. The resistance arises from the fact that at some time in the past the suggestion that he is a poor speller was accepted and incorporated into

> his definition of himself, and is now an integral part of his total personality. . . That is, he must endeavor to behave in a manner consistent with his conception of himself. [15]

As Velleman correctly recognizes, Lecky's observation is overstated. All deficiencies in the ability to spell, or anything similar to it, cannot be attributed merely to one's initial self-knowledge. But Lecky's exaggeration should not deter us from extracting the accuracy of the observation that self-knowledge can lead to an unnecessary continuance of undesirable traits. However, recognizing that one's self-knowledge of X is capable of propagating X is itself self-knowledge that can mitigate the effect.

Further, some degree of (fragmented) knowledge about one's emotions and proclivities is necessary for I-A and improvement. It allows one to recognize more readily when one is acting against one's "better judgment" because of circumstantial emotional reactions. It is also necessary to improve virtuously. (Fragmented) knowledge of how one is presently constituted means that one can be aware of important and lacking virtues. The virtue of I-A encapsulates these considerations of self -knowledge and -becoming. It includes the ability to recognize when self-knowledge is, or would be, merely self-propagating. For instance, I-A includes the ability to see when knowledge that "I am an angry, stressed out person" leads one to become more angry and stressed out. In still other words, I-A manifests the ability to see when self-knowledge is a hinderance

---

[15] For Lecky's case see: Lecky, Prescott. Self-Consistency: A Theory of Personality. Island Press: NY. 1945. P. 103-4. For Velleman's discussion of Lecky's case see: Velleman, David. *From Self Psychology to Moral Philosophy.* Philosophical Perspectives. October 2000. Vol. 14. P. 350.

to self-becoming.

Before we delve too deeply into issues of intellectual virtue, which is the topic of a later section, let's quickly consider factor (3)--other psychological factors (associations, memories and other proclivities). We must again offer a limited concession to (3)--that it is a significant factor for moral behavior. But (3) also demands the inclusion of intellectual virtues into moral virtue theory because intellectual virtues can normatively account for (3). Towards the beginning of this section I noted that (3) and (2) are structurally similar. That is, they both function in moral thinking in broadly the same manner, in that they can fundamentally alter the shape of moral thinking, and they have the same normative implications. Because of these relevant similarities, little is left to be said of importance about (3). Psychological factors other than intellect and virtues have a profound impact on the shape of moral thinking—which kinds of things are considered first, which things are immediately perceived as repulsive, attractive, comfortable, etc.. So only a few specifics about (3) are left. Mainly, I find it revealing to consider *bias* and *immediately considered responses* in relation to these basic psychological factors.

Under (3), we consider psychological factors such as associations, memories, proclivities, etc.. These factors are distinguished by being primarily environmental. They are largely determined by a person's history and are constituted largely by its effects—which kinds of faces are associated with which characteristics, which types of situations are comfortable, which types of habits

one has picked up, and so on. While, as I have stressed, they bear a strong structural similarity to emotion in terms of their place in moral thinking normatively and descriptively, they are especially important to a person's biases. It is no secret that memories of poverty correlates strongly with support for social programs or that Former President George W. Bush has had a negative impact on people's associations with the republican party. In short, it is hardly a secret that our experiences partly shape what we care about, our associations and our prima facie attitudes towards many things. Again, these common observations are important descriptively so that our normative account of virtue can adequately handle them.

Two important observations are the ability for these psychological factors to shape biases and immediately considered responses. And both of these are directly related to the intellect. Bias is explicitly intellectual. One has a bias when one has an immediate positive or negative response to a possibility. *Immediately considered responses* are less obviously intellectual, but as we begin to look at intellectual virtue rather than traditional intellect, we will see their importance in all intellectual thinking, but especially morally based thinking.

The significance of biases and immediately considered responses lies partly in that they usually occur prior to conscious considerations. Being primarily prior to consciousness in the process of decision making, they (1) can effect the process without detection, and, therefore, conscious balancing and (2) determine an action in imminent or stressful scenarios where one does not have the

opportunity to 'think things through'. Because of their non-conscious import, an account of moral thinking cannot easily account for them. Theories of practical reason so often neglect non-conscious factors by relying too heavily on the conscious mental process of weighing relevant factors. As philosophers, our desire for systematic solutions can lead us to neglect non-conscious factors which elude systematic accounts. The non-conscious does not, in the relevant sense of the word, heed to rules and directives in the way that the conscious does. Virtues have the capacity to account for non-conscious factors, however. The non-conscious side of decision making must be trained and constructed in such a way as to lead to positive results. This kind of training and self-creation gives virtue a significant advantage in handling these factors. Cultivating virtues is partly, even largely, beneficial due to their ability to provide agents with proper immediate responses--responses being either an immediate action or a thought-procedure.

2.4. Intellectual, More Virtue

I argue then that by accounting for intellectual procedures in moral theory we are on our way to conditions for an ethical act that are both descriptively realistic and prescriptively useful. The preceding forays into (folk) psychology—psychological factors of emotion, associations, etc.—suggest that "intellect," for the purposes of moral theory, should be based on virtue rather than more traditional conceptions of intellect such as IQ or academic performance. Some of the most significant intellectual requirements for moral decisions are not the same

as those requirements for academic work, IQ tests, memorization, or even creativity. The requirements, while plainly in the sphere of the intellect, are strongly related to emotional intelligence, self-knowledge, understanding, how-to knowledge, and general mental awareness. These intellectual skills might have correlations with more traditional conceptions of intelligence, but in the interest of descriptive accuracy and (to what generally follows) prescriptive usefulness, we should begin with virtue, base moral theory on these virtues, and later consider any potential relationships to traditional epistemology and practical reason.

Contemporary epistemology has progressed (mainly from the reliabilist tradition, but also explicitly borrowing from virtue ethics) into the use of virtues in a group of virtue epistemological theories. While this literature is useful here in some particular ways, simply melding virtue epistemology and virtue ethics is not the best route here. Virtue epistemology is still (rightly) aimed at establishing conditions for knowledge-that. Assessing knowledge-that claims is of course not the only, or even primary, aim of the intellect in moral theory. And while borrowing from Aristotelian virtue theory might seem like a natural strategy to supplement moral virtue theory with intellectual virtue, theories such as Zagzebski's make the mistake of trying to base a virtue epistemology upon virtue ethics. It is my conviction, though it cannot and need not be argued here, that ethics has more to learn from epistemology than vice versa. [16]

[16] One might ask, for instance, why virtue epistemology has not been met with the same criticisms and skepticism as moral virtue. Intellectual virtues are not as vulnerable to situationalist-type attacks. One reason is that intellectual virtues in virtue epistemology do not have defined targets, unlike moral virtues in virtue theory. Intellectual virtues describe *ways of thinking* or *processes* which are consistently applied, but do not have defined targets for application. The primary target is knowledge or understanding, but this target is shared by all

Primarily, however, the role of the intellect in moral theory cannot be focally concerned with knowledge conditions or assessments, but rather intellectual skills and procedures for navigating through real-life scenarios. And while *knowledge-that* is certainly one part, we need to look more closely at intellectual virtues as ways in which people can think, analyze and otherwise navigate around murky moral scenarios that do not yield to our desire for accessible objective fact of the best results, and can allow for complex morally significant relationships such as, what Garcia calls, role-relationships.[17] Nonetheless, because virtue epistemology wisely incorporates and analyzes intellectual virtues and common intellectual processes, it is of some use to the moral theorist. Intellectual virtues and procedures which reliably acquire knowledge are certainly some of the same intellectual virtues and procedures necessary to reliably do the right action. And an agent is surely at a severe disadvantage if his that-beliefs are untrue. Good thinking is only one part of the battle. It is hardly beneficial if one's virtuous thinking is using incorrect

---

intellectual virtues. Another important reason, from which moral virtue theory might learn, is that virtue epistemology has worked to ground, or naturalize epistemic virtues. One significant example of this is Alvin Goldman's work on epistemic virtues and *concepts* in psychology. If this paper were longer, it might be possible to show how intellectual virtues, and even virtue acquisition generally, can be grounded in the basic psychological process of categorization by relating this research to an intellectual process similar to *phronesis*. For more on this see:
Goldman, Alvin. *Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology.* Liaisons. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA. 1992. P. 155-75
And for a Wittgensteinian-type view on concepts in psychology see Eleanor Rosch's studies:
Rosch, E., & Mervis, C. B. (1975). *Family resemblances: Studies in the internal structure of categories.* Cognitive Psychology, 7, 573-605.

