# Construing Character: Virtue as a Cognitive-Affective Processing System

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# Construing Character: Virtue as a Cognitive-Affective Processing System

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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CONSTRUING CHARACTER: VIRTUE AS A COGNITIVE-AFFECTIVE PROCESSING SYSTEM

by

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requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

CONSTRUING CHARACTER: VIRTUE AS A COGNITIVE-AFFECTIVE PROCESSING
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by

Denise Vigani

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Following its re-emergence in the second half of the twentieth century, virtue ethics was

confronted with an empirically-based challenge known as 'the situationist critique.' Philosophical

situationists argue that experimental evidence in social psychology strongly suggests that humans are

not the sorts of creatures to develop the robust traits that the virtues are supposed to be.

Furthermore, they maintain that what explains people's behavior is a matter of situational factors,

not alleged facts about their character, such as whether they are honest or generous. In response to

the situationist critique, some philosophers have recently suggested that the social-cognitive

psychological model of personality as cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) can supply

virtue ethics with an empirically plausible model of a trait.

My dissertation, *Construing Character: Virtue as a Cognitive-Affective Processing System*, examines

this psychological model from the perspective of virtue ethics. I argue that virtue ethics can take on

board the CAPS model without undermining its normativity or its ability to provide action guidance

and assessment. Furthermore, I employ the model to develop an empirically plausible account of

neo-Aristotelian virtue that, I argue, supports some key aspects of virtue ethics that have been

previously criticized, namely, John McDowell's analogies between virtue and perception and

Aristotle's doctrine of the reciprocity of the virtues.

I begin with an examination of the CAPS model and of the ways in which previous attempts

at specifying virtue in terms of the model fall short. The CAPS model holds that an individual's

subjective construal of a situation is crucial to understanding that individual's behavior. From a psychological standpoint, this emphasis on subjective construal is quite reasonable. For instance, it would probably be difficult to make sense of the behavior of gang members without reference to the ways in which they construe situations as demanding a demonstration of loyalty to their gang. The process of subjective construal has received inadequate attention from virtue ethicists.

The account of virtue that I develop begins, therefore, with an elaboration of the distinctive way in which the virtuous person construes situations, which I use to develop and defend a McDowellian view of practical reasoning. Furthermore, I suggest that this notion of 'virtuous construal,' as I call it, opens up space for normativity in the CAPS model, since the virtuous person's construal of a situation is not only distinctive, but also correct. Most of us, however, are not fully virtuous. Drawing on the work of Michael Smith, I elaborate an advice model of correct construal. This advice model, I argue, anchors a normative notion of subjective construal while appropriately accounting for individuals' shortcomings.

In shifting from considering virtue in general to providing a framework for CAPS accounts of particular virtues, I defend Aristotle's doctrine of the reciprocity of the virtues and his methodology of individuating the virtues according to their objects, both of which have fallen out of favor among many virtue ethicists. I employ his methodology in spelling out a framework of 'thin' and 'thick' accounts of individual virtues, where the thin account specifies the field of the virtue and grounds the account in an Aristotelian notion of excellence, and the thick account elaborates the particular cognitive-affective elements that constitute the virtue.

Finally, I apply the account to the virtues of courage and patience in order to show how the action guidance and assessment capabilities of virtue ethics remain intact.

# Acknowledgments

# Contents

## Social Psychology, Philosophical Situationism & Virtue Ethics

The re-emergence of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics[1] in the second half of the twentieth century rather quickly faced an empirically-based challenge known as philosophical situationism.[2] Virtue ethicists claim that the virtues are robust traits of character that are regularly manifested in the behavior of the individuals who possess them. By 'robust,' they mean both cross-temporally and cross-situationally stable. Drawing on psychologists' experimental work on personality that reveals the extent to which individuals' behavior varies according to situational factors, philosophical situationists express skepticism that the virtues exist in humans and doubt that humans could, in fact, cultivate such traits (Flanagan 1991, Doris 1998, 2002, 2005, Harman 1999, 2000, 2003, Merritt 2000, Vranas 2005).

There are several well-known studies to which philosophical situationists frequently refer. They include John Darley and Daniel Batson's study of helping behavior among Princeton theological students (1973), in which students who were running late to their talk were less likely to stop to help a person in need, and Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May's study of deceit among school-age children (1928), in which the children displayed a considerable lack of consistency in behavior across situations. Also frequently cited are Alice Isen and Paula Levin's study of the effects of feeling good on helping behavior (1972), in which individuals who found a dime in a phone booth coin return were more likely to help a stranger pick up papers, and Stanley Milgram's famous obedience experiments (1974), in which participants were asked by an experimenter to administer what they believed were increasingly severe electrical shocks to another subject.

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[1] There are many varieties of virtue ethics. Throughout this project, I will be working from a neo-Aristotelian framework. I may at times drop the 'neo-Aristotelian' for ease of reading, but readers should note that I do not at any point take myself to be speaking for all of virtue ethics.

[2] Following Nancy Snow (2010, 2), I will refer to the philosophers who are critiquing virtue ethics as 'philosophical situationists' in order to distinguish them from psychologists working in the situationist tradition.

According to philosophical situationists, these studies demonstrate that the robust traits posited by virtue ethicists do not drive behavior and so strongly suggest that such traits do not exist in humans.  Rather, what really drive human behaviors are features of the situations in which we find ourselves.  Furthermore, we may not even be aware of some of these situational features, or of the ways in which they influence our behavior.  For example, a study by Jonathan Haidt and Thalia Wheatley suggests that hypnotically induced disgust can affect the severity of individuals' moral judgments (2005).

These are serious accusations that the philosophical situationist lodges against virtue ethics.  What these studies show, they claim, is that humans do not possess the robust traits that virtue ethics says we ought to cultivate.  Philosophical situationists are unimpressed when virtue ethicists point out that full virtue would be, at least on an Aristotelian understanding, both rare and hard work to foster.  Mark Alfano, for instance, goes so far as to label this kind of response "the dodge" (2013, 62).  This suggests that the philosophical situationists are really after a much bolder claim, namely, that empirical evidence strongly suggests that, psychologically, humans are not the sorts of creatures who develop the kinds of robust traits that the virtues are supposed to be.  We simply do not appear to be built that way.  If the philosophical situationist is right, that would signal the death knell for virtue ethics as a normative ethical theory, for what good is a theory that tells us to cultivate traits that we are psychologically incapable of forming?

Virtue ethicists, as well as some psychologists, have responded vigorously to what has become known as 'the situationist critique.'  Their replies can be roughly divided into negative and positive responses.  The negative responses consist of critiques either of the empirical studies themselves or of the conclusions being drawn from those studies (e.g., Annas 2005a, Athanassoulis 2000, Kamtekar 2004, Miller 2003, Sabini and Silver 2005, Sreenivasan 2002, Swanton 2003, 30-33), while positive responses attempt to offer either an alternative conception of virtue that abandons the

notion of the virtues as robust traits (e.g., Miller 2013)[3] or alternative empirical data in support of the existence and efficacy of robust character traits. Given that talk of robust traits is pervasive both in philosophy and folk psychology, the burden of proof seems to be squarely on the philosophical situationists to demonstrate that robust character traits do not exist. Nevertheless, the attempt at a positive response to the situationist critique is important. As a normative ethical theory virtue ethics is, after all, committed to the cultivation of certain deep-seated character traits, namely, the virtues. It would certainly behoove the theory to be able to provide a psychologically plausible story about such traits.

One positive response that often appears in the psychological literature involves pointing out the existence of what have become known as the 'Big Five' personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (John and Srivastava 1999). Some psychologists argue that these five traits have been empirically established as cross-temporally and cross-situationally stable. In addition, these traits are, like virtue, conceived of as a continuum between extremes: every individual falls somewhere on the continuum for each of the five traits. And, just as very few, if any, of us are fully virtuous or fully vicious, very few individuals fall on the extreme ends of the continuums of the Big Five factors.

For a number of reasons, however, the Big Five response seems an unsatisfactory reply to the situationist critique of virtue ethics, and so virtue ethicists have largely avoided bringing the Big Five literature into the philosophical debate. Perhaps the biggest concern over the Big Five is that it is unclear the extent to which many of the traits are moral or how they might relate to the virtues traditionally enumerated by virtue ethicists. Other reasons to be wary of a Big Five response include worries regarding the efficacy and degree of heritability of these traits (Prinz 2009, 121-122), methodological concerns in establishing the existence of these traits, particularly regarding the

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[3] Alfano calls this kind of response "the retreat" (2013, 62).

reliance on pencil-and-paper surveys (Doris 2002, 67), as well as concerns regarding the degree of disagreement among five factor theorists as to the theoretical underpinnings of these traits (Snow 2010, 11-12). Rather than opting for the Big Five response, some virtue ethicists have advocated for a different positive response, based on an account of virtue as a cognitive-affective processing system (Russell 2009, Snow 2010).

Virtue ethicists take the notion of a traits as a cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) from the work of social-cognitivist psychologists Walter Mischel and Yuichi Shoda. It might be a bit surprising that virtue ethicists have turned to Mischel to defend virtue against philosophical situationism, since Mischel himself provided much of the impetus for the situationist critique (Mischel 1968). Over the last 40 or so years, however, Mischel and Shoda have developed a CAPS conception of personality that reconceptualizes the notion of a personality trait (Mischel 1973, 2007, Mischel and Shoda 1995, Shoda and Mischel 1996, 1998, Shoda, Mischel, and Wright 1993). Before introducing the CAPS model, however, let me first clarify some of the vocabulary that is used in this literature.

## Personality, Traits, Character, Virtue, and Dispositions

A lot of specialized vocabulary gets thrown around in the debate between philosophical situationism and virtue ethics. To make things even more difficult, the philosophical, psychological, and common-sense notions of these terms do not always coincide. It is worth getting clear, then, on some of the central terms of the debate at the outset. Virtue ethicists focus on character, and in particular on virtues of character. They often speak of individuals possessing character traits, and they almost always explain character traits in terms of dispositions. The psychology literature, by contrast, is framed in terms of personality, although psychologists, too, talk of traits and dispositions. So there are five main terms that need sorting out: personality, traits, character, virtue, and dispositions.

In psychology, personality refers to the internal structure or organization of individuals, as evidenced by their psychological features and behaviors. Psychologists working on personality focus both on what all individuals have in common as well as the individual differences that make each person unique. An example of the former would be the various personality theories that have been proposed over the years, such as Sigmund Freud's personality structure consisting of the id, ego, and super ego. According to Frued's theory, all individuals share this personality structure. An example of the latter would be the different degrees to which individuals possess each of the Big Five traits. Jack, for instance, may be less open and more neurotic than Jill, and this is part of what makes him unique.

Traditionally, there have been two competing paradigms of personality: dispositional, or trait, theory and psychodynamic theory. The latter conceives of personality as a system of mediating processes, and is a conception whose tradition finds its roots in Freud's psychodynamic theory. The former conceives of personality as a set of traits, where a trait is a tendency to think, act, and/or feel a certain way and constitutes a relatively stable difference between individuals that persists both over time and across situations. Psychologists often distinguish cognitive traits, such as verbal intelligence, from personality traits, which are wide-ranging and include adaptability, assertiveness, empathy, humility, impulsivity, optimism, and timidity, to name just a few.