[17] See Garcia, J.L.A. "Practical Reason and Its Virtues." *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski. Oxford UP, 2003. Garcia argues in this paper that virtues are sensitive to roles such as friend, patient, citizen, spouse, parent, etc.. One virtue-relevant feature of a situation is an agent's role within it.

information. With that said, the intellectual role in morality thus far discussed shows us that the role of the intellect in moral thinking (and thinking generally) incorporates a wider range, and a more nuanced use, of intellectual virtues. In other words: for moral thinking, virtues cannot be treated as being similar to reliable processes. Some virtues are foundational or fundamental in that they are not *used* in one or another situation, but are rather fundamentally active within a person's psychology. This feature of virtue is at the same time its descriptive advantage and theoretical liability. It is a liability because it eludes strict conditions. It is a descriptive advantage because it prescribes only small, specific departures from one's actual thinking, rather than fundamentally different thought procedures. As Doris has advanced: prescriptive ethics should be based on an accurate descriptive picture. Otherwise an ethical theory is merely an exercise in theoretical exhibition.

So with these reasons for preferring virtues as the intellectual component of ethics, we should move on to discuss the intellectual basis for morality. Some questions should direct our discussion: Can one be good and stupid? What kind of intelligence is required for good action? Does our use of intellectual virtue favor an objectivist, subjectivist or prospectivist view of right action? And, correspondingly, can one evince all the right virtues and commit an act with less-than-the-best results? Some implications of these answers might be counter-intuitive or counter-traditional literature. For example, one potential implication is that the right action will be divorced from the best action, and some will find

this unacceptable. But I do not think we should shy from such implications. I consider them to be beneficial results of a more realistic, pluralist theory.

Consider first the popular situationalist's example of the "good Samaritan." Later we will look at the study that made the good samaritan a popular example, but for now let's consider the moral conundrum in a slightly different scenario. Imagine you (as you surely have done) are driving down a sparsely populated road when you pass a car on the side of the road. A man has seemingly blown a tire and looks rather helpless. It is likely that you can help this man. You have a cell phone and a spare tire with tools in the trunk of your car. However, it is dusk and you are in an unfamiliar area. Most people would immediately feel inclined to offer help to this man, but you imagine a number of ensuing scenarios: The man could be dangerous and using stuck-on-the-side-of-the-road theatrics to lure you into his plan to steal your worldly possessions, or worse. You could be stuck helping him for hours, thereby neglecting whatever engagement you had planned. Or, more optimistically, you could help the man out and you could both go on your merry ways.

There is no clear manner in which to decide which possibility applies to this particular case. It would be inappropriate to assign probabilities to each possibility and weigh them against their respective outcomes. From where would one get such probabilities, anyway? Moreover, your necessarily fleeting observation of the man does not offer any clear indication. But you must decide fast. This case mirrors the more common example of a pedestrian in need, but

more focally presents the time constraints in which moral decisions operate. Let's call this case the roadway samaritan case.

Strictly in terms of moral virtue, the action you take is not the most pertinent piece. In this case we can see the intersection of many factors. The *compassionate* individual will have the immediate inclination to help this man. If that same compassionate person is also paranoid, he might continue down the road. Or if that compassionate person is in a terrible rush, he also might speed away. One might even argue that helping this man is simply not worth the risk. Despite these factors (which we have already considered), there are certainly good and bad ways to think about the situation. How you reach your decision will partly determine how you are judged by others, or yourself later in the day. If your paranoia leads you to *assume* the man is dangerous, you are thinking viciously. You are prematurely reaching a conclusion, and thinking without enough deliberation. If your haste leads you to shun your compassionate response almost as quickly as it came because you think your dinner party engagement is more important than this man's needs, you are thinking viciously. You are thinking with bias and without impartiality. This much seems clear.

Note that it is not necessary to use compassion here to achieve the same structure and problem. We could also construct a case, for instance, in which it is not immediately clear that S should be express honesty (but instead perhaps loyalty), and by being honest S gets what S wants. In such a case, an important question would be whether S decided to be honest out of bias or because it was

the appropriate virtue. The moral virtues are one important part of the explanatory story, but cannot alone fully describe or judge the act in question. It is not enough to attribute an act to a moral virtue for that act to be considered *the moral act*. Nor is the moral virtue enough to claim the person acted virtuously full stop.

Two points arise from these cases. The first is that the intellect plays an important role in determining (a) what an agent will do, and (b) whether the agent's act was right or virtuous. The complex of virtues involved, both intellectual and moral, must be considered rather than merely determining whether an act was caused by a single virtue. The second point arises from the necessary consideration of this complex. Moral and intellectual virtues are wound too closely together to be understood separately. If S behaved honestly due to a personal bias, S's honesty is surely compromised. But even further, S's biased thinking would be attributable partly to a moral vice: selfishness, or lack of altruism. Garcia makes a very similar point when he writes ""If practical wisdom is internal to moral virtue, it appears, then so too many moral virtues are internal to practical wisdom, and thus to intellectual virtue and practical rationality themselves. *The two may well be locked in such a conceptual embrace that neither can adequately be understood save through the other."*[18] In a later section we will look at relations between specific moral and intellectual virtues, and what these relations tell us about their theoretical embrace.

---

[18] Garcia, J.L.A. "Practical Reason and Its Virtues." *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski. Oxford UP, 2003. 90.

Chapter 3. Virtue Contextualism

3.1. Moral Contexts

Moral contexts are made up of virtue-salient features. Where there is danger, there is courage. Where one stands to gain from lying, there is honesty. Where there is suffering, there is care. Where there are friends in need, there is loyalty. Where there are commitments, there is responsibility. Where there is temptation, there is integrity. And the list goes on. These are mere generalities, but they serve to present the point: Virtues are relevant to some features of moral situations. The features of any situation collectively constitute what we can call *the moral context*. A quick and simple example: Your friend and roommate's car breaks down as he is leaving for an important interview. He'll be late, or you can give him a ride. The context can be described generally as: your friend is in unexpectedly dire straights and you are the best solution to his problem. The relevant virtues include loyalty and care. Barring exceptional circumstances, it would be good for you to provide your friend with a ride. This is easy, but the difficulties come with more complex, unusual situations.

More problematic situations are those with features relevant to a plurality of virtues—that is, virtues which would dispose one to incompatible actions. For a preliminary example consider common scenarios in which a consistently self-sabotaging friend is in need (yet again). The virtuous (loyal and caring) agent may want to help, but many other also virtuous agents (caring and courageous), may want to tell him he is on his own. For one individual, one virtue is more

relevant to the situation than another, conflicting, virtue. Also consider how some non- or less- religious people often view some of the more religious parents in North America. Especially in the American south, some very religious parents choose to home-school their children to give them a "religious education." They seem to believe that the public education system, and their children's potential peers, will have a negative impact on their child's morality or upbringing. However, other people often criticize these parents and view them as indoctrinating their children into an uneducated, unscientific, religious life. So here, the religious parents and the critic represent the same situation significantly differently. As a result, while they may agree on the relevant virtues (care and responsibility for one's kin), those virtues point to vastly different actions.

This example shows that recognizing the relevant virtues is not always enough. One must represent the situation appropriately to apply those virtues. Of course, what counts as an appropriate representation is not always clear. As this example illustrates, a representation of a moral situation can be determined partly by a fundamental world view—here, religious belief. This often makes it difficult to assess another person's behavior as either right or wrong. However, rather than this being a problem for this view, it accurately represents real-world issues with moral judgment. This view, as we will see further later, distinguishes between moral and intellectual failings. Together, these two examples illustrate the two primary intellectual roles in behaving virtuously: (1) representing a situation accurately and appropriately, and (2) recognizing the virtue-salient

features of a situation. Assigning conditions for getting (1) and (2) right is not as straightforward as for knowledge since it is often unclear which moral representation is *right,* or which moral virtues are *most* relevant.

Most people are working to be, and present themselves as, virtuous agents. The problem that often arrives for us is whether enacting a particular virtue is appropriate in a particular situation. One might find oneself wanting to be loyal and honest in a situation where these two virtues seem to conflict. The difference between a loyalty- and a honesty-relevent context is often very subtle, and dependent on various contextual factors. I argue that discerning between these types of situations is the responsibility of intellectual virtue. Moral virtue, in the complexity of real life, is inert without the intellect—intellectual virtue. So the right act cannot be defined merely in terms of moral virtue, or the perfectly virtuous person. It must also be defined in terms of the epistemic relation between agent and situation. Moral virtues, it is no surprise, applied to the wrong interpretation of virtue-salient features, can lead to disastrous results. Look no further than terrorism, or the policies of some neo-conservatives. Sometimes this is an unfortunate feature of the situation, but sometimes it is the fault of the agent. Judgments of an agent should respect this difference, so one does not attack the moral character of an agent when it is (a) an intellectual failing, or (b) an unfortunate feature of the situation.

3.2. Bridging the Gap: Intellectual Virtue in Moral Contexts

This separation between the virtuous character and the right act is often bridged with appeals to practical reason. However, here I wish to explore the possibility of bridging this gap with the growing interest in intellectual virtue in epistemology. Doing so, I believe, has some benefits: (1) moral virtue theory can easily incorporate and integrate work on intellectual virtue and (2) it may be found to be more descriptively accurate to moral psychology. Additionally, the notion of practical reason, while certainly having its place, often suffers from being unusable due to its generality.

First, consider the problem with ignoring the gap between a virtuous moral character and the right moral act. As we have seen, there are various other factors leading to an agent's moral action. One's intellect, perhaps more than the other factors discussed in the previous section, has the ability to misinterpret and thus trigger inappropriate virtuous dispositions. A generous man might give generously to those least deserving. A loyal woman might abandon honesty to protect the wishes of a friend. A man might commit adultery by stressing morally irrelevant features of a lustful situation. It is possible to account for these problems without departing from virtue. A morally virtuous individual's deviating behavior can be accounted for, not by rejecting the existence of character, but by recognizing the role of intellectual virtue in appropriately interpreting situations. So situationalist evidence suggesting that moral virtues are not consistently applied enough to be considered robust can be attributed to an intellectual failing,

or perhaps mere intellectual differences, rather than the non-existence of virtuous character.

It is not uncommon for an individual to appeal to unavoidable ignorance or intellectual deficiency when defending an action which turned out negatively. The goal of these appeals is to shift the blame from a faulty moral character to a lack of intellectual virtue or even the situation itself being too complex or veiled. Take John. John recently lost his job as a contract instructor and needs to feed and clothe his children. He is approached by a seemingly respectable stockbroker and is lured into a seemingly lucrative business opportunity as a junior stockbroker. Unfortunately, however, the depraved stockbroker has cleverly lured John into a scheme to sell stock in companies that barely exist. The companies are created on paper but conduct zero business. And it is John's job to sell shares in these companies to naive individuals so their share values artificially spike. The people in the stockbroker's organization sell their shares just before the stocks' values reflect the facade and plummet.

John will surely appeal to his ignorance when defending his actions to friends (or a judge in a court of law). The problem becomes whether John is culpable for his ignorance. The theoretical problem is how one can avoid situations where virtue (here loyalty, responsibility and care) leads an individual to commit vicious acts. As the example was written, it is clear that John's actions were not caused by a depraved moral character as much as by an intellectual gap. This intellectual gap, being framed in terms of virtue, respects overlaps between

moral and intellectual character. John's intellectual failing could be characterized in terms of intellectual virtues which overlap with moral virtues. These overlapping and connected virtues, like diligence, suggest that moral and intellectual virtues should be analyzed in concert. The question, however, is whether John is to *blame* for his intellectual failing. What conclusions should be drawn about John's character? If he is to blame, we must ask if John is morally culpable as a result. Does being intellectually blameworthy for failing in moral situations necessitate moral blame?

This example illustrates the first way epistemic concerns slip into moral concerns: ignorance. This problem points to the moral dimension of epistemology. When are we responsible for our knowledge or lack thereof? John Greco has argued for a virtue epistemology with a strong normative component that, I argue, can be applied to specifically moral scenarios. It is important to note the difference between pure epistemology and the intellectual component of ethics. In ethics, our primary epistemic concern does not center around knowledge per se. Rather, it concerns normative judgments of an agent's representation of the situation. In other words, we need not determine whether agent A had *knowledge* of the facts in a situation (although one might want to determine this for independent reasons). We need only determine whether agent A's representation of the situation is good, or good enough to warrant a given action. In this way, we are interested in determining an agent's claim that her act was or was not *her fault*.

3.3. Virtues in Concert: Credit and Virtuous Acts

Assessing contexts and relevant features appropriately need not have the same conditions as those for knowledge. This is so for two reasons: (1) We can credit agent A with enough sensitivity (or justification, if you like) of a situation to perform an act without crediting A with having knowledge of the situation. The conditions for one's belief to be knowledge are not necessarily the same as the conditions (or threshold) for acting based on that belief--depending on, for instance, the stakes riding on the belief's truth. And (2) Agent A may have some knowledge X, relevant to the moral situation, but be epistemically and morally blamed for *not* having knowledge Y.

For (2), consider the above example of John the stock broker. John might argue that he knew the job paid well and that his family was in trouble. Based on these facts, it would be responsible and caring of him to take the job despite it not being his ideal occupation, or so he may argue. Nonetheless, depending on the specifics of the case, he might be blameworthy for not acquiring, or even ignoring, evidence of the true nature of the job. He might be guilty of self-deception—an intellectual vice with strong moral ties. If this is the case, his moral blameworthiness would be based on his epistemic blameworthiness. Despite having acted, to his psychology, virtuously, those virtues were wrongly applied to the situation. Relevant knowledge is not enough, then, if it is restricted to only some of the salient features.

For (1), consider Tim. Tim wants to donate some disposable income to

charity. Tim, similar to many generous charity-givers, does not have the time or resources to research the charities to which he will give his money. So Tim solicits the advice of a co-worker, who provides him with the name of a charity working to ameliorate poverty in Africa. After some light internet searching, he decides to donate to this cause despite not *knowing* it to be the best or perhaps even a wholly trustworthy charity. He gives his money away generously, and despite a lack of *knowledge*, he has still behaved virtuously. He had enough sensitivity (or justification) for one to credit the generous act.

John Greco's virtue contextualism is based on *credit*. Greco's framework of virtue contextualism provides a strong normative element to epistemic judgments and a flexibility required to handle subtly different contexts. So now we should outline the elements of virtue contextualism we will use to underly moral virtue. I credit Greco with the basic idea. However, the details and application will differ strongly from his arguments. Nonetheless, the three basic elements of virtue contextualism are (1) causal salience, (2) intellectual virtue and (3) credit. I will treat these in turn.

First, when we single out X as a cause for Y "we mark out X's occurring as a particularly important or salient part of the causal story behind Y's occurring." It is picked out as a particularly important piece of the explanatory story. Further, what is picked out as causally salient is sensitive to context. Sometimes a particular cause is sensitive to the the complex of other causes. For example, sparks in a house fire might be picked out as *the cause of the fire*. But in

a welding shop, where there are sparks flying everywhere, the sparks would not be singled out as *the cause*. Something else, or something more, would be picked out as *the cause*.

Other times the salience of the cause is sensitive to the explanation itself and the person who is explaining it. For example, people generally pick out causes over which we could have control. Further, it is sensitive to the interests of the person providing the explanation. It could just be a matter of specificity (the car crashed into the wall because: (a) the brakes were bad, or (b) the brake pads were worn down to thin metal sheets). The salient cause also might differ by the explainer's interests (the heart attack was caused by: (a) the patient's clogged arteries, or (b) his having eaten too much red meat). So the salient cause for any particular event is highly relative to the context of (1) the event and (2) the kind of explanation needed and explainer's purpose.

Second is the element of intellectual virtue. Intellectual virtue is necessary for the proper representation of the moral context. The central reason to use *virtue* is to (a) maintain a continuity between the moral virtues and the intellectual element, (b) avoid reducing moral thinking to the acquisition of fact or strict conscious deliberation and (c) remain as meta-ethically neutral as possible. The intellectual and moral virtues are not always, and perhaps usually are not, segregated. Some virtues operate at the border of these two categories (empathy, care, foresightedness and deliberation, for instance). Others are interdependent humility/honesty and impartiality; discernment and courage).

So thirdly, there is *credit*. Greco argues that when we ascribe knowledge to someone we are crediting them with having acquired true belief in a worthy way. To credit a person with something, however, is not just to acknowledge that the person has or did something. Rather, we are claiming that the person did or has it *because* of their characteristics and efforts. This is so for moral ascriptions as well: We would not morally credit S for having saved an innocent person from being murdered when his stray bullet just happened to strike the murderer, Bill's, arm. We would, however, morally condemn the individual if he was actually aiming for the victim's child, but happened to miss and hit Bill accidentally. In other words, we are concerned with whether the result occurred because of the individual's virtues and capacities.

Ascriptions of knowledge operate in much the same way according to Greco. One would not ascribe knowledge to someone when the person did not believe the truth *because* of their virtues and abilities. For example, we would not credit S for knowing that shooting Bill would save the victim's life if he was shooting at Bill because he thought Bill was a bad guy and would likely shoot some innocent person *at some point*. If we knew this about S's epistemic position, we would not credit him with knowing he was saving the innocent person's life. It is clear, I think, that in such moral situations we are very much concerned with issuing credit and blame for a person's beliefs. We want to know if we can credit the individual with having known "*what he was doing.*"

Greco presents us with another example. A teenager gets a ride home

from a stranger, and claims to have known he was a decent non-axe-murderer, but her mother refuses to *credit* her with the knowledge. There are many reasons the mother might refuse to grant knowledge in this situation, according to Greco. The mother might think that the daughter was being reckless and is only rationalizing her action after the fact, or that the teenager formed the belief through wishful thinking rather than good reasoning. Either way, the mother is clearly concerned with whether she should credit her daughter for the belief. The question is whether the teenager's intellectual abilities and virtues were causally salient in her having the true belief.