'Character,' which tends to appear more frequently in the philosophical literature than in psychology,[4] can be understood in a couple of different ways (Russell 2009, 292-293). It can be used holistically in the ethical evaluation of an individual's personality, as in, 'She is a woman of great character.' It can also refer to a subset of personality, namely, those personality traits with moral import. This subset of traits would include, for example, cowardice, courage, and rashness.

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[4] Although the growing field of positive psychology, which focuses its attention on healthy human psychology, has brought increased attention to character by psychologists. See, for example, the work of Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (2004).

According to an Aristotelian understanding, a virtue is an excellent character trait. A 'standard list' of virtues would include benevolence, honesty, loyalty, courage, generosity, and justice (Hursthouse 1999, 34). It is worth noting that even though many philosophers use 'character' to refer to a subset of personality, they do not necessarily agree on *which* traits constitute character. While it is uncontroversial that the traits on the standard list have moral import, the status of others is more disputed—for example, the Aristotelian virtues of temperance and magnificence. In order to qualify as a virtue, however, a trait must meet two interrelated requirements: 1) the trait must characteristically benefit its possessor, that is, it must characteristically allow him/her to live a flourishing, or *eudaimon*, life; and 2) the trait must contribute to making its possessor a good human being, that is, good *qua* human being (Hursthouse 1999, 167).[5]

The notion of virtue-as-excellence needs to be emphasized because our everyday, non-philosophical employment of virtue language does not always track the Aristotelian conception (Hursthouse 1999, 13-14). For example, we sometimes find ourselves saying or thinking things like, 'He is too honest,' or, 'She is honest to a fault.' On an Aristotelian understanding of virtue, however, just as it is impossible to be too excellent, it is impossible to be too virtuous. It does not make sense on an Aristotelian understanding of virtue, then, to say that someone is 'too honest.' This is not to say, of course, that the Aristotelian could not, at least sometimes, capture the notion behind the attribution of 'too honest.' For instance, one might be able to point out that, in this or that particular case, it is not that this person is 'too honest,' but rather that she is overly frank or perhaps even tactless. And the fact that s/he is this way is evidence that she does *not* possess the virtue of honesty.

Virtue ethicists often explain character traits in terms of dispositions. Psychologists, too, will sometimes use the term 'disposition' interchangeably with 'trait.' Some care must be taken with the

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[5] Hursthouse calls these "Plato's requirement on the virtues."

disposition language, however.  For virtue ethicists, a character trait is a multi-track disposition, encompassing not only beliefs, actions, and motives, but also "desires, emotions and emotional reactions, perceptions, attitudes, interests, and expectations" (Hursthouse 2006a, 101).  Such a multi-track disposition includes internal psychological tendencies as well as external behavioral manifestations.  Psychologists, by contrast, have traditionally employed a thinner notion of 'disposition,' namely that of a behavioral disposition, and so have restricted their focus to external behavior.  It is this latter notion of 'trait' that is employed in the studies discussed earlier as frequently cited by philosophical situationists.

Traditionally, the assumption in psychology was that a trait predisposed an individual to engage in particular types of behavior, and that this took the form of a direct relationship (Shoda 1999, 157).  Under this assumption, the greater degree to which an individual possesses a particular trait, the more frequently she would engage in the corresponding behavior.  For example, according to the behavioral dispositional conception of traits, the more cheerful I am, the more frequently I will exhibit cheerful behavior.  In other words, if I am accurately described as a cheerful person, then I should engage in cheerful behavior more often than the average person across all, or at least the vast majority, of the situations in which I find myself.  Differences in my cheerful behavior are seen as due to the situations that I encounter.  One would expect, for instance, that I will be less cheerful when visiting a cemetery than when visiting a friend's home.  But if I am a cheerful person, then my behavior at the cemetery will still be more cheerful than that of the other, 'non-cheerful' people at the cemetery.  Any further differences in my behavior—say, that I am more cheerful when visiting one friend's home than another's—is just 'noise' that can be ignored by finding my average level of cheerfulness across all of my visits to friend's homes.

In summary: Character is a subset of personality.  The virtues are excellences of character. While both philosophers and psychologists have thought of the virtues as character traits explained

in terms of dispositions, they have meant very different things by 'disposition.' As we shall see, however, some psychologists have challenged the traditional psychological understanding of traits.

## The Cognitive-Affective Processing System (CAPS) Model

The notion of traits as behavioral dispositions was dealt a serious blow by Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (1968), which surveyed the available data—including many of the studies cited by philosophical situationists against virtue ethics—and became one of the leading criticisms of traditional trait theory. The data, Mischel contends, simply does not support the view of traits as behavioral dispositions. Traits do not appear to be directly tied to the frequency with which particular types of behavior are manifested; rather, individuals' behavior across situations varies significantly. The behavioral disposition view of traits simply cannot account for this variation.

Mischel did not give up on traits, however. Instead, he and Shoda have worked to unify the trait and process paradigms of personality theory. They take as their starting point the view of personality as a system of mediating processes. Unlike the view of personality as behavioral dispositions, this process model of personality holds that an individual's psychological features influence not only the frequency of behaviors, but also when and where those behaviors are manifested (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 248). However, the process model, Mischel and Shoda argue, does not preclude a role for traits in a theory of personality. Rather, they contend, even on a process model of personality, traits are important and useful concepts. What needs dispensing with is the identification of traits with behavioral dispositions, not the notion of 'trait' itself.

According to Mischel and Shoda's model, the processing system that constitutes an individual's personality is composed of a variety of cognitive-affective units (CAUs) (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 252-253). Unlike the personality-as-behavioral-disposition model, where the central focus is on observable characteristics of behavior, Mischel and Shoda take these CAUs to be primary (Shoda 1999, 165). They outline five main types of CAUs: 1) encodings, which include

constructs of the self, as well as of other people and situations;[6] 2) expectancies and beliefs about the social world, including beliefs about one's own self-efficacy and about expected outcomes in particular situations; 3) affects, which include feelings, emotions, as well as affective and physiological responses; 4) goals and outcomes, including desirable and undesirable outcomes, as well as life projects; and 5) competencies and self-regulatory plans, which include the potential behaviors one can do and the strategies one has for organizing one's behavior as well as one's own internal states. These various CAUs are not discrete, but rather dynamically interrelated (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 253-255). They are activated and inhibited both by external stimuli, such as the setting in which an agent finds herself, and internal stimuli, such as the agent's affective state or goal. Different CAUs are activated or inhibited in different situations and/or on different occasions, and activating or inhibiting one CAU can activate or inhibit others. For instance, a particular belief may in turn activate a related desire. When a set of CAUs has been repeatedly activated in a particular pattern, that set becomes organized into a network, and the relationships between those CAUs become stable.

Individuals differ according to the CAUs that are available to them, the ease with which they can access the CAUs that are available to them, as well as the organization of the relationships between those CAUs. For example, people differ in the ease with which they can access feelings of irritability or distress, with some people with easy access to these units experiencing these affective states more frequently (Eysenck and Eysenck 1985). And while I encode a trip to the beach as hot and uncomfortable, an encoding which triggers a negative affective state and strategies by which I can attempt to extricate myself from the situation, others may encode a trip to the beach as relaxing and restorative, which triggers in them a positive affective state and strategies to put off their departure. The patterns of relationships between CAUs in an individual, Mischel and Shoda have

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[6] I discuss encodings in more detail in the next chapter.

shown, result in discernable *if…then* patterns of behavior on the part of that individual.  To continue

with the beach example, one could say of me that *if* scorching hot sand is involved, *then* Denise acts

grumpy.  An individual's *if…then* patterns of behavior are stable, resulting in what Mischel and

Shoda call '*if…then* situation-behavior profiles.'

The stability of these *if…then* situation-behavior profiles, Mischel and Shoda argue, allows

for a reconceptualization of personality traits.  They concede that behavior varies across situations;

on that count, the evidence seems undeniable.  This variability does not mean that personality is

incoherent, however, because the *patterns* of variability are stable, distinctive, and predictable

(Mischel 1999, 43).  These patterns themselves, then, constitute relatively stable and persisting

differences between individuals.  So instead of conceiving of traits as behavioral dispositions,

Mischel and Shoda conclude, a personality trait should be conceived of as a set of interrelated CAUs

that result in robust *if…then* patterns of behavior.  An individual acquires a personality trait through

the repeated activation of the set of CAUs that constitute that trait.

According to Mischel and Shoda, the key to uncovering these *if…then* patterns of behavior is

in the classification of the situations being studied.  Situations are constituted by a much wider range

of features than has been typically acknowledged in psychologists' search for behavioral dispositions

(Mischel and Shoda 1995, 215-252).  In the studies usually marched out by philosophical

situationists, for instance, situations are classified nominally, that is, according to their external—

sometimes also called 'objective'—features.  Such nominal features would include, for example, that

there is money sitting out on the table, or that there is a dime in the phone booth coin return.  In

addition to nominal features, however, situations also consist of features that are internal to the

subject(s), and which may depend upon their subjective perception of the external features of the

situation (Mischel 1973).  Such internal, or 'psychological,' features could include interpersonal

relationships—for example, whether the other individuals involved are peers or authority figures—

or particular fears that an individual may have, such as the fear of failure or fear of rejection. Traditional trait theorists have tended to ignore these psychological features but, Mischel and Shoda argue, this is a mistake.

Attention must be paid to the psychological features of situations because, like nominal features, they too can activate or inhibit the CAUs of an individual's personality system. Take, for example, individuals whose deep-seated fear of rejection has rendered them what psychologists call 'rejection sensitive' (Downey and Feldman 1996). These individuals have easy access to the expectancy of being rejected, and so this particular CAU is often activated. Expecting to be rejected, they are always on the lookout for potential signs that they are about to be rejected by a partner. As a result, they tend to perceive rejection in what are otherwise ambiguous situations. This perceived rejection then tends to generate hostile behavior (Ayduk et al. 1999). Note that what triggers the process that generates the hostile behavior is the *perceived* rejection, not any particular nominal feature of the situation. In order to uncover an individual's stable *if…then* patterns of behavior, then, psychologists need to attend to both nominal and psychological features when classifying situations. Regarding nominal features, they must attend specifically to those that are salient to the *subject*, and which activate or inhibit her CAUs (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 250).

When one attends to both the psychological features and the nominal features which are salient to the subjects across various situations, Mischel and Shoda contend, the *if…then* patterns of behavior of the individuals emerge. They proffer two empirical studies in support of their methodology for classifying situations and the *if…then* patterns thereby uncovered: the study of student conscientiousness at Carleton College (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 5-6) and the study of aggression in children at a summer camp (Shoda, Mischel, and Wright 1994).[7] In the Carleton

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[7] For a more recent study of youth baseball coaches that finds further support for situation-behavior consistencies, see Smith et al. (2009).

College study, college students were repeatedly observed in a variety of situations that they had identified in pretesting as relevant to conscientiousness, such as in the library or in class. While consistency in conscientious behavior across all of the situations was low, and not significantly different between those students who thought they were conscientious and those who did not think they were conscientious, those who viewed themselves as conscientious *did* exhibit stable situation-behavior profiles, *unlike* those who did not view themselves as conscientious. In the summer camp study, the behavior of children at a summer camp was observed over the course of the two-month program. Their behaviors in various interpersonal situations, such as being warned by an adult counselor or being teased by a peer, were recorded. The data was then averaged to arrive at a mean level of aggression for each situation. When an individual child's behavior was plotted against the mean levels, distinctive situation-behavior patterns emerged. For instance, one child displayed consistently high levels of aggression when approached prosocially by peers, but only average levels of aggression in other situations.