There is an important difference, however, between Greco's use of credit and mine. Greco is interested in whether an individual's true belief can be credited to her cognitive abilities, or intellectual virtue, for the purposes of defining knowledge. So for Greco, the relationship of causal salience lies between (1) the acquisition of true belief and (2) intellectual virtue. The question is whether (2) was a salient cause of (1). If so, we issue credit and ascribe knowledge. Here, however, we are not interested in conditions for knowledge. The relationship lies between (1) the application, or manifestation, of the moral virtues and (2) intellectual virtue. The question again is whether (2) was a salient cause of (1). As we have seen, (1) can go terribly wrong without (2). In this way, I am using intellectual virtue in a way more familiar to virtue ethics, where virtue is often used to judge the morality of an act, not credit an agent with an act already established as morally good. This difference means that not only can we

credit an agent for a good intellectual representation, but we can also *blame* an agent for a bad representation.

Greco describes two ways in which *salience* is contextual: (1) We "will often pick out what is abnormal in the case," and (2) Our interests and purposes. This description can apply not only to *causal salience* as it was used in the previous paragraph, but also to *salient features*--particularly, moral- and virtue-salient features of a situation. So here, salience is a powerful tool because it allows individuals to represent the same situation, but with different concentrations. It is not simply that the interests of an agent or ascriber are different. Rather, the interests and purposes of the ascriber or agent alter the way the phenomena is understood. We can break (2) into two more specific underlying elements: (3) background knowledge and (4) individual views. (3) explains how a doctor will pick out a different salient cause than non-doctors for having contracted an illness (clogged arteries vs. eating too much red meat). (4) accounts for how views *about* virtues and what is good can alter whether a virtue is considered salient. For example, Y might consider loyalty to be a particularly important virtue, while X considers it to be neutral or even a vice. Recent research has suggested that political conservatives tend to be Ys, while liberals tend to be Xs.[19] This research suggests that one's political views, or views simply of *what is a good state of affairs,* have consequences in terms of one's views of which

[19] Jonathan Haidt has studied the differences between the moral foundations of liberals and conservatives. See especially: Haidt, J., Graham, J., Nosek, B. *Liberals and Conservatives use Different Sets of Moral Foundations*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 2009. Vol. 26. Pp. 1029-46.
Also: Haidt, J., Graham, J. *When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives have Moral Intuitions that Liberals May Not Recognize*. Social Justice Research. 2007. Vol. 20. Pp. 90-116

virtues are most important generally, or most salient in particular situations. For a directly epistemic example, the importance of originality also differs across individual views. As an assessor deems a virtue less important, that individual will be less likely to credit an individual with an appropriate interpretation, or representation, of the morally-salient features of a situation. The assessor can, nonetheless, differentiate between a failing of moral virtue, a failing of intellectual virtue, or a mere legitimate difference in preference rankings between the agent and the assessor.

So while I have used Greco's language of knowledge, this is, as I have said, not necessary. The point is that an assessor is interested in whether an agent understands the situation well enough to act virtuously within it. Sometimes an agent need not have knowledge, but be only justified enough to warrant action. But also, knowledge (knowledge-that, or propositional knowledge) itself is sometimes not of primary importance, but rather an accurate representation or *understanding* of a complex situation. In other words, we are interested in whether the agent's representation of the situation is sufficiently justified and complete. What counts as sufficient, as we have seen, is contextual. By including these intellectual virtues in our causal story of an agent's moral act, and assessing the act based on these factors, we can begin to account for the disparity of behavior in situationalist research. Our causal story begins with the intellectual endeavor of representing the moral situation, and then the act within that situation. Depending on one's representation of the situation, the resulting action can be

very different.

Take, for example, the often cited study involving theological students. Two groups were instructed to give a sermon in a building a walk away. One group was instructed to give a sermon on the parable of the good Samaritan, and the others were not. On the way to their sermon, all these students would pass by a man clearly troubled, and probably in need of help. One might expect the first group to be more likely to help this man since the topic of benevolence was in their minds. However, there was a more significant correlation between how rushed the student felt and how likely they were to help. This difference can be explained in various ways. One might say that, in fact, there is no such characteristic as caring. It is more likely, however, that the two groups were led to represent the situation very differently. Perhaps the simplest (but not necessarily the best) explanation is that impartiality is a particularly rare intellectual virtue, and as the rushed students passed by they represented the situation as particularly responsibility-relevant (responsibility to be on time for a sermon). As the students passed by they might have neglected to consider equally the needs of the troubled man and their need to arrive to the sermon on time. Impartiality is most strongly tested when one's own needs are inflated by stress. One's responsibilities are also often exaggerated when one is struggling to meet them. As a result, these seemingly callous students could be said to be acting responsibly to their time commitments, despite failing to realize other, perhaps more salient, virtues.

3.4. Ignorance and Uncertainty in Action

An agent's representation of a situation can often be put crudely in an "if . . . then" format. If I do X, Y will happen. If I do Z, R will happen. And so on. Consequentialist moral theories are often concerned with whether Y or R is the best state of affairs. (If R is the best state of affairs then one should do Z.) The related epistemic question is: How strong is one's epistemic position regarding Y or R? If one knows that indeed R *would be* the best state of affairs, but is in a weaker epistemic position to judge the relation between Z and R, it is not clear that (a) one should do Z, or (b) that one should expect to receive credit for Z. We can bring this out by varying the overused example of the *trolley case*.[20] Note, however, that I will be varying it to the extent that it ceases to be the classic trolley case. Even though it still involves trolleys and tracks, it attempts to illustrate a different problem. This version illustrates the intellectual difficulties of dealing with ignorance and uncertainty, and intellectually virtuous ways to handle them. I have chosen to use the basic features of the trolley case because it is simple and readers of ethical philosophy will readily recognize its ethical characteristics.

So take Nick. Nick stands in front of a switch that routes a train between two possible tracks. As it is, the train is headed along a track with five unwitting loiterers on it. The train will not have time to stop, and the five loiterers will not move out of the way. Nick can hit the switch and re-route it to the second track

---

[20] For a classic presentation of the trolley case, see Judith Thomson: Thomson, Judith Jarvis. *Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem* . Monist. April 1976. Vol. 59. Pp. 204-217

with no people on it. So if Nick pulls the switch, five lives will be spared. However, let's now assume that Nick must account for a number of other contingencies. Assume Nick has some rudimentary understanding of the mechanics of train tracks and sees that the split in the track has some mechanical flaws. In other words, he can recognize that the split does not look to be in good shape. He cannot, however, assess the magnitude of its mechanical flaws, and he cannot know what security measures have been implemented on this particular track by its operators. For instance, he recognizes that he is not in the position to judge whether the flaws will (a) render the switch and the split useless, (b) lead to a delay between pulling the switch and the reaction of the point blades, (c) result in the point blades getting stuck in a middle position, or (c) smoothly divert the train to the divergent track. Let's assume further that this is a passenger train, and Nick is located in a densely populated area. So if the train derails, the catastrophe is much more severe compared to the five potential casualties. So he stands in a strong epistemic position to say that five people will die if he does nothing, but in a far weaker position to judge what will happen if he pulls the switch. Nick recognizes that this asymmetric ignorance has led him to a difficult predicament.

So far Nick has considered the relevant possibilities virtuously. He has not acted too hastily, and has recognized the risks of trying to save the five individuals. Notice the complex of virtues operating here. Nick is intellectually tempered (the situation is not unduly throwing his intellect into chaos), he is

humble (not claiming more than he has reason to claim), he is attentive (he is observing the surroundings), he is using foresight (taking what he can see and extrapolating their potential future results), and he is being objective (his has not as of yet been concerned with how it might affect him). The central proposition in question for Nick: If I pull the switch, the train will not derail. More than any other single proposition, he must consider how likely it is to be true without falling into the trappings of vicious thinking in a complex, chaotic scenario.

So he does not pull the switch. He is confident he made the right decision because he had reason to believe that the train would derail, and could not justifiably believe that it would not. Five people die, and he might have some explaining to do to any observers. This example, presented from Nick's perspective, is a case of a difficult intellectual judgment in a dire situation, but is nonetheless relatively clear. One could undoubtedly construct cases in which the right decision is far less clear. Consider if Nick is a railway worker himself (which would explain what he is doing down by the switch in the first place). He had spent some time working along the track, fixing the split in the track, and has good reason to believe it is in good working order despite not being recently tested or cleared for use. In addition, the five oblivious individuals are his co-workers. Nick's predicament here is much different. He is partly responsible for the state of the track, and thus more responsible for his actions. He is also more equipped to judge the likelihood of a catastrophe, but still can hardly be sure the track split is mechanically sound. The same virtues are relevant, but with the

addition of loyalty and responsibility. In this case it is much less clear which action he should take. Officially, the track is not cleared for use, and he knows this, so he will likely be blamed and held responsible for any catastrophe, but he is also more equipped to use his foresight appropriately. This situation, unfortunately, could likely lead observers, his boss or a judge to blame him for any negative result. Nonetheless, it is hardly clear what the most appropriate course of action is. Further, there are interesting questions regarding what one should do in cases of nearly complete epistemic blindness towards the outcomes of one or more of the possible acts. That would be too far a digression here, however.