Mischel and Shoda have developed a rich reconceptualization of personality traits as cognitive-affective processing systems. Their CAPS model eschews exclusive focus on external behavior by emphasizing an individual's subjective construal of a situation and by taking into account the psychological features of a situation in addition to its nominal features. Their detection of distinctive *if…then* situation-behavior profiles, however, allows the model to retain an important notion of consistency.

## The CAPS Model and Virtue Ethics

Recently, some virtue ethicists have embraced Mischel and Shoda's reconceptualization of personality traits as providing virtue ethicists with a framework for an empirically plausible notion of a character trait (Russell 2009, Snow 2010). They argue that a CAPS conception of character traits could provide the stability and consistency of which philosophical situationists are skeptical. The

existence of stable, cross-situationally consistent traits is empirically plausible, so the argument goes, as long as one does not construe 'cross-situational consistency' as consistency across situations as characterized solely by their nominal features (hereafter 'nominal consistency').

Mischel and Shoda's work seems to supply virtue ethicists with a promising reply to the philosophical situationists, as Daniel Russell (2009)and Nancy Snow (2010) have both argued. However, even if one agrees that virtue ethicists have never meant by 'trait' or 'disposition' a mere behavioral disposition—a point often raised in the negative responses to philosophical situationists (e.g., Annas 2005a)—considerably more work needs to be done before it is clear that virtue ethics can take on board a CAPS conception of traits. In particular, a CAPS conception of traits appears to present two main challenges for virtue ethics. First, the CAPS model places considerable emphasis on an individual's internal, psychological features, and, more specifically, on the individual's subjective construal of the situation. As I explain below, one might worry that if virtue ethics were to take the model on board, the normative theory would collapse into a kind of subjectivism. Second, a CAPS conception of traits embraces nominal inconsistency in the behavior of individuals. If virtue ethics were likewise to embrace such nominal inconsistency, one might worry that the theory's ability to provide action guidance and assessment would be undermined.

In emphasizing the psychological features of a situation, a CAPS conception of traits holds that an individual's subjective construal of situations is of utmost importance when attempting to uncover stable *if…then* situation-behavior profiles (Shoda 1999, 168). Recall the example of rejection-sensitive individuals: it is the *perception* of rejection that generates hostile behavior. This emphasis on subjective construal seems reasonable, as it is quite plausible that an individual's construal of a situation would be central to understanding her behavior. For instance, it would probably be difficult to make sense of the behavior of gang members without reference to the ways in which they construe situations as demanding a demonstration of loyalty to their gang. And we

would expect gang members—successful ones, at least—to demonstrate considerable consistency in those situations in which they take a demonstration of loyalty to be demanded, that is, we would expect them rather consistently to meet the demand as they construe it. A CAPS conception of traits, then, would allow us in this case to recognize these gang members as possessing stable, robust traits of loyalty—at least, of loyalty as they construe it.

This, however, is where things get tricky for virtue ethics. As psychologists, Mischel and Shoda's project is primarily descriptive. Through a CAPS conception of traits, they are attempting to understand, describe, explain, and predict people's behavior. Virtue ethics, however, is a normative ethical theory. Its concern is not so much with the traits that individuals actually have, but with the traits that they ought to cultivate. So while a CAPS conception of traits might allow us to identify the trait of 'loyalty as construed by this particular gang member,' or perhaps even 'loyalty as construed by this particular gang,' this, in and of itself, is not particularly helpful for virtue ethics. If all the CAPS model does is allow us to identify traits as they are subjectively construed, then one would be stuck with a form of ethical subjectivism, where moral standards are particular to a given individual or group. By contrast, virtue ethics is not concerned with consistency according to an individual's own personal standard, or according to a particular group's standard, as they subjectively construe it (Doris 2002, 84). Virtue ethics, rather, is concerned with consistency in accordance with the standards of *virtue* (Russell 2009, 304-305). And virtues, recall, are *excellences* of character. If virtue ethics is going to embrace a CAPS conception of traits, then there needs to be a way to specify traits *qua* virtues in a way that is consistent with the CAPS model.

Furthermore, it is unclear that virtue ethics can take on board the kind of diversity in behavior that a CAPS conception of traits embraces. As John Doris notes, consistency is relative, and can only be identified according to a particular standard (2002, 80). A CAPS conception of traits provides a way of specifying standards for one kind of consistency, namely, psychological

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consistency. But, Doris is surely right in pointing out, this identification of one kind of consistency does not make the *in*consistency of behavior across nominally classified situations disappear (2002, 78). A CAPS conception of traits embraces nominal inconsistency and focuses instead on psychological consistency. The question is: can virtue ethics do the same without undermining its plausibility as a normative ethical theory? Here again, the descriptive project of Mischel and Shoda and the normative nature of virtue ethics seem at odds.

As a normative ethical theory, virtue ethics is expected to provide action guidance and assessment. Action, then, is still very much a concern for virtue ethicists, as clearly evidenced by the recent literature on virtue and right action (Swanton 2001, Das 2003, Johnson 2003, Gibert and Rossi 2011, Pettigrove 2011, Van Zyl 2011). In addition, when one looks at how virtue ethicists elaborate the multi-track nature of virtue, one sees phrases like, "involving *much more than* tendencies or dispositions to act" (Hursthouse 1999, 11, emphasis added) and "a virtue cannot be adequately understood *just* as a disposition to perform actions" (Annas 2011, 28, emphasis added). Such language leaves little doubt that—whatever else we might expect of virtuous individuals—we *also* expect them to act in certain ways, and to do so reliably.

At the same time, however, virtue ethicists have always held that what counts as virtuous may vary from situation to situation. So it would seem that nominal inconsistency would pose no challenge for virtue ethics. But most virtues are fleshed out, at least in part, in terms of tendencies to perform specific kinds of actions. Thus, the honest tend to tell the truth, and the compassionate tend to help those in need. On a CAPS conception of traits, however, it would seem that sometimes a virtuous agent would act in these ways and sometimes not. Now, one may point out the all-important qualification of 'tends to'—after all, no one expects virtuous agents to be perfect, and there are always exceptional circumstances. The variations in behavior allowed for on a CAPS conception of traits, however, seem to be considerably more wide-ranging than the occasional slip-

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up or exceptional circumstances. And this may pose a significant problem for virtue ethics. If, in taking on a CAPS conception of traits, the virtue ethicist can no longer say that the virtuous tend to tell the truth, or tend to help those in need, then the ability of virtue ethics to provide meaningful action guidance and assessment is once again called into question. After all, this sort of objection has been raised against virtue ethics before. During its initial resurgence, virtue ethics' more devout particularists,[8] who argued that general principles have a small—if any—role to play in ethics, provoked objections to virtue ethics' ability to provide action guidance and assessment.[9]

## Providing a Psychological Account of Virtue

The previous section shows that much more needs to be said about psychological consistency in relation to virtue, and about the manifestation of virtue, before it is clear that virtue ethics can take on board a CAPS conception of traits. Virtue ethics needs to be able to provide an account of virtue in terms of psychological consistency. In addition, the account would need to allow for the kind of behavioral diversity across nominally classified situations that a CAPS conception of traits embraces—that is, for diversity that is considerably more wide-ranging than the occasional slip-up or exceptional circumstances. If the account is unable to allow for this, then it would seem as though virtue ethics is unable to accommodate a CAPS conception of traits, and that the empirical plausibility of the ethical theory might still be in doubt. Furthermore, if virtue ethics is to remain a plausible normative theory, this account must still allow virtue ethics to provide action guidance and assessment.

Despite the fact that action has maintained a rather prominent role in most accounts of virtue in the literature to date, there are some good reasons to think that virtue ethics would be able

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[8] The most prominent of whom is probably John McDowell (1998g). It is controversial, however, whether McDowell's position in "Virtue and Reason" holds that there are no general principles in ethics (Hursthouse 1999, 57-58).
[9] Such objections were so prevalent that Hursthouse devotes considerable space to defending virtue ethics against them in *On Virtue Ethics* (1999, Chapters 1-3).

to provide an account of virtue in terms of psychological consistency. For one, there is a rich tradition of virtue as both cognitive *and* affective, going all the way back to Aristotle. As noted earlier, virtue ethicists take virtue to be a complex, multi-track disposition, and so have always included psychological features in their elaboration of virtue. For example, virtue ethicists have long insisted on the importance of acting for certain kinds of reasons, and of having certain kinds of motivations and emotions (Hursthouse 1999, 11-12). There are also John McDowell's well-known analogies between virtue and perception, through which he emphasizes the virtuous person's sensitivity to the demands of a situation, since the virtuous person "sees situations in a certain distinctive way" (1998g). As I go on to argue in the next chapter, McDowell's account in particular provides a promising avenue for virtue ethics to pursue in accommodating the emphasis that the CAPS model places on subjective construal. If virtue ethics is to take on board a CAPS conception of traits, however, these psychological aspects of virtue need to be spelled out in a way that is consistent with the CAPS model.

As prominent proponents of a CAPS conception of virtue, Russell and Snow have both outlined potential accounts of virtue that would be consistent with a CAPS conception of traits, although neither has gone into great detail. Russell suggests that an account of virtue can be fleshed out primarily in terms of the goals one seeks out and the reasons to which one responds (2009, 328-331). He defines a virtue as "a character trait by which one regularly, and with phronesis [practical wisdom], acts for reasons that we can take to be good reasons from within an overall ethical framework" (Russell 2009, 330). A virtuous person, on this view, is one who regularly seeks out virtuous goals and regularly responds for certain kinds of (virtuous) reasons.

Russell's specification of virtue, however, strikes me as inadequate for a few reasons. First, the approach appears to be too exclusively focused on the cognitive side of the picture. To be fair, his discussion of CAPS and the standards of virtue are part of a larger project of defending the role

of practical wisdom within virtue ethics. It is no surprise, then, that it focuses on the cognitive side of things. But given the multi-track nature of virtue as traditionally conceived, as well as the CAPS conception of traits as cognitive-affective bundles, it would seem a minimum requirement that any adequate account of virtue address both the cognitive *and* the affective. For example, the virtuous not only respond for certain kinds of reasons, but also have certain kinds of motivations, desires, and attitudes.

In addition, these motivations, desires, attitudes, and so on would seem to form a crucial part of an account of virtue, since it seems unlikely that reasons-responsiveness alone is enough to distinguish the virtuous from the merely continent. Most neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists maintain the distinction that Aristotle draws between the fully virtuous and the continent, who act in accordance with virtue but, unlike the fully virtuous, must overcome contrary desires in order to do so.[10] Indeed, it is to preserve this distinction that Russell adds the qualification "and with phronesis." After all, the continent individual makes and acts on the right decision, in accordance with reason (1151b1-5).[11] For example, although the continent person would much rather *not* tell her spouse about the bonus she recently received at work so as to be able to spend it all on fun stuff, she knows that the honest, just, and respectful thing to do is to tell her spouse so that they can discuss together how best to allocate the funds. And that is, in fact, what she does, despite her desire to the contrary. What distinguishes the continent from the virtuous are not reasons and actions, but rather appetites and feelings.[12] The continent have "base appetites" and find things "against reason" pleasant (1151b33-1152a3), even though they do not give in to those appetites and feelings. Russell's exclusion of the continent through the qualification "with phronesis" fails to address these differences in appetites and feelings, which seem to be psychologically important.

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[10] I offer some considerations in Chapters 5 and 6 for why that distinction is worthwhile.

[11] Unless otherwise noted, all references to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* are from Terence Irwin's translation (1999).

[12] And this, in turn, affects their construals of situations, as I argue in the next chapter.

Furthermore, one worries that Russell's definition may be circular since, on a traditional Aristotelian understanding, if one has phronesis, then one possesses all of the virtues, and vice versa.[13] It would seem that an adequate account of virtue, then, would be better off including some account of the appetites and feelings of the virtuous.

Snow grounds her account of virtue as social intelligence in the motivations of the virtuous person (2010, 85-93). On this view, the virtuous person's motivations influence how she construes the situations in which she finds herself, as well as the other CAUs that constitute the virtue in question. If those motivations were to be replaced with other, say vicious, motivations, then the activation and inhibition of the other CAUs would change as well. For example, a virtuous person is motivated to be generous, and it is that motivation which allows the virtuous person to construe a situation in which she encounters someone in need as an opportunity to respond generously. By contrast, a stingy person, motivated as she is to hoard her possessions, may construe that same (nominal) situation of a person in need as a time to hang back and avoid attention, lest she be pressured to provide assistance.

In contrast to Russell, Snow's approach does not seem to be cognitive enough. While it is true that if I am virtuous, I will have certain kinds of motivations, in order for me to be truly virtuous, those motivations need to move me to respond in ways that are in accordance with the demands of virtue. Suppose, for example, that I am motivated to be honest, and so construe situations in which I interact with others as opportunities to be honest. As a result, I say exactly what is on my mind in these situations, steadfastly avoiding sugar-coating or editing my comments, and refusing to bite my tongue. While I may be manifesting the trait of 'honesty as I construe it,' I am certainly not manifesting the *virtue* of honesty. Here my failure may not be motivational, but cognitive: I fail to understand what the virtue of honesty involves. And given the multi-track nature

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[13] I defend Aristotle's thesis of the reciprocity of the virtues in Chapter 4.

of virtue, it seems unlikely that one can cash out what the virtue of honesty involves solely, or even primarily, in terms of motivation.

A similar worry applies to Snow's emphasis on motivation's influence on subjective construal. Imagine someone who is in the process of acquiring virtue. This 'learner' is sincerely motivated to be generous. Much like the rejection-sensitive individuals discussed earlier, who are always on the lookout for potential rejection, our learner is on constant alert for situations in which she can exercise generosity. And, just as rejection-sensitive individuals perceive rejection in ambiguous situations, the learner sees opportunities to exercise generosity everywhere, even where it is unclear that such opportunities actually exist. For example, she still insists on helping out on days when the soup kitchen is already fully staffed, she is always giving her friends 'gifts' they neither want nor need, and she gives money to every organization that solicits her, regardless of the cause, political affiliation, or track record of success. This learner's motivation is clearly influencing her construal of the situations that she encounters. But something is still going awry: she does not seem to be reading these situations *correctly*. So although Snow is surely right in that one's motivations can shape one's subjective construal of situations, when it comes to virtue, there needs to be some story about how one gets that construal *right*. And again, that story looks as though it will need to involve much more than just motivation.

I hope my remarks have made it clear that I think that both Russell and Snow are on the right track. Goals, reasons, and motivations will all to have to be part of an account of virtue. But to specify virtue in terms of goals and reasons, as Russell does, or in terms of motivation, as Snow does, fails both to address the variety of CAUs involved in a CAPS conception of traits and to capture the multi-track nature of virtue as it is typically elaborated by virtue ethicists. What is needed, then, is a fuller account of virtue—an account that provides for robust psychological consistency while allowing for nominal inconsistency.

## Two Concerns

At this point, two concerns need to be addressed. The first is the worry that virtue ethics might be putting all of its eggs in one basket, so to speak, by elaborating an account of virtue in a way that is consistent with a CAPS conception of traits. After all, as the fields of social and personality psychology advance, the picture of personality traits is likely to change. The concern is that if virtue ethics ties itself too closely to a psychological picture that is surely bound to change, the ethical theory will risk invalidation or irrelevance at the first major revision of the CAPS model.

One must concede that advances in psychology may very well lead to revision of the CAPS model. How significant those revisions will be remains to be seen. A few things are worth noting, however. First of all, the CAPS model is no flash in the pan. Mischel and Shoda have been developing the model for over forty years. The model is particularly noteworthy because it reconciles what have been the two main paradigms of personality research to date: dispositional, or trait, theory and psychodynamic theory (Shoda and Mischel 1998). CAPS itself, then, represents a major advance in personality theory. And, as discussed earlier, the empirical evidence in support of the model is promising.

It is also important to emphasize that the CAUs identified by Mischel and Shoda are not foreign to discussions of virtue, although the specific language may differ slightly. Virtue ethicists do not tend to discuss encodings, but they do often emphasize perception, perceptual capacity, and salience (McDowell 1998f, g). And while 'expectancy' does not often appear in the virtue ethics literature—although Rosalind Hursthouse does note that virtue encompasses expectations (2006a, 101)—the notion of practical wisdom (phronesis), which "involves getting things right" (Hursthouse 1999, 12), clearly includes the kinds of beliefs and expectancies outlined by Mischel and Shoda. Discussion of affect goes all the way back to Aristotle, who insisted that virtue has to do with actions *and* feelings (1106b25, see also Burnyeat 1999). Finally, the analogy between virtue and skill

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(1103a31-1103b1), recently explored in depth by Julia Annas (2011), involves discussion not only of goals and outcomes, but also of competencies and self-regulatory plans. That these CAUs are already part and parcel of virtue ethics suggests that taking the CAPS model on board does not require wholesale revision of the theory. The project here, then, is not to change virtue ethics, or to devise a new version of virtue ethics. Rather, what the CAPS model requires of virtue ethics is primarily *elaboration*. As will become clear, the traditional glosses in terms of tendencies to act in certain ways will no longer suffice. Worries about virtue ethics' vulnerability should the CAPS model be revised, however, should not be overblown.

The second worry has to do with the CAPS model itself. Some have complained that the CAPS model is so uncontroversial as to be uninteresting (Miller 2014, Ch5). While this might further quell the first concern, it raises another: that the CAPS model is of little use, including to virtue ethics. Christian Miller, for example, dismisses the CAPS model by claiming: "using technical language, the CAPS model re-describes and finds supporting evidence for basic platitudes of commonsense folk psychology" (2014, 108). That the model confirms platitudes of commonsense folk psychology, however, is in large part what makes it so valuable, because the situationist critique alleges that folk psychology is simply *wrong*. That the model has become so mainstream as to be considered uninteresting means that virtue ethics will not be courting psychological controversy in drawing on it.

That said, it is important to be clear about the limitations of the CAPS model. The model provides a framework for conceptualizing traits. It does not itself identify traits; rather, it lays out a map, so to speak, by which one can go about identifying traits. Similarly, it does not provide a substantive account of the specific CAUs that constitute a given trait. Even if virtue ethics takes on board the CAPS model, then, the normative theory still will have to do the hard work of

individuating virtues and fleshing out psychological accounts of those virtues, work that I begin to do in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

Finally, virtue ethics cannot get around the fact that it is committed to the existence of character traits. Character traits are a feature of human psychology. This means that virtue ethics will always, to some degree, be vulnerable to the empirical findings in psychology, and moreover, that whatever virtue ethics has to say about character traits has to be psychologically plausible. This sentiment not only gets the situationist critique going, but also impacts much of the work done in virtue ethics, as can be seen, for example, in Neera Badhwar's (1996, 2009) and Christian Miller's (2013, 2014) attempts to limit the scope of virtue. Although the psychology is always open to revision, virtue ethicists need to work with what is available. And, as I argue over the course of this dissertation, understanding virtue via the CAPS model opens up new and interesting ways for virtue ethicists to develop empirically plausible accounts of the virtues that incorporate the best available psychological research.

## Conclusion

Philosophical situationists present a serious objection to virtue ethics with their claim that humans do not appear to be psychologically the sorts of creatures to develop robust traits. Mischel and Shoda's reconceptualization of personality traits as cognitive-affective processing systems seems to supply virtue ethicists with a promising and empirically plausible reply. Before virtue ethics can take on board a CAPS conception of traits, however, two challenges must be met: 1) virtue ethics must show how it can avoid a collapse into subjectivism by elaborating an account of virtue in a way that is consistent with the CAPS model, and 2) virtue ethics' acceptance of the kind of nominal inconsistency embraced by the CAPS model cannot undermine its ability to provide action guidance and assessment. There are good reasons to think that virtue ethics can meet these challenges, as I shall argue in the following chapters.

The project proceeds as follows.  In light of the CAPS model's emphasis on subjective construal, the account of virtue that I develop begins with an elaboration of the distinctive way in which the virtuous person construes situations, which I use to develop and defend a McDowellian view of practical reasoning.  In Chapter 3, I suggest that this notion of 'virtuous construal,' as I call it, opens up space for normativity in the CAPS model, since the virtuous person's construal of a situation is not only distinctive, but also correct.  Since most of us, however, are not fully virtuous, I draw on the work of Michael Smith to elaborate an advice model of correct construal.  This advice model, I argue, anchors a normative notion of subjective construal while appropriately accounting for individuals' shortcomings.

In Chapter 4 I shift from considering virtue in general to providing a framework for CAPS accounts of particular virtues.  I defend Aristotle's doctrine of the reciprocity of the virtues and his methodology of individuating the virtues according to their objects, both of which have fallen out of favor among many virtue ethicists.  I employ his methodology in spelling out a framework of 'thin' and 'thick' accounts of individual virtues, where the thin account specifies the field of the virtue and grounds the account in an Aristotelian notion of excellence, and the thick account elaborates the particular cognitive-affective elements that constitute the virtue.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I apply the account of virtue that I have developed to the virtues of courage and patience.  In Chapter 7 I argue that these accounts show how the action guidance and assessment capabilities of virtue ethics remain intact.  Finally, I explore some of the implications for virtue ethics of taking on board the CAPS model.

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## Virtuous Construal: In Defense of Silencing

The CAPS model holds that an individual's subjective construal of situations is of utmost importance when attempting to understand that individual's behavior. From a psychological standpoint, this emphasis on subjective construal is quite reasonable. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it would probably be difficult to make sense of the behavior of gang members without reference to the ways in which they construe situations as demanding a demonstration of loyalty to their gang. Any adequate CAPS account of virtue, then, must say something about subjective construal, a process which involves selective attention to, as well as interpretation and categorization of, stimulus input into meaningful units (Mischel 1973, 267-268).