3.5. Specific Relations Between Moral and Intellectual Virtues

Intellectual and moral virtues are not always segregated. Virtues can be either what I shall call "borderline" or "allied". These close relationships between specific intellectual and moral virtues suggest further that the intellectual aspect of morality should be put in terms of virtue as well. If specific virtues interact closely, or are simultaneously moral and intellectual, there is good reason to believe that the general relation between the two types hold similar relationships.

Borderline virtues are virtues that are used both morally and intellectually. Allied virtues are specific sets of two (or more) virtues which are often, or always, realized together in moral behavior.[21] These types of virtue illustrate how

[21] Slote, Michael. Goods and Virtues. Oxford UP. 1983. P. 61. This notion of allied virtues should not be confused with dependent virtues as defined by Slote. Slote defines a dependent virtue as a trait that is only a virtue when used in conjunction with an independent virtue. I, however, am

character cannot be analyzed or judged purely from one side. These specific and strong links between virtues are striking instances of the general relationship between the moral and the epistemic. Borderline virtues, examples of which are below, are characterized by their capacity to provoke intellectual or moral responses. Despite usually leaning more strongly in one category than the other, this characteristic makes it difficult to categorize them as strictly moral or strictly intellectual. Further, it is the overlap that is more interesting than the leaning. Allied virtues, in contrast, as shown by examples below, are characterized by their consistent interaction with, and even reliance on, one or more other virtues. Since we are concerned with moral behavior, these are cases where a moral virtue allies with an intellectual virtue. The moral virtues tend to need to ally themselves with an intellectual virtue when they are realized.

First consider borderline virtues. There are various examples of these: Empathy, courage, deliberation, care, humility, etc.. Notice that some borderline virtues are borderline in the sense of not clearly falling in one category or the other, while others seem to clearly fall into *both* categories. For example, while empathy is a virtue with both intellectual and moral characteristics, humility appears to be a virtue falling separately in each. In other words, if one were to distinguish between moral humility and intellectual humility, one would be distinguishing between two separate applications of the same virtue. However, when a virtue clearly falls into both categories, it is sometimes the case that it is

---

marking an alliance between two virtues--that is, a pair of equally defined virtues--within which the moral virtue tends to utilize the intellectual virtue.

actually two virtues under the same name. In other words, while they are psychologically two separate virtues, they are behaviorally or categorically similar in such a way that it is useful to call them by the same name.

Determining which virtues are psychologically separate despite having the same name is often difficult in specific cases. What is important, however, is that borderline virtues are either (a) virtues that can be applied to both moral and intellectual situations separately, (b) two psychologically different virtues with behavioral similarities such that they are considered of the same kind, or (c) virtues which are both intellectual and moral and apply to moral and intellectual situations together. It is not always important to distinguish particular virtues between (a) and (b), since their causal roles do not change, only their psychological categories. Ethics is concerned with their behavior, and how to analyze and distinguish them in particular manifestations in situations. The difference between an (a) and (b) virtue is not in its behavior or relationship to its moral or intellectual counterpart, or to other virtues, but rather in its descriptive category. In other words, the difference between (a) and (b) is a difference in specificity. One can choose to describe a virtue generally as, say, *courage,* or more specifically as moral courage, or even more specifically as military moral courage (and more specifically still as strategic military courage, etc.).

Still, there are clear cases of (b) not resulting from categorical specificity, but from similarities that result in using the same word for two different virtues. For example, moral and intellectual responsibility are different virtues which

share the same name because of a slight ambiguity in the word “responsibility.” When one is being morally responsible, one is properly attending to one's commitments, duties or jobs. But when one is being intellectually responsible, one is attending to the proper considerations and not being rash. Being moral responsible entails being responsible *for* some thing, like a commitment, and attending properly to those commitments. Being intellectually responsible does not entail being responsible *for* something, but rather sufficiently thinking through the proper considerations. One way to view this is that intellectual responsibility relates to morally *taking responsibility* in the sense of *taking moral responsibility* for one’s thinking. But (c) virtues are a special case. So let's first consider them.

Perhaps the strongest example of (c) is empathy, which always acts as both moral and intellectual. Being empathic consists of two elements. Morally, it consists of a connection to another person's psychological state--sympathy. Necessary for empathy, however, is the intellectual ability to simulate the psychological states of another. This is a delicate process that requires a keen awareness of subtle clues together with the ability to simulate complex structures. These two elements together constitute empathy. There is an immediate difficulty, then, in discounting intellectual virtues in a virtue ethical theory. Empathy is also a particularly important virtue since it enables an agent to understand the mind, attitudes and assumptions of others. Ethical decisions are fraught with questions of how another person will behave, what other people need, how they will react to a particular action, and how one's action will

positively or negatively effect another person. Closely related to empathy are two other borderline virtues: Social caution and *proximation*.

Since it is, as far as I am aware, a virtue not previously recognized, let's begin with intellectual *proximation*. It is common in ethics, especially in Peter Singer's writings, to argue against the idea that care can differ depending on one's nearness to those in need. We will certainly feed a hungry child who is our own, we are quick to help a child in our neighborhood, more sluggish in helping those in our country, and often neglectful of the mass starvation in third world nations. Nearness is said to have an emotional impact on our decisions not always warranted by reason. This emotional effect is certainly an aspect of nearness, but there is also a more general intellectual virtue at work--or, often, not at work. It is the ability and tendency for our factual knowledge to be the forefront of our working intellect.

One important aspect of this is creating a coherent world view from information we learn. While this is a neglected virtue, it is remarked upon in everyday conversation. It is often said that while one knew there was poverty in Africa, for example, one did not really *know* it until visiting. One might also say "I knew my girlfriend felt neglected, but I did not fully realize it." Often it is not that the person gained more information, but that knowledge lying dormant suddenly enters into the forefront of one's mind. Intellectual proximation is closely related to empathy because they both require a person to interact actively with one's information. When the information in question is the psychological

state of another individual, the virtue is functionally the same as empathy. However, when it is not realized, it is a different failing. In other words, empathy is sufficient for proximation, but not necessary. Proximation is especially important for problems that Singer poses. It is partly the intellectual failing of really *knowing* (proximate knowledge) that there are large communities in need that leads otherwise caring people to neglect them.

One's *proximity* can be based on various factors such as geographical distance, cultural distance, racial difference, familial distance, etc.. Of course, which of these factors are relevant for moral judgment is often debated, especially in debates on utilitarianism where some theorists claim that familial distance is a relevant factor that more impartial forms of utilitarianism wrongly reject. [22] These theorists, in other words, claim that caring more for close relationships is a virtue, not a vice. Nonetheless, *moral proximation* is the general virtue of keeping beliefs in the forefront of one's mind in proportion to their importance and perceived accuracy. Thus, moral proximation is an internal virtue. Impartiality or partiality can then manifest within this internal context.

The status of proximation as a borderline virtue can be seen through moral examples. Consider again the issue of distant suffering. First there is the moral virtue, moral proximation: Considering more or less the needs of others based on the other person's or issue's proximity to oneself. It is possible to keep intellectual

---

[22] Baron, Marcia. *Impartiality and Friendship*. Ethics. 1991. Vol. 101. Pp. 836-57.
Singer, Peter. *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*. Philosophy and Public Affairs. 1972. 1. Pp. 229-43.
Smart, J.J.C., Williams, Bernard. Utilitarianism: For and Against. Cambridge UP. 1973.

proximation at a constant by imagining two people whose intellectual proximity to poverty in Uganda are the same. In other words, both individuals *know closely* the extent to which people are suffering from starvation in Uganda. These two people, nonetheless, might care to differing degrees because the geographic or racial distance sets their moral consideration apart. Imagine taking a trip to a slum in Uganda. As you witness the suffering and starvation of children first-hand, the stories and statistics about poverty suddenly become real. While in the region, you have an overwhelming desire to help these people. Their suffering, after all, is right in from of you. You feel it. So you vow, once you return home, to do more to help--by raising money and awareness, donating, etc.. This is a significant experience because, while empathy is easy in the presence of the other, it is much more difficult from afar. But now you can remember the emotions this experience aroused. However, once you return home, the effect slowly dissipates. The knowledge of the extent of the suffering remains, but your caring is no longer strong. The virtue of moral proximation is thus in the ability and tendency to retain one's caring despite the increased distance. This difference would be apparent between a fellow traveller with the virtue, and yourself.

Proximity as an intellectual virtue, then, is, as defined above, the ability and tendency for one's information to be close in one's working 'knowledge base'. In the moral example of Uganda, this closeness occurred because of a first-person experience--or, knowledge by acquaintance. Proximity is easy in this sort of example. The intellectual virtue should refer to the ability and tendency to

achieve intellectual proximity when the information is abstract or distant. In other words, when one learns of statistics on poverty around the world, it is common for this information to *remain a statistic*--that is, in the abstract--in one's mind. The virtue is in converting it into close, used knowledge. One process by which this occurs is through imagination. One can imagine the extent of the poverty through the statistics to make it more real. But this, even, integrates the moral virtue in that it relies on the emotional, caring relationship to the sufferers. So it is apparent that the intellectual and moral virtues often act in concert. But to consider the intellectual virtue alone, it is perhaps best to look at a strictly intellectual example. Intellectual examples are apparent in instances of cognitive dissonance, where one uncomfortably perceives two (or more) of one's beliefs to be inconsistent--one is often abstract, while the other is concrete.