In the context of virtue ethics, perhaps the philosopher for whom subjective construal plays the most significant role is John McDowell. Over the course of several articles, McDowell describes the practical reasoning of the virtuous person via an analogy between virtue and perception, whereby the virtuous person sees situations in a distinctive way, a way that explains her virtuous behavior. Despite its influence on many prominent virtue ethicists, including Julia Annas (2005b) and Rosalind Hursthouse (2013), McDowell's view remains obscure and abstract and has been criticized as psychologically unrealistic (Blackburn 1998, Jacobson 2005, Seidman 2005). In this chapter, I develop and defend a McDowellian view of practical reasoning that is consistent with the CAPS model. I begin by presenting McDowell's view and some criticisms of it. I then defend the phenomenon of silencing against what, I contend, is a misunderstanding of McDowell's position. I argue that the view does not require the virtuous to be as detached and unfeeling as it might first appear and suggest that skepticism regarding the existence of the phenomenon of silencing looks unwarranted. Finally, I offer what I argue is a psychologically plausible interpretation of the claim that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way.

# McDowell's Perceptual Analogies

McDowell likens virtue to a perceptual capacity; the virtuous, he claims, see situations in a distinctive sort of way. Briefly, his picture of the virtuous person's psychology is as follows: knowledge of how one ought to live combines with knowledge of the particulars of a situation to produce a view of that situation in which one fact about the situation is seen as salient (1998g, 65-69). This "salience" then "meshes" (67) with particular concerns of the individual to yield action. Let us examine this picture in more detail.

McDowell is a particularist; he holds that ethics cannot be codified into a set of universal principles.[1] Consistent with this particularist position, McDowell is explicit that "knowledge of how one ought to live" is not merely propositional knowledge and certainly not knowledge of universal principles (1998g, 73). Rather, it is one's moral outlook, "a specific determination of one's practical rationality" (1998g, 58) that has both evaluative and affective aspects. In other words, it is one's virtuous character. Clearly, McDowell is using 'knowledge' here in a rather uncommon way. Because the virtuous, by definition, have the *correct* moral outlook, we can think of them, McDowell suggests, as having knowledge. For those of us who are not fully virtuous, our moral outlooks or characters play the same psychological role as the virtuous person's does, even though we do not qualify as having knowledge in this regard. Going forward then, I will drop the reference to knowledge and refer to one's moral outlook or conception of how to live, in order to be inclusive of those who are less than fully virtuous.

This last point highlights the fact that, although McDowell focuses on what is distinctive about the virtuous, he elaborates a psychological picture that applies to individuals more generally. The overall idea is that, in upbringing, intellect and desire are shaped *together* (1998d, 40) such that we

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[1] The extent of McDowell's particularism is controversial. Rosalind Hursthouse, for instance, doubts that McDowell holds that there are *no* general principles in ethics (1999, 57-58).

become sensitive to certain sorts of reasons for acting (1998g, 58).[2]  In examining McDowell's

psychological picture, then, we should not lose sight of the fact that, according to the Aristotelian

view, we are *all* shaped by the activities that we repeatedly do such that we come to possess a

character of one sort or another (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.1).

Knowledge of the particulars of a situation includes "all" facts that could be, as McDowell

puts it, "potentially reason-yielding" (1998g, 69 n.31).  One may worry that McDowell is expecting

omniscience here with his inclusion of *all* facts, but his point is better understood in light of his

claim that the virtuous arrive at a view of the situation in which a single fact or aspect is seen as

salient.  McDowell's use of "all" facts is meant, I think, to emphasize that virtue is not a matter of

putting on blinders, so that the virtuous see only the salience and nothing else.  Rather, it is a matter

of taking in the situation as a whole and focusing on what is important so that other considerations

which, in other circumstances, might constitute reasons for action, fail to do so in the present

situation.  The virtuous need not—and, indeed, often cannot—be blind to situational features, even

if they do not take those features to be salient.  The courageous, for instance, are not blind to the

risks involved when they decide to stand and fight.  Likewise, the temperate are not ignorant of the

deliciousness of the chocolate cake they pass up.  Yet in their respective views of the situations,

these features—the risks and the deliciousness—are not salient.

One's conception of how to live, that is, one's moral outlook as constituted by one's

character, combines with what one knows about a particular situation to produce a specific view of

that situation.  McDowell insists that the virtuous person's view of the situation is distinctive.  He

highlights that distinctiveness by contrasting the virtuous person's view with that of the vicious, on

the one hand, and the continent and incontinent on the other.

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[2] McDowell refuses to draw a sharp distinction between the intellectual and desiderative components of one's character, and this puts him at odds with what he calls the 'quasi-Humean' reading of Aristotle and with Humeans more generally.

The vicious person sees no reason at all to be virtuous; she has, therefore, a considerably different conception of how to live than the virtuous person does. As a result, her view of a particular situation will be significantly different from the way a virtuous person would see it (1998a, 80). As an example, say that a man walking down the sidewalk has unwittingly dropped a hundred dollar bill. A virtuous person walking behind him sees that he dropped his money and that she can return it to him, which she does. Contrast this with a vicious person: she sees an opportunity to pocket the bill and continue on her merry way one hundred dollars richer, which she does. Both women in this example seem to have the same knowledge of the particulars of the situation, yet the way in which this knowledge combines with their conceptions of how to live yields widely differing views of the situation: one sees an opportunity to help while the other sees an opportunity for self-enrichment. Anyone who doubts the degree to which these two see the situation differently need only to propose to one the other's course of action. The likely response would be: 'Why in the world would I do *that*?'

Things become trickier with the continent and the incontinent, however. Unlike the vicious, they do not respond to the prospect of acting as the virtuous acts with, 'Why in the world would I do *that*?' Although the continent fights an inclination to keep the money and the incontinent goes ahead and pockets it, they both know that they ought to return the money. They seem, then, to see the situation in the same way that the virtuous person does. This understanding, however, would undermine McDowell's insistence that the virtuous see the situation in a distinctive way. What we get from McDowell on this point is the following image: "Their [the continent and incontinent's] inclinations are aroused, as the virtuous person's are not, by their awareness of competing attractions: a lively desire clouds or blurs the focus of their attention on 'the noble'" (1998a, 92). So, McDowell concedes, there is an extent to which the continent and incontinent do share the virtuous

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person's conception of the situation, unlike the vicious, but their views are at best approximations (1998d, 47).

The key to grasping the difference between the views of the continent and incontinent on the one hand and the virtuous on the other, McDowell argues, is to understand that, for all three, the formation of the judgment about what one ought to do is not the result of a process of weighing reasons for and against particular courses of action. Let us continue with the example of the dropped money. According to McDowell, the virtuous person does not consider competing reasons for action. She does not weigh reasons to return the money against reasons to keep it, with the former winning out. Rather, she focuses on the fact that the man failed to realize that he had dropped *his* money. For the virtuous, nothing else about the situation—such as the fact that she could pocket the money without anyone noticing—matters. Any features of the situation that could serve as reasons to do something other than return the money are, in McDowell's language, "silenced" (1998g, 56). I discuss the phenomenon of silencing in more detail later in this chapter; for now, we can understand silenced considerations as failing to operate as reasons in the individual's practical reasoning. In the example, the feature upon which the virtuous person focuses—that the man failed to realize that he had dropped *his* money—engages with one of her concerns, say, her concern for other people's property, and this yields the action that she performs, namely picking up the money and returning it to its owner.

In judging what they ought to do, the continent and incontinent do not weigh reasons, either, according to McDowell; however things unfold differently for them (1998d, 47). Like the virtuous, they take the fact that the man failed to realize that he had dropped *his* money as important. Their conceptions of how one ought to live are similar enough to that of the virtuous that they know that this is all that they *should* take as important. This allows them to form the judgment that they ought to return the money (or, perhaps better: that the virtuous thing to do

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would be to return the money).  But they do not have the kind of focus that the virtuous do.  Their conception of how one ought to live differs from the virtuous, such that their focus extends to other features of the situation as well, like the fact that the man dropped a *hundred dollar* bill, or that *no one would notice* if they picked it up and put it in their pocket.  In other words, we do not get the silencing that we do with the virtuous, which is why the continent's and incontinent's view of the situation is blurry or clouded, as McDowell says.  Because these other features are in focus as well, concerns other than the one for other people's property—say, how pleasurable it is to spend money—are likely to be engaged.  And this results in the internal struggle experienced by the continent and incontinent that is absent in the virtuous.  The struggle comes, according to McDowell, not from weighing reasons for and against a course of action, but rather from multiple desires that have become engaged due to a lack of focus.

In distinguishing between weighing reasons and engaging multiple concerns, McDowell makes clear his motivation for insisting that the virtuous see the situation in a distinctive way.  First, there is the preservation of Aristotle's distinction between the continent and the virtuous (1998g, 55).  On the weighing reasons picture, the difference between the virtuous and the continent would vanish.  Both would consider reasons to keep the money, reasons that would be more or less promptly overridden by reasons to return it.  There would be no way, McDowell argues, to account for why the continent experience and must overcome desires to act contrary to virtue while the virtuous do not.  If reasons to keep the money exert motivational force on the continent, why would they not do the same on the virtuous?

Furthermore, McDowell contends, the weighing reasons picture looks unable to account for the internal conflict experienced by the continent and incontinent (1998a, 92-93).  Take the incontinent person, for example: she judges that she ought to return the money.  If she weighed reasons for and against keeping the money in order to arrive at that judgment, then her reasons to

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keep the money are outweighed by reasons to return it. Moreover, McDowell points out, the motivational force of the reasons to keep the money would be used up, so to speak, in that process of weighing. Yet the incontinent person goes against her judgment and keeps the money. How, McDowell wonders, could reasons to keep the money possibly continue to exert motivational force on the incontinent individual *after* she has weighed her various reasons and arrived at the judgment that she ought to return the money? Since the continent also experience desires to act contrary to virtue despite their judgment of what ought to be done, the same question would apply to them as well.

If there is to be a meaningful distinction between the virtuous and the continent, and if we are to make sense of the conflict experienced by the continent and incontinent, then there has to be an alternative to the weighing reasons view. Features of the situation that might serve as reasons in favor of acting contrary to virtue are *not* taken into account in arriving at the virtuous person's view of the situation (McDowell 1998a, 93). Their motivational force, therefore, does not get used up as it would if one were to weigh reasons. But since those features are silenced for the virtuous individual, they fail to exert any motivational force on her. The continent and incontinent, however, do not experience silencing the way that the virtuous person does. This means that they *can* experience the motivational force of these features of the situation. This allows multiple concerns of theirs to be engaged simultaneously, resulting in internal struggle.

Before moving on, let me emphasize the narrowness of scope that McDowell grants the psychological phenomenon of silencing (1998g, 53 n.5, 1998a, 93). He commits only to the claim that the virtuous reliably experience silencing in situations where there is a clear requirement of virtue. There will be, one imagines, many situations where there is no clear requirement of virtue: from the relatively unimportant, such as the pleasant irresolvable dilemma of a mother who must choose between equally good birthday presents for her daughter (Hursthouse 1999, 66-67), to

morally weighty hard cases, such as some decisions faced by hospital transplant teams.  A

commitment to silencing does not entail that the virtuous cannot or do not weigh reasons for and

against various courses of action in such situations.[3]

## Criticisms of McDowell's Psychological Picture

Several philosophers have found McDowell's view straightforwardly implausible.  For

example, Daniel Jacobson simply asserts against McDowell that the idea of the individual weighing

reasons "is surely more plausible" (2005, 402).  Simon Blackburn complains that McDowell's notion

of silencing—particularly the way in which the virtuous person is not so much as tempted to do

otherwise—suggests a "god-like nature" that "belongs to nobody, and represents an ideal to which

nobody can approximate" (1998, 37).  Jeffrey Seidman also finds McDowell's view of silencing

implausible, at least in the vast majority of cases (2005).