Consider the familiar beliefs within a romantic relationship. We (i.e. people in western society) routinely foster the (usually) patently false belief that our significant others are never attracted to anyone other than ourselves. This is coupled with the equally common acknowledgement (though at a different "distance") that everyone is, at times, attracted to other people outside the couple and that fantasy is healthy so long as it remains fantasy. One could describe at length how this cognitive dissonance can lead, in some people, to irrational jealousy and equally irrational anger when our really-known-to-be-false belief buts heads with otherwise accepted reality. But that would be self-indulgent. The example merely illustrates the distinction between distant belief (that everyone is,

at times, attracted to people outside their relationship) and close belief (that our mates could never even conceive of any attraction to another person). Similar distinguishing beliefs are: the health effects of fatty foods (or cigarettes) v. a deliciously fatty food's (or a soothing cigarette's) health effects on our own bodies or the absolute truth of the gospel as written in the bible v. recognition of scientific, namely biological, facts.

Consider further beliefs of very concrete things, i.e. the existence of distant, very foreign continents or other geological areas. Everyone *knows* arctic glaciers exist, but this knowledge is far more distant and abstract than knowledge that their hometowns exist. This may seem too obvious to be significant. Of course first-person experience brings a more concrete dimension to our relationship to knowledge *that* a place exists. But consider the ramifications on issues like climate change, where many socially aware, environmentally conscious people may still find the existence of mass glaciers almost fictionally true, and the toppling of those glaciers even more unreal. People would, it hardly bears mentioning, be far more prone to action if their knowledge of glaciers were closer, more concrete, more real, or *in their backyard*. If we were to experience, in any place other than newspapers, the garbage heaps miles long in diameter collecting in oceans, we would be far more concerned, and not merely because it would *affect* our lives to a greater degree, but because our knowledge would be more proximate.

The relationship between moral and intellectual proximation is different

from empathy. It is not (c)--a virtue acting always as both intellectually and morally. It is either (a) or (b) since one can realize the intellectual virtue without realizing the moral virtue. As the above claims, for ethics it is not generally important to determine whether a specific virtue is an (a) or a (b). The difference between moral and intellectual proximation is, roughly, between intellectual and emotional proximity to the issue or situation. So while there are clearly different processes involved, it is, like courage, useful to categorize them by the same name due to behavioral similarities.

The other empathy-related virtue I would like to discuss is *social caution*. This is the virtue of being aware of a situation or environment so that one does not inadvertently say or do something insensitive or offensive. There are obviously things one can do or say in front of one type of group but not another. It is no secret that one can speak more candidly about a number of topics--consider anything that would not make it on network television--amongst close friends than strangers or family. This is because there is a considerable risk in offending someone. This example is illustrative, but the easy and obvious case hardly captures the virtue. Consider another example. You are at a party with many familiar, but also some fresh faces. It is commonplace for you and your friends to joke derisively about Christian conservative ideals and, after perhaps a few too many drinks, you feel comfortable enough to engage in this sort of banter. Feeling comfortable with everyone, you begin to joke about the irrational views of gay marriage and the irrationality of religious belief in humorous, sardonic and

insulting language. Half of the group suddenly becomes silent and leaves the gathering. If you had known there were Christian conservatives present, you would certainly have refrained from such humor, or at least been more polite about it. However, in the moment you were not thinking about the possible ideologies of these other guests. One more example: You are teaching a freshman philosophy seminar and the topic is morality and cultural relativism arises. You attempt to provoke discussion by talking about abortion as one of the young female students rushes out crying. It appears that some amount of sensitivity was required since some people might have had personal, and very traumatic, experiences with the issue. As a philosophy instructor you did not intend to provoke any personal emotions, but rather debate on a general topic. However, a sufficient amount of social caution would have led you to stray away from any potentially sensitive topic.

The relation between social caution and empathy is in the similar mental process of representing, or simulating, the potential minds of others in a larger group. In other words, in a group of unknown individuals, one cannot accurately simulate the mentality of any one of those individuals. Nonetheless, one can simulate the social situation for potential people who would react negatively to some act or speech. Certainly, one cannot restrict one's behavior and speech to accommodate everyone. However, the virtue of social caution lies in the awareness of, and sensitivity to, a social situation. It entails, then, both intellectual and moral capacities. Morally, it requires (like empathy) care and

sensitivity to others. Intellectually, it requires the ability to analyze and assess social environments.

This virtue is highly sensitive to context. In fact, the virtue is partly defined by an awareness of context. In this way it is an individual example of exactly the relationship between moral and intellectual generally--only restricted to this particular type of situation. Intellectual social caution assesses the social context, and moral social caution disposes one to act based on and sensitive to its features. So the relationship between the intellectual and moral sides of a borderline virtue provides a microcosm for the relationship between moral and intellectual virtues generally.

Borderline virtues have both moral and intellectual features, and cannot be clearly categorized as one or the other. Thus, for the purposes of my argument, they are more powerful than any other type of virtue. Borderline virtues exhibit the relationship between the class of intellectual and moral virtues. There is, however, another type of virtue which shows the close relationship between moral and intellectual virtues. They are allied virtues. Allied virtues are pairs of virtues that are especially and strikingly connected in moral behavior. The moral virtue, almost to the degree of dependence, acts in concert with its intellectual ally. Further, good moral behavior benefits from, and even requires, their alliance.

Perhaps the best way to see the relation of alliance is through examples. Consider the moral virtue *compassion.* Compassion entails a disposition to care for others especially when they are in need or suffering. It is the moral virtue

studied in the dime case. Notice that there is no one other significant intellectual element built into care, so it is not eligible for status as a borderline virtue. It does, however, tend to require intellectual capacities or virtues. Primarily, it requires intellectual attentiveness or sensitivity. An agent realizing compassion must be attentive and sensitive to the predicaments of those around him to act compassionately. He also must be attentive and sensitive to assess the particular needs of the other person. Recall the case of the good samaritan. Subjects on their way to give a sermon were far less likely to help someone in need along their path if they were rushed. Their failure to act compassionately could be attributed to their lack of attentiveness or sensitivity to the individual. Compassion, in other words, may need to ally itself with this intellectual virtue to be properly active, or active at all.

This case shows a deep connection between a moral and an intellectual virtue. The moral virtue can be left inert without the intellectual virtue. One could argue that this kind of attentiveness is integral to moral compassion. However, this would merely concede that intellectual virtue is integral to moral virtue, but would lack the benefit of analyzing their functions more subtly.This sort of subtle analysis gives understanding to deviations in virtue realization.

Consider one more relationship of alliance. In this case the moral virtue is *integrity*. Defining this virtue broadly to avoid serious contention, integrity entails a disposition to behave in accordance with one's core values and commitments. It promotes a continuity and coherence of behavior by disposing an

agent to behave uncorrupted and in alignment with oneself. One function of integrity is to avoid acting from the strongest desires or emotions no matter how fleeting, and 'stay true' to one's convictions. To behave with integrity, however, tends to require *intellectual honesty,* or *rigor*. Intellectual honesty entails a lack of delusion in one's thinking and maintaining beliefs (for present purposes, beliefs about oneself) that one's uncorrupted intellect supports. Intellectual rigor, similarly, entails a consistency of thinking applied to similar cases--a lack of partiality despite one's desires or immediate preferences. The relationship between these virtues can be seen in Williams's famous cases of integrity. Ignore, for present purposes, the original intent of the case as a counter-example to act-utilitarian theories. The example itself demonstrates integrity at work.

George is a recent doctoral graduate in chemistry.[23] He is having difficulty finding work, has a family, young children and has an illness which restricts his job opportunities. George is strongly committed to pacifism as a matter of principle and policy. His pacifism, in other words, is said to be a central and core commitment and value for George. George is offered a job at a laboratory doing work on chemical warfare. Now if George does not take the job, it will undoubtedly go to an individual who is not committed to pacifism and will work harder to make a real contribution to chemical warfare, and, of course, he will remain unemployed. However, if he takes it, he will clearly be acting against his

[23] Williams, Bernard. Eds., Smart, J.J.C., Williams, Bernard. *Integrity.* Utilitarianism: For and Against Cambridge UP. 1973. p. 97-9.
See also: Williams, Bernard. Ed. Williams, Bernard. *Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence.* Moral Luck. Cambridge UP. 1981. Note that Williams does not consider integrity to be a virtue. Nor is he a virtue theorist. I borrow the case without borrowing Williams's unique view of integrity, since the case is applicable to integrity as a virtue as well as integrity as identity.

core values and, thus, without integrity.

Williams argues that George should not take the job for reasons of integrity. Prescriptions of George's right course of action are not important here. Rather, to have integrity in this case requires George to be honest and consistent in his thinking about his values and commitments. Integrity, like compassion, is inert without intellectual work that is specific to an intellectual virtue. He must think honestly (and rigorously) about the strength and importance of his values, and the degree to which these values are integral to his character and personality. And if the case was written such that George merely believed and favored pacifist policies without a high degree of conviction, his deliberation would have to be able to make this distinction. Otherwise, actions committed in the name of integrity could be based on self-serving whims wrongly assessed as core convictions.

Allied virtues are specifically strong examples of intellectual and moral virtues that are linked in moral behavior. In the case of allied virtues, a moral virtue has an especially strong reliance on a specific intellectual virtue. Like borderline virtues, they provide evidence for the interrelatedness of virtues generally. If these strong tendencies occur between specific virtues, there is good reason to assume that weaker tendencies occur between other virtues. Tendencies in such cases are merely more contextual and situation-sensitive. The two classes of virtue are interlocked, so it is theoretically beneficial to analyze them in concert.

Chapter 4. Minding the Gap

4.1. The Gap, Moral Luck, And Gettier Cases

In the previous section we looked at some factors which lead to the variability of morally virtuous behavior. The most significant of these factors was the intellect. We saw, in general terms, ways in which the intellect is (a) a factor in morally virtuous behavior, and (b) a controller of other psychological factors. One moral of these stories is that virtue theory should be based on descriptively sound psychological observations. In this section, I will show the function of intellectual virtues in virtue ethical theory specifically, and how they can serve virtue theory beyond guarding against situationist attacks. In the previous section I introduced *credit* as a way to assess one's intellectual grasp of a situation. I argued that the intellectual virtue component of an ethical decision should be based on crediting an agent with the proper understanding of a situation. I will use the notion of *credit* again to consider a theoretical gap in ethics which at times is akin to Gettier-type problems in epistemology. In ethics, this problem is sometimes referred to as *moral luck*--specifically *resultant luck*. I argue that supplementing moral virtues with intellectual virtues goes a long way to solve this problem. Two types of cases are relevant here: (1) cases in which an agent should not be credited with result X due to a disconnect between his/her moral intentions or virtues and Y, and (2) cases in which an agent should not be credited with result X due to an intellectual failing. Both cases are structurally similar to Gettier cases, and are specific types of resultant luck.

First let's consider moral luck. For present purposes, the important type of moral luck is resultant. Resultant luck occurs when (a) some outcome of an action came about by accident (was out of the agent's control), and (b) that the outcome affects the moral judgment that an agent receives. (a) and (b) should sound conflicting, because it is intuitively assumed that one is not to blame for outcomes beyond one's control. This is called the *control condition*: Agent A is only to blame for outcome O if O was in A's control. Despite the intuitive plausibility of the control condition, there is no shortage of situations in which an outcome outside the agent's control affects the moral judgment of that agent. To use the stock example: We inevitably judge the reckless driver who is unlucky enough to have a child in his path more harshly than the equally reckless driver who, by blind luck, encountered no sentient obstacles.

In another example agent A courageously climbs a ladder to save an infant from a burning house only to have that baby slip from his arms on the way down the ladder, while agent B commits the same courageous act to bring the infant safely to ground level. In both these cases we see that luck issues into common moral judgments more than our theoretical stance should allow. There are various proposed solutions to this problem of moral luck. Philosophers including Richards, Rescher and Rosebury have proposed an epistemic solution to the problem in which they argue that the judger makes an epistemic mistake by presuming the agents' actions are relevantly different. While I think these solutions are on the right track, I do not intend to take a strong stance in this

debate. Rather, I will use the problem to elucidate further reasons for moral philosophy to incorporate intellectual virtue.

Some Gettier-type cases in ethics will eventually lead us to see the links between this problem and the intellectual gap in virtue ethics. The first type of case to consider points out how being intelligent about situations is not enough. This point may seem obvious at first, but leads to the centrality of intention in assessing moral actions. Consider a high-level employee of a large, multi-national biotechnology company. His name is, say, Sam. Sam is attempting to design a genetically modified seed for a plant commonly used for food. He is doing this so the company can patent the plant and achieve a virtual monopoly on the manufacture of the seed. His goal, then, is to genetically modify the seed t*o a more desirable, better*, form enough to obtain the patent, but not enough as to require GMO labeling on its products. Sam's intentions are clear: to control a market. The result of Sam's ambitions is his company's design of a modified X-seed that is resistant to many pesticides. The environmental impact of the company's design is overwhelmingly positive. Since the X-seeds are resistant to pesticides, farmers are able to use far fewer pesticides on the land, thereby contributing to a substantial decrease in X-related pesticide use. Sam's company benefits from the patent, and the environment wins. Nonetheless, we would hardly give moral credit to Sam for the environmental benefits. The environmental benefits were incidental to his aim. We can see this more clearly by looking at this case's structural similarities to Gettier cases in epistemology.

In Gettier cases S justifiably believes X, where X is broad or includes disjuncts, some sub-X turns out to be true, but S's justification was related to a different sub-X. This is one central feature of some Gettier cases, and the feature that bears a significant resemblance to the moral case. In this similar moral case, S intends to do Y, which is defined broadly, does a sub-Y that turns out to be good but for reasons other than S's intentions for doing Y. S's intentions related to Y (obtaining a patent strategically good for business), but not to sub-Y (designing a seed that leads to environmental improvement). As in Gettier cases, we do not intuitively want to give S credit for sub-Y because it was merely luck, not the agent, that connected Y to sub-Y. Crediting S for an action is dependent on the action's relation to S's virtues. The next case will further illustrate this dependence.

The structure of Sam's case becomes even more striking if it is altered so that his intentions were decidedly vicious. For instance, consider if Sam had a vendetta against agricultural farmers, and intended to use his patent to sue and run farmers out of business to create massive company-owned farms. Certainly, then, Sam would be credited with his takedown of small, family farms. But would he also be credited morally for the environmental benefits? Again, I think not. The disconnect between Sam's intentions and the environmental benefits intuitively leads to a lack of credit, just as the similar disconnect in Gettier cases between an agent's justification and truth leads to a lack of credit. Sam's intended actions were not at all directed at environmental benefits, or any other similar benefit

besides his own.

Sam could certainly receive credit from observers unaware of his original intentions. His credit would be an instance of moral luck. But this luck would be no different from an observer unwittingly giving Smith credit for knowing that he would get the job, or that Brown is in Barcelona.[24] This type of mistake in assessment can never be entirely removed in practical life. There will always be some gap between the epistemic position of an observer and the background intentions of agents. This disconnect between observer and agent is precisely the element of the problem of moral luck that the aforementioned philosophers--Rescher, Richards and Rosebury--attempted to solve. Their solutions--collectively known as the 'epistemic solution'--are not, however, equipped to solve theoretical gaps in moral judgments where all the information about the agent is known. A moral theory should certainly provide the proper moral assessment in idealized philosophical examples in which all the information is known. We need to fill in the theoretical threads between an agent's reasons for action, the action and its results. In this way, ethicists can take epistemology since the publication of Gettier's cases as a strategic model.

---

[24] I am referring here to the two original Gettier cases presented by Edmund Gettier. In the first case Smith applies for a job, but has the justified belief that Jones will get it. Smith also has the justified belief that Jones has ten coins in his pocket. So he forms the belief "the man with ten coins in his pocket will get the job." However, Smith ends up getting the job, and all the while, and without his knowledge, also had ten coins in his pocket. In the second, and structurally simpler case, Smith has a justified belief that Jones owns a Ford. So Smith concludes by logic "Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona." But Jones has no justification for the belief "Brown is in Barcelona" itself. As it turns out, Jones does not own a Ford, but Brown is in Barcelona. In both of these cases, Smith has a broad belief that is justified, but does not have a true belief *because* of this justification. Smith got lucky, so to speak. But we do not want to credit him with knowledge.

The second type of case further clarifies this gap. It illustrates the need for virtue moral theory to strengthen the intellectual component of moral action. Moral virtue theory, without a strong intellectual component, can wrongly assign credit to an agent for an act that arose from moral virtue but had bad results due to an intellectual mistake or deficiency. Well known forms of these intellectual deficiencies occur when an agent has the best of intentions but lacks some intellectual ability or knowledge necessary to put those intentions into proper action. It is thus common to say an agent "means well" or "has his heart in the right place." These cliche comments come from one correct observation: that some morally virtuous desires to act require intellectual abilities or knowledge that an agent does not possess.