We can see, then, a few distinct claims being lodged against McDowell.  First, there is

skepticism regarding the existence of the phenomenon of silencing.  There is also the claim that the

more psychologically plausible view of practical reasoning is one of the individual weighing reasons

for and against various courses of action.  Furthermore, there is the worry that McDowell's view is

too idealistic, in the sense that it is inadequately *human*.

One primary source of these objections to McDowell's view is his insistence that nothing

forgone for the sake of virtue constitutes a "genuine loss" for the virtuous.  He elaborates:

> [I]f someone really embraces a specific conception of human excellence, however grounded,
> then that will of itself equip him to understand special employments of the typical notions of
> "prudential" reasoning—the notions of benefit, advantage, harm, loss, and so forth—
> according to which (for instance) no payoff from flouting a requirement of excellence […]
> can count as a genuine advantage; and, conversely, no sacrifice necessitated by the life of
> excellence […] can count as a genuine loss. (1998c, 16-17)

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[3] These examples are a little tricky.  In a sense, there is a clear requirement of virtue: in the birthday example, for
instance, the requirement is to purchase a gift, and so the virtuous mother would experience silencing in that regard.  But
she may then quite reasonably go on to weigh reasons for and against the purchase of various specific gifts.

Sacrifice for the sake of virtue fails to constitute a genuine loss for McDowell because if a consideration is silenced, it fails to constitute a reason for action (1998c, 17). If one forgoes something which one had no reason to secure, then passing up that thing cannot, McDowell contends, count as a loss (1998c, 18). This is so even if the thing forgone is a good that one *would* have reason to secure in other circumstances. We can see, then, how McDowell's notions of silencing and loss go together: if considerations are silenced in the way that McDowell claims, then forgoing the goods that those considerations would otherwise have us pursue cannot register as a loss for the virtuous individual in her practical reasoning because if she registers a loss, then the consideration was not actually silenced.

Many have found McDowell's claims about loss unpalatably Stoic. Seidman gives an example of a shopkeeper faced with bankruptcy, whose only remaining options to prevent losing the business that supports his family involve acting dishonestly:

> [I]f we accept that the shopkeeper would not take the loss of his business to be a genuine loss, we render his previous deliberative efforts unintelligible. If losing the business would not matter to him, why has he struggled so mightily to keep it afloat? One could avoid this difficulty by supposing that when it turns out that there is no morally acceptable way of keeping his business, the shopkeeper suddenly ceases to regard losing it as a genuine loss. But this view is hardly tenable. It is true, of course, that he will recognize that he could avoid the loss of his business only by acting dishonestly—and so enduring a different, and worse, sort of loss. But the lesser of two losses is still a loss. (2005, 73)

How could it be, the objection goes, that the sacrifice of a life's project, or one's health, say, could *fail* to constitute a loss? This would require a degree of detachment or insensitivity on the part of the virtuous that looks simply implausible for humans, if not downright undesirable. The loss of life, health, loved ones, life projects, and so on *are* real losses because they are genuine goods that we generally have reason to pursue. One's reasons to maintain life and health cannot disappear simply because there is a worthy battle to be fought. It must be the case that those reasons are not silenced as McDowell claims, but rather overridden by weightier concerns.

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## Genuine Loss and the Phenomenon of Silencing

While the Stoicism running through McDowell's comments about loss is undeniable, I do

not think his claim that something forgone for the sake of virtue cannot constitute a genuine loss for

the virtuous is as stark as his language and his critics suggest.  McDowell does not deny that things

like life, health, or loved ones are, in fact, goods or that we have, in many cases, reason to pursue

those goods.  For McDowell, however, there are multiple dimensions of worthwhileness, and "that

worthwhileness along the dimension marked out by the concept of *eudaimonia* [happiness or

flourishing] is worthwhileness *par excellence*" (1998d, 41-42).  He continues:

> The relevant dimension of worthwhileness is such that, if a consideration that belongs to it
> bears on a practical predicament, anyone who has learned to appreciate such considerations
> will see that nothing else matters for the question what shape his life should take here and
> now, even if the upshot is a life that is less desirable along other dimensions. (1998d, 43)

This passage suggests that we ought to grant that Seidman's shopkeeper can recognize that

something desirable along one dimension of worthwhileness has been lost.  But when it comes to

whether or not to act dishonestly, the fact that he might lose the store *does not matter* to the virtuous

shopkeeper.  It fails to constitute a reason for acting.  Here is the appropriate response to the

example of the shopkeeper: In *not* acting dishonestly, the shopkeeper has *not* passed up an

opportunity to save the store because he encountered *no such* opportunity.  If the shopkeeper is,

indeed, virtuous, then the decision is not between acting honestly and losing the store, on the one

hand, and acting dishonestly and saving the store on the other.  The *only* option is to act honestly;

there is no reason to act otherwise than honestly.  So there is no opportunity (via dishonest means)

to save the store.  We can imagine the shopkeeper sincerely thinking, "I did everything I could to

keep the store going," where failing to report cash sales on his tax return, while something that

might allow him to keep the store, was simply not on the table, so to speak, as an available option.

From the shopkeeper's perspective, he has not lost the store *because* he acted honestly (as opposed to

dishonestly).  In that sense, then, his exercise of virtue has not caused him to suffer a loss.

Here we see another way in which the phenomenon of silencing ought to be understood as quite narrow in scope. Considerations are silenced *in one's practical reasoning.* They fail to operate as reasons in one's decision regarding what one should do. But that does not mean that these considerations cannot or should not be acknowledged in other ways. The view in no way entails that the virtuous cannot mourn or feel regret (in an appropriate manner and to an appropriate degree). The shopkeeper's life is now less desirable along one dimension of worthwhileness; we have no reason to think that he cannot acknowledge that fact. We can agree, then, with Seidman that something would be amiss if the shopkeeper had no affective response whatsoever to the closing of the store. Indeed, the closing of the store seems to provide a good reason to mourn. But note two things: 1) the prospect of mourning for the store does not, for the virtuous shopkeeper, constitute a reason to act dishonestly in order to keep the store, and 2) the mourning is not evidence that the shopkeeper acknowledges a reason to act otherwise than he did.

Furthermore, no part of the view prevents the shopkeeper from feeling regret if appropriate to the circumstances in which he loses the store. But one needs to be careful in spelling out what it is that the shopkeeper regrets. This is not a case of dirty hands, a situation from which the virtuous "emerges having done a terrible thing, the very sort of thing that the […] vicious agent would characteristically do" (Hursthouse 1999, 74), for according to the example, the shopkeeper acted honestly and so virtuously. The shopkeeper, then, should regret neither his honest actions nor that the circumstances necessitated his acting honestly (cf. Hursthouse 1999, 76-77). The shopkeeper may, however, regret the circumstances in which he finds himself. He may regret the economic recession, the gentrification of the neighborhood, the corrupt land developer, or whatever it was that put him in a position to lose the store. Although a rather minimal form of regret, it does point to space for an additional kind of genuine affective response to, and acknowledgement of, the fact that

life is now less desirable along certain dimensions of worthwhileness, though not the dimension that matters most.

Regarding skepticism about the actual occurrence of silencing, I venture that we see examples in everyday life of something that looks an awful lot like silencing. Think of instances where people spring into action to help strangers. Take, for example, the woman who, in the freezing cold, gave her shirt, sweater, and jacket to a woman who had just given birth on a New York City sidewalk (Pritchett 2014). "[I]t's just something that someone would do for someone else in this situation," she said. Or consider the man who saw a child in his apartment complex standing on a third-story air-conditioning unit, ran over, and caught her as she fell, sparing her from injury but tearing a tendon in his shoulder. "Please let me catch her, please let me catch her, that's all I could say. Let me catch the little baby, that's all," he told reporters (Castellano 2012).

I am not claiming that these individuals are virtuous; that would be foolish to do based on one instance of behavior. Yet in these kinds of cases of individuals springing into action to help others, the individual seems to have a clear conception of the situation where concerns regarding his/her own health, well-being, etc., fail to operate as reasons for acting otherwise. That is enough, I suspect, to suggest that silencing is a real psychological phenomenon for humans.

It is worth noting that the psychological phenomenon of silencing itself may not be distinctive of the virtuous person. One could imagine a thoroughly vicious individual seeing certain situations with the kind of clarity of focus ascribed to the virtuous. And, as perhaps in the real life examples mentioned above, some of us may experience silencing in certain situations or with regard to certain considerations despite our being less than fully virtuous. What *is* distinctive about the virtuous is that they regularly experience silencing in situations where there is a clear requirement of virtue.

The regular silencing experienced by the virtuous is the result of the distinctive way that they see situations in which virtue demands a response. Recall that it is in fleshing out this notion of a distinctive view of the situation that McDowell rejects the idea that the virtuous, continent, and incontinent weigh reasons for acting. Although many have found McDowell's rejection of the weighing reasons view implausible, I contend that there is an interpretation of the claim that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way that looks considerably more plausible than these critics acknowledge. Furthermore, this interpretation is consistent with a CAPS conception of traits. To begin, let me expand on what was said in the previous chapter regarding subjective construal and encodings, as this will be useful in elaborating and defending that interpretation.

## Subjective Construal

As discussed in the previous chapter, an individual's interpretation, or subjective construal, of a situation is a crucial determinant of her response to that situation. An individual's subjective construal of a situation is one kind of a more general psychological phenomenon known as encoding. 'Encoding' can refer to both the process through which an individual organizes stimulus input into meaningful units and the construal at which the individual arrives as a result of that process. It involves selective attention, interpretation, and categorization (Mischel 1973, 267-268). Regarding selective attention, an individual pays more attention to certain features of a situation than others, and the features to which different individuals selectively attend vary. For example, one person might focus on the shape of a particular cookie, while another may focus on its taste. Individuals also vary in how they interpret and categorize features of situations. A coworker might be categorized as a peer or as an authority figure; a pat on the shoulder might be interpreted as supportive or intimidating. In addition to encoding individual features of a situation, one also encodes the situation as a whole; this particular encoding is often referred to as a subjective

construal.  By selectively attending to particular features of a situation, and then interpreting and categorizing those features, an individual forms a subjective construal of that situation.

Which features are attended, as well as how those features are interpreted and/or categorized, depends upon the schemas available and accessible to the individual doing the encoding (Mischel, Shoda, and Ayduk 2008, 382-383).  Schemas are the mental representations individuals use to interpret and categorize the world around them.  They often have a prototype structure, grouping together particular examples of a concept based upon similarities between examples, with some of these examples better exemplifying the concept than others (Mischel, Shoda, and Ayduk 2008, 380). For instance, an apple is a more prototypical fruit than a tomato.

Whether or not a particular schema is engaged in a particular situation depends upon its availability, accessibility, and applicability (Higgins 1996, 134-135).  A schema is available to an individual if that individual has the schema in her memory.  For example, every person on the planet probably has an available schema for 'insect.'  Members of uncontacted tribes in South America presumably will *not* have an available schema for 'computer.'  Accessibility refers to the ease with which an available schema can be engaged.  A more easily accessible schema may be activated via free recall, whereas a less easily accessible schema might only be engaged via cued recall.  The probability that a schema will be engaged also depends upon its applicability to the situation.  The more similarities between the schema and the attended features of the situation, the greater the applicability of the schema.  With increased applicability comes the increased likelihood that the schema will be activated.

Note that the similarities between schema and situation involved in applicability concern *attended* features.  As mentioned above, individuals selectively attend to some features of situations and not others.  Some features of a situation might be attended because of properties of the situation.  For example, I am likely to attend to the one red marble in a bag of blue marbles *because* it

is the only red marble. But schemas direct our attention, too, and once engaged, can affect to which features of a situation one attends (Mischel, Shoda, and Ayduk 2008, 381-382). For example, I may pay more attention to the red marble in a bag of multi-colored marbles because red is my favorite color. This attention-directing aspect of schemas is significant because the CAUs outlined by the CAPS model, such as beliefs, affects, goals, and competencies, are themselves schemas (Mischel, Shoda, and Ayduk 2008, 416). This means that they can direct an individual's attention and therefore affect that individual's subjective construal of a situation.

## Virtuous Construal

I suggest that we understand the claim that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way as claiming that the virtuous are distinctive in the way in which they subjectively construe situations. If we understand virtue in terms of the CAPS conception of traits, then the virtuous have a particular set of stably interrelated schemas that are available and easily accessible, namely the CAUs that constitute the traits that are the virtues. These schemas affect not only how the virtuous categorize particular features of situations, but also which features of situations the virtuous attend. The virtuous use these schemas to encode the various features of the situations that they encounter and to form subjective construals of those situations. These subjective construals explain why the virtuous act as they do.

A vicious person, by contrast, does not possess the virtues and so has available and accessible a considerably different set of schemas. When facing the same situation as a virtuous person, the vicious person's attention is directed by those schemas in ways very different from the virtuous and, furthermore, the vicious person interprets and categorizes the attended features according to those different schemas. As a result, where a virtuous person sees a situation demanding a virtuous response, the vicious person sees no such thing.

Unlike the vicious, the continent and the incontinent share, to some extent, the virtuous person's conception of how one ought to live. Unlike the vicious, they largely accept that a life of virtue is the best kind of life that one can live. They hold—as the vicious do not—that it is good to be kind, generous, and honest, that it is wrong to be dishonest, and so on. And they generally agree with the virtuous as to what constitutes kindness, generosity, etc. So although they do not have the same traits as the virtuous—that is, they do not have available and accessible that exact set and arrangement of stably interrelated CAUs/schemas that constitute the virtues—it seems reasonable to expect that their schemas will exhibit a considerable amount of overlap with those of the virtuous. Presumably, the schemas that constitute this overlap will direct their attention in much the same way as they direct the virtuous person's. To the extent that they share schemas with the virtuous, then, the continent and incontinent are likely to attend to the same features that the virtuous do and to categorize and interpret those features in the same way that the virtuous do.

The schemas available and accessible to the continent and incontinent, however, are not a *complete* match with the virtuous person's. Take, for example, the schema 'highly pleasurable activities.' Recall that schemas have a prototype structure: in this case, the individual will view some activities as more prototypically highly pleasurable than others. Suppose that continent Colleen enjoys acquiring money a bit too much. For her, acquiring money is a prototypical, highly pleasurable activity. For virtuous Veronica, by contrast, although acquiring money is generally pleasant, it does not fall within her schema for highly pleasurable activities the way that, say, spending time with friends does.

Colleen and Veronica's differing schemas are likely to direct their attention in different ways, resulting in differences in the features to which each attends. Return to the example of the dropped money. Since Veronica is virtuous, her schemas direct her attention to the fact that the man failed to realize that he had dropped *his* money. As discussed earlier, nothing else about the situation—

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such as the fact that she could pocket the money without anyone noticing—matters. Now imagine that Colleen was the one walking behind the man. Colleen, like Veronica, attends to the fact that the man failed to realize that he had dropped *his* money. But since acquiring money is a prototypical highly pleasant activity for Colleen, her 'highly pleasurable activities' schema directs her attention towards the dropped *hundred dollar* bill. As a result, Colleen attends to the hundred dollar bill *in addition to* the fact that the man dropped *his* money.

The differences in the features to which Veronica and Colleen attend yields differences in the applicability of schemas, since applicability depends upon attended features. Veronica attends to one feature of the situation—that the man dropped *his* money—and this feature is an excellent match to her schema 'opportunities to help.' Since she is not attending to any other features, no other schemas are applicable and, given the high applicability of the schema 'opportunities to help,' that schema is engaged. Colleen, too, attends to the fact that the man dropped *his* money. So she, too, experiences a match between attended features and her schema 'opportunities to help.' But Colleen has another attended feature, the hundred dollar bill, that matches another schema available and accessible to her, namely, 'opportunities to acquire money.' This schema, then, has a certain degree of applicability for Colleen, whereas it has no applicability for Veronica, who is not attending to the hundred dollar bill. As a result, Colleen has two schemas with applicability to the situation and so is faced with two competing construals of the situation: 'opportunity to help' vs. 'opportunity to acquire money.'

This point regarding the applicability of schemas gets to how I suggest we interpret the notion of silencing: For the virtuous faced with a situation in which virtue demands a particular response, *there is only one applicable schema* for construing the situation. Features of the situation that would increase the applicability of other schemas are simply not attended. Furthermore, the inner conflict experienced by the continent and incontinent comes not from weighing reasons, but from

competing construals. Understanding silencing in this way has at least two distinct advantages. First, it provides an alternative to the view of individuals weighing reasons that is faithful to McDowell's refusal to draw a sharp distinction between intellect and desire: both cognitive and affective schemas direct our attention and affect how we construe situations. Secondly, it lends plausibility to the claim that the virtuous person focuses on a *single* fact about the situation. Let me take each of these up in turn.

Subjective construal is so important to understanding an individual's response to a situation because how one construes a situation plays a large part in determining what reasons one takes oneself to have. Consider, once again, individuals whose deep-seated fear of rejection has rendered them rejection sensitive (Downey and Feldman 1996). Recall that these individuals are always on the lookout for potential signs that they are about to be rejected by a partner. As a result, they tend to perceive rejection in what are otherwise ambiguous situations. This perceived rejection then tends to generate hostile behavior (Ayduk et al. 1999). In other words, *because* these individuals construe an ambiguous situation as one of rejection, they take themselves to have reason to be hostile and so that is how they act. To return to the dropped money example, since Veronica does not construe the situation as an opportunity to acquire money, the dropped bill does not serve as a reason for her to pocket it. In singularly construing the situation as an opportunity to help, she does not take herself to have any reason to pocket the money. There are, then, no reasons to be outweighed in her practical reasoning because the only reasons that she takes herself to have are reasons to return the money. We can see, therefore, how fleshing out the notion of silencing in terms of subjective construal really does distinguish it from the weighing reasons picture.

The case of the continent and incontinent is a bit different; they feel the attraction of each of the competing construals that they face. Note, however, that each construal gives the individual access to a different set of reasons (or, perhaps, reasons to do different things) and that the

individual only gets access to those reasons via the construal. When the situation is construed as an opportunity to help, then the fact that money was dropped can serve as a reason to return it to its owner. When the situation is construed as an opportunity to acquire money, then the fact that money was dropped can serve as a reason to pocket it. The tension experienced by the continent and incontinent, then, is between whether this is an opportunity to help or an opportunity to acquire money. It is a question of how they are going to make sense of the situation at hand, of which features of the situation will serve as reasons, and of what those features will serve as reasons *for*.[4]

This is quite different than what we get on the weighing reasons view. In pitting reasons to keep the money against reasons to return it, the weighing reasons view assumes that one has already made sense of the situation at hand, identified various reasons for various courses of action, and, furthermore, that one can see those reasons both clearly and all together. The clearest examples of when we tend to weigh reasons are when we are faced with big decisions where we must choose between one or more relatively similar options. Think, for instance, of buying a car when several different models look, at first glance, suited to one's needs and budget. In that kind of case we see ourselves carefully taking stock of the pros and cons of our various options. Moreover, we have a clear construal of the situation: this is an occasion to buy a car. And since we usually do not buy cars often, nor do we tend to buy ourselves more than one at a time, we make a serious attempt to find the one that is best for us: 'Well, I went with the hybrid car even though it was more expensive because it gets great gas mileage and the dealer threw in an extended warranty for no extra cost.' Here, gas mileage and warranty length are weighed against price.

Buying a car is a kind of case where we *tend* to weigh reasons. Even here, however, we need not do so. One might not weigh reasons in a case like this because one lacks a clear view of the

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[4] It is worth noting that I am not making any commitment regarding how explicitly these questions must be considered by the individual.

situation, that is, because one faces competing construals of the situation. Consider, for example, a stereotypical father in midlife crisis whose current car has fallen into disrepair and needs to be replaced. He really wants the tiny red sports car, which certainly cannot accommodate his children's car seats nor handle the snowy winters where he lives. He knows that he ought to go with the much more practical, all-wheel drive minivan. He is caught between construing the situation as an opportunity to acquire a fun toy that will bring him significant pleasure, at least in the summer months, and as an opportunity to get a vehicle that will serve his family's needs. Some may object to how I have individuated construals here; how exactly we ought to go about individuating construals is a large question that goes beyond the scope of this project.[5] But however we decide that they carve up, it seems clear that, in this case, the father is construing the potential purchase in two very different ways. Furthermore, it is clear that these construals are competing. The family-*un*friendly features of the sports car, if they are to serve as reasons for buying it, depend upon the father construing the situation as an opportunity to get a fun toy.

But let us return to the case in which I do weigh reasons when buying a car. We can see why the weighing reasons view seems unable to make sense of the conflict of the continent and incontinent. Once one has weighed up the pros and cons and identified the most promising option, where would the motivation to go against that judgment come from? I might second-guess the weight I assigned to various features: Did the extended warranty really matter? Am I even going to need it? But notice that these are all doubts about what I ought to have done, about the judgment that I made. Moreover, once I have weighed the various pros and cons and decided on a car model, any motivation to go with a different model would also seem to be motivation to revise my original judgment.

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[5] And is, perhaps, best left to those working in philosophy of mind.

By contrast, the incontinent person does not doubt her judgment of what she ought to have done: in the case of the dropped money, she should have returned it. Consider the kinds of explanations we tend to give when we get called out for incontinence, for doing something that we know we should not have done. We tend to attempt to rationalize our (mis)construal of the situation and we often seem to be trying to convince ourselves as much as others: 'I did not know *for sure* that it was his money. Really, it could have been anyone's.' We are attempting to justify the construal of the situation that granted us access to the reasons why we did what we did.

All of this prompts the following question: What accounts for the difference between the continent and the incontinent—for the continent returning the money despite wanting to keep it and the incontinent pocketing the money, knowing they should not? The difference is found, I suggest, in the extent to which they dwell on these competing construals as well as the extent to which the engaged concerns are central to them. Note that both of these differences ultimately stem from differences in their characters. The continent person's schemas, being closer to those of the virtuous than the incontinent's are, may direct her attention such that she can resist the non-virtuous competing construal in a way that the incontinent person cannot. Likewise, the continent person's closer approximation to virtue means that the concerns of virtue figure more centrally in her conception of how one should live than they do in the incontinent person's conception, allowing her to resist the non-virtuous construal.[6] Their opting for one construal or the other, then, stems from differences in the characters of the continent and incontinent, not differences in the amount of weight they assign to a particular reason.