One striking example of misplaced virtue appeared recently in the news. At the start of this year--2010--an earthquake hit Haiti and international aid almost immediately mobilized to help the injured and displaced people in Port-au-Prince. One result of this catastrophe was the large number of children without families in need of aid, temporary housing, or in some cases adoption. With so many displaced people, it was difficult to determine which children were orphans and which children had surviving parents elsewhere in the chaos. Even more difficult was tracking individuals so they could locate their families. However, with so many homeless children something needed to be done to help them. An interesting story emerged from all of this: a group of missionaries attempted to take a bus of Haitian children across the border to the Dominican Republic, where

they were arrested for kidnapping.

Let's assume these missionaries were, as their own account has it, acting out of compassion for these children and merely attempting to find a safe place for them to go. They did not realize they were engaging in illegal behavior by taking the children across a border. Nor did they understand that they were compromising the overall aid effort's ability to match children with their families and to determine how to proceed. In this case, the missionaries were not acting from moral vice. Their compassion was misguided, and they arguably failed to behave cooperatively. Whether we frame their mistake in moral virtue in terms of mistaken compassion or a lack of cooperation, their error was an intellectual one. They acted virtuously from moral compassion, but either lacked the relevant knowledge or engaged in bad thinking. The missionaries have since admitted to their mistaken judgment.

One central point of the case is largely uncontroversial: moral virtue can sometimes lead to poor results in cases of poor intellectual judgment. However, there is a second issue to consider. Based purely on moral virtue and intentions, these missionaries would receive credit for *attempting* to help these displaced children. In other words, an ethics purely based on moral virtue would issue a positive assessment of the missionaries' actions. This assessment, however, neglects to account for their apparent intellectual errors. There is again a theoretical gap between the agent's virtues and intentions and the agent's actions, which leads to wrongfully assigned credit. This wrongfully assigned credit is not

itself the most interesting lucky scenario. It is based solely on the assessments of pure moral virtue theory. There is another, more interesting, possibility.

Imagine, for instance, that the missionaries had succeeded and brought the children to the Dominican Republic. Imagine further that these children were indeed orphans, and found well-functioning homes in their new country. If this were the case, these missionaries would almost universally be praised for their courageous and compassionate efforts. They would, that is, receive credit for having helped these thirty children. Notice, however, that nothing internal to the agents has changed. They were merely lucky to have succeeded despite displaying the same intellectual errors. In this case, virtue ethics and consequentialism alike would issue credit to the agents even though the sole difference between the cases is luck.

In both the real story of the missionaries and the altered version it is appropriate to have the same judgments. However, luck has deemed one right and the other wrong. Our theoretical ethical system should nonetheless yield the same moral judgment when all the information is known. Including an intellectual virtue component to our ethical theory fills this gap of moral luck. It allows us to judge the agents based on their moral and intellectual processes. It considers both the moral and intellectual virtues used by an agent leading to his/her act.

Recall that the original case of the missionaries showed that acting from moral virtue can lead to poor results in cases of poor intellectual judgment. One common concern from consequentialists about virtue ethics is that by being

'agent-centered' it is not equipped to answer the prescriptive question "what should I do?" directly, but rather does so indirectly through internal virtues. Nor does it base ethical *assessments* directly on the act itself or its consequences. There is no need to engage in this dispute between consequentialist and virtue theories, and I am not convinced that a theory's inability to provide clear prescriptions for an act is a problem rather than a strength. Nonetheless, it is worth considering this concern here if we are interested in a theory's ability to reliably manifest good results. I do not intend to imply that any particular virtue ethical theory succumbs to this problem, but merely that the moral virtue component alone succumbs to this problem (if one deems it a problem).

4.2. Concluding Remarks

The potential liability for agent-based theories is that the theory's internal prescriptions do not directly equate to a good result in terms of the act and its consequences. One gauge for a good agent-based theory is that its internal conditions reliably lead to good external results. The case of the missionaries illustrates the gap between moral virtue and external results by showing that the former does not imply the latter. The case of Sam illustrates the same gap by showing that the latter does not imply the former.

Filling in the gap with something descriptively accurate that lends itself to conditions similar to those of moral virtue provides a good way to more reliably bridge internal conditions with external results. The combination of intellectual

and moral virtues provides this bridge, and allows for more subtle assessments based on the particular error of the agent. Thus, one does not need to rely on singular prescriptions for right action, and one can avoid blunt, outright judgments of right and wrong action. By better bridging the gap between the internality of the agent with consequences, one can avoid luck based on achieving optimal results despite the agent's internal failures, as well as luck based on having virtuous intentions while nonetheless achieving poor results due to intellectual failures.

Together these two types of cases illustrate the potential disconnect in ethics between moral and intellectual virtue. They help show that one is not enough. There is a difficulty for virtue ethics, then, to account for intellectual errors, and risks crediting agents with moral results when there is a disconnect between those moral virtues and an act with its consequences. This difficulty is hardly insurmountable, however, and here in the previous section I have proposed one way to include a functioning intellectual component. Alone, however, intellectual virtue--and more traditional types of intellect--risks neglecting an agent's moral intentions and motivating virtues.

There are good reasons for using intellectual virtue to supplement moral virtue. It is capable of lessening the impact of moral luck by being a usable gauge of intellectual justification for moral scenarios. It does not attempt to provide strict directives for complex, often subtly different thought processes. It also retains a concentration on the internal. Like moral virtue, it is based strongly in

the agent, and sets internal conditions for appropriate moral thinking. Thus, it does not deviate from virtue ethics's basis in internal conditions, while still filling in the theoretical gap. Finally, as we saw in the previous section, moral and intellectual virtues are naturally married and are often difficult to separate. Some virtues are linked to their moral or intellectual counterpart, and require specific counterparts to be properly applied to moral situations. This last reason is the most striking. Unless there are otherwise good reasons to fill in the intellectual gap with something else, it is best to use these linkages. Of course, this does not entail that other forms of intellect are useless to describe moral thinking, like, for instance, practical reason or decision theory. Rather, it means that, first and foremost, intellectual virtue is a good theoretical supplement to moral virtue.

References

Baron, Marcia (1991), "Impartiality and Friendship", *Ethics,* 101: 836-57.

Baron, Robert (1980), "Olfaction and Human Social Behavior: Effects of Pleasant Scents on Physical Aggression", *Basic and Applied Social Psychology,* 1 (2): 163-172.

Bucciarelli, M., Khemlani, S., and Johnson-Laird, P.N. (2008) " The Psychology of Moral Reasoning", *Judgment and Decision Making*, 3(2)

Doris, John (2002), *Lack of Character: Personality & Moral Behavior*. Cambridge UP.

Driver, Julia. Ed. Crisp, Roger (1998), "Virtues and Human Nature", *How Should One Live?: Essays on the Virtues*. Oxford UP.

Garcia, J.L.A. (2003), "Practical Reason and Its Virtues." *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski. Oxford UP.

Goldman, Alvin (1992), "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology" *Liaisons.* MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.

Haidt, J., Graham, J. (2007) "When Morality Opposes Justice: Conservatives have Moral Intuitions that Liberals May Not Recognize", *Social Justice Research,* 20: 90-116

Haidt, J., Graham, J., Nosek, B. (2009), "Liberals and Conservatives use Different Sets of Moral Foundations", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 26: 1029-46

Lecky, Prescott (1945), *Self-Consistency: A Theory of Personality,* Island Press: NY.

Levin, P.F., Isen, A.M. (1975), "Further Studies on the Effect of Feeling Good on Helping*" Sociometry,* 38 (1): 141-47

Li, W., Moallem, I., Paller, K.A., Gottfried, J.A. (2007), " Subliminal Smells Can Guide Social Preferences", *Psychological Science,* 18 (12): 1044-9

Nichols, Shaun (2004), *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment*. Oxford UP.

North, Adrian., Tarrant, Mark., Hargreaves, David (2003), " The Effects of Music on Helping Behavior", *Environment and Behavior,* 36 (2): 266-275.

Rosch, E., & Mervis, C. B. (1975), "Family resemblances: Studies in the internal Structure of Categories*", Cognitive Psychology*, 7, P. 573-605.

Schnall, Simone., Benton, Jennifer., Harvey, Sophie (2008), " With a Clean Conscience: Cleanliness Reduces the Severity of Moral Judgments"*, Psychological Science,* 19 (12): 1219-1222.

Singer, Peter (1972), "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 1: 229-43.

Slote, Michael (1983), *Goods and Virtues.* Oxford UP.

Smart, J.J.C., Williams, Bernard (1973), *Utilitarianism: For and Against.* Cambridge UP.

Sreenivasan, Gopal (2002), "Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait

Attribution”, *Mind,* 11: 53-62
Swanton, Christine (2003), *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*. Oxford UP. 2003.
Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1976), “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem” *Monist,* 59: 204-217
Velleman, David (2000), “From Self Psychology to Moral Philosophy”, *Philosophical Perspectives,* 14.
Williams, Bernard (1973), “Integrity”, *Utilitarianism: For and Against.* Eds., Smart, J.J.C., Williams, Bernard. Cambridge UP.
Williams, Bernard (1981), “Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence”, *Moral Luck*. Ed. Williams, Bernard, Cambridge UP.