One might worry that the competing construals view suggests that the incontinent fail to act for reasons at all, for it might look as though they are simply overwhelmed by, say, non-rational,

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[6] The differences between the continent and the incontinent raise a number of interesting issues that I cannot address here, including how we come to acquire the schemas that we have and the extent to which that acquisition is up to us.

appetitive desire. Recall, however, that opting for the non-virtuous construal does get the incontinent access to a set of reasons. The incontinent person pockets the money *because* the man dropped it, and no one would notice if she just took it, and acquiring and spending money is so very pleasurable. So even though her cognitive and affective schemas are directing her attention such that she opts for the non-virtuous construal, the incontinent person is still very much acting for reasons. In this case, she knows perfectly well why she did what she did—the dropped money, no one noticing, and so on—and, furthermore, she realizes, even if only implicitly, that taking those features of the situation to be reasons to pocket the money reflects poorly on her character.

Regarding the second advantage of my interpretation, McDowell consistently says that the virtuous person focuses in on a *single* aspect, fact, or salience of the situation at hand (e.g., 1998g, 55-56, 69). It is difficult to say what, exactly, this aspect, fact, or salience is supposed to be. If it were a particular feature of the situation then the claim would be problematic. While it may be plausible that in certain exceedingly straightforward circumstances—such as, perhaps, the dropped money example—there is only one feature to which the virtuous attend, in complex social situations, it seems likely that the virtuous will attend to multiple features. McDowell sometimes seems to suggest that the aspect, fact, or salience is the requirement of virtue itself, the 'thing to be done' (e.g., 1998a, 91). In that case, the salience would be something like, 'Return the money.' But thinking of the salience in this way cannot be right, since the salience engages a concern and this engagement yields action. By the time one arrives at 'Return the money,' however, the relevant concern has surely already been engaged. 'Return the money' does not engage my concern for other people's property; rather, it is the engagement of my concern that yields the thing to be done. My interpretation of the salience as an applicable schema for construing the situation, by contrast, avoids these problems.

Suppose we tweak our dropped money example so that the item dropped was something with significantly greater monetary value and social cachet, say, a diamond ring. One might think that something so valuable would surely catch the attention of even the virtuous. In that case, virtuous Veronica would attend to the ring in addition to the fact that what the man dropped was *his*. On my interpretation, attention to the ring will not increase the applicability of a schema other than 'occasion to help.' It certainly would not increase the applicability of the schema 'opportunity to acquire jewelry' or anything of that sort because taking things that belong to other people simply has no place in Veronica's schemas regarding how things are acquired. This is not to say that Veronica must be so naïve as to fail to recognize that other, less scrupulous individuals view taking other people's property to be a perfectly good means of acquisition. The claim is just that such a view does not apply to her. Attention to the ring may, however, increase the applicability of her schema 'occasion to help.' Attention to the fact that the dropped item has significant monetary and probably sentimental value could increase Veronica's urgency and resolve to return the ring.

The key to silencing as I have interpreted it is that, for the virtuous person, there is only one applicable schema for construing the situation. There is no commitment regarding the number of features to which a virtuous individual may attend in a given situation. The claim, however, is that those multiple features do not increase the number of applicable schemas. On my interpretation, then, the virtuous are not implausibly restricted to a single attended feature, and the construal of a situation is available to engage a relevant concern of the individual.

## Responding to the Critics

The view that I have developed here offers a substantive reply to the critics of silencing. First, as the real life examples that I offered suggest, silencing looks to be an actual psychological phenomenon experienced by everyday human beings. Furthermore, given the narrowness of scope granted to silencing, there looks to be significant space for acknowledgement of and affective

response to the loss of worthwhile things, even if those considerations are silenced in one's practical reasoning. This possibility of acknowledgement raises a question regarding the extent to which the virtuous are aware of silenced considerations. In short, it will depend on the situation.

The virtuous need not be blind to silenced considerations; selective attention does not entail blindness. For instance, when I attend to what my dinner companion is saying in a noisy restaurant, I am not unaware of the people around us. So even though Veronica sees an occasion to help and decides to return the diamond ring, she need not be unaware of the ring's monetary value, social cachet, or attractiveness. None of these things, however, changes the fact that this is an occasion for her to help. That said, some considerations may be silenced insofar as they simply fail to arise for the virtuous agent. For instance, robbing a bank might allow the shopkeeper to keep the shop open. But we can imagine that course of action being so far beyond the pale for the virtuous shopkeeper that the possibility never enters his mind.

Of course, if our shopkeeper is truly virtuous, cheating on his taxes would probably not enter his mind, either. Just as taking other people's belongings has no place in Veronica's schemas for how things are acquired, cheating on taxes has no place in the shopkeeper's schemas for how one runs a business. As mentioned earlier in relation to Veronica, however, neither she nor the shopkeeper need be so naïve as to fail to acknowledge that those non-virtuous courses of action do play a role in some other people's schemas. And even if a particular course of action fails to occur to the virtuous individual, it might be pointed out to them by someone else. I see no reason to think that the virtuous would respond naïvely to such suggestions.

Despite its idealism, then, the picture of the virtuous that we get on the view that I have developed here is a decidedly human one. In situations in which there is no clear requirement of virtue, the virtuous may not always be completely sure of what to do, and they may weigh reasons for and against various courses of action. They may attend to multiple features of a situation and

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need not be blind to silenced considerations.  The virtuous, in recognizing multiple dimensions of

worthwhileness, can appreciate the potential attractiveness of various courses of action.  But their

commitment to a life of virtue—that dimension of worthwhileness *par excellence*—prevents that

appreciation from becoming actual attraction when such attraction would not be virtuous.  This

does not entail, however, that the virtuous are naïve goody-two-shoes.  Furthermore, in recognizing

multiple dimensions of worthwhileness, the virtuous are able to acknowledge and affectively

respond to loss, so there is no reason to think that they would be detached or unfeeling.  What we

have is not a god-like ideal, but rather a human one.

## Conclusion

I have argued that a CAPS conception of virtue makes available an empirically plausible

interpretation of McDowell's claim that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way.  The

view of practical reasoning that I have elaborated here provides an avenue for moving from the

descriptive project of Mischel and Shoda to the normative project of virtue ethics: the way in which

the virtuous subjectively construe situations is not only distinctive, but correct.  I go on to examine

the notion of correct construal in the next chapter.

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## Correct Construal: Making Room for Normativity

In the previous chapter, I argued that we could make sense of McDowell's claim that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way via what I call 'virtuous construal,' namely, the idea that the virtuous subjectively construe situations in a distinctive way. The account is meant to capture what is distinctive about the virtuous person. More needs to be said, however, about the way in which the virtuous get things right. It is a central tenet of virtue ethics that (for the most part) the virtuous person acts and feels "at the right times, about the right things, toward the right people, for the right end, and in the right way…" (1106b22-23). In my initial elaboration of the CAPS model in the first chapter, we saw the way in which an individual's subjective construal of a situation plays a crucial role in explaining that individual's response to that situation. We see a similar sentiment in McDowell: the virtuous person's view of the situation explains her response to that situation (1998g, 52). Given the explanatory role of subjective construal, *responding* correctly in a given situation must be, in large part, a matter of *construing* that situation correctly.

The virtuous get things right, then, at least in part by construing situations correctly. For example, the reason why they do not rashly charge ahead to fight is because they do not construe situations in which charging ahead would be rash as opportunities to courageously fight, the way that the rash person does.[1] Virtuous construal, then, is not merely a matter of the applicability of a single schema, but rather of applicability of a *correct* schema.

This notion of a correct schema may strike some as worrisome. Insisting on one correct construal of a situation would seem to discount the psychological features that the individual brings to the situation, the exact psychological features that Mischel and Shoda criticize the behavioral

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[1] Consider Aristotle: "[T]he coward, for instance, calls the brave person rash, and the rash person calls him a coward…" (1108b25-26).

dispositional conception of traits for ignoring (Mischel and Shoda 1995). The whole point of the CAPS model's emphasis on subjective construal is that nominally identical situations are subjectively different to different people, as a result of the different psychological features that individuals bring to the situations that they encounter. A notion of virtuous construal that ignores that subjective difference would violate a fundamental premise of the CAPS model.

The claim that virtuous construal consists in the applicability of a single, correct schema, however, does not entail that there is a single correct schema for all individuals to construe the (nominal) situation. Virtuous construal merely claims that this particular virtuous individual gets the construal right *for that individual*, given that individual's psychological features. The single, correct construal of a nominal situation by one virtuous person may not be the same as the single, correct construal of that same nominal situation by a different virtuous person if those individuals bring relevantly different psychological features to the nominal situation. Consider, for example, the kind of situation one often sees in romance movies, where one's love interest is about to depart and courage demands that one respond. Here one may correctly construe the situation as an opportunity to be open and honest. But it is not as though we can plug any old virtuous person into that situation and expect the same construal; it is the particular feelings that *this* virtuous individual has for this person that makes the construal correct. The notion of correctness in virtuous construal, then, in no way undermines the subjectivity of the construal, as it takes into account the specific psychological features that a particular virtuous individual brings to the situation.

Of course, the reality is that most of us are not fully virtuous. We may not reliably experience silencing in situations where there is a clear requirement of virtue. We do not always act as we ought, or think we ought, to act. We get ourselves into situations in which the virtuous would never find themselves. In this chapter, I present and defend an advice model of correct construal for those who are less than fully virtuous. After presenting Michael Smith's distinction between

advice and examples models, I examine several types of objections that have been raised against the employment of an example model in virtue ethics. I argue that an advice model of correct construal can avoid many of these concerns before addressing some objections against the advice model itself. Finally, I argue that this notion of correct construal is, in an important sense, external to the individual: although correct construal does take into account an individual's psychological features, it is not limited by the individual's actual motives. The externality of correct construal, I argue, prevents virtue ethics from collapsing into a form of subjectivism.

## Advice vs. Example Models

In "Internal Reasons," Michael Smith distinguishes two models of what he calls the 'internalism requirement,' which holds that what we have reason to do in particular circumstances is analytically connected to what we would desire to do in those circumstances if we were fully rational: the advice model and the example model (2012, 100-102). He does this by identifying two possible worlds: the 'evaluated' world, in which an individual finds her actual self faced with a particular set of circumstances, and the 'evaluating' world, which contains the individual's fully rational self. On the advice model, the individual in the evaluated world has reason to do what her fully rational self, looking on her actual self from the evaluating world, would desire her actual self to do in the circumstances that she faces in the evaluated world. It is as though the individual's fully rational self is giving her actual self advice about what she ought to do in the circumstances in which she finds herself. On the example model, by contrast, the individual in the evaluated world has reason to do what her fully rational self would desire to do in the evaluating, *not* the evaluated, world. In other words, her fully rational self never looks over to her actual self in the evaluated world, but rather resides in the evaluating world as an example to be followed.

The example model, Smith argues, "is plainly wrong" (2012, 101). What we have reason to do must take into account the fact that we are not always fully rational. Smith illustrates the point

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with a modified version of Gary Watson's example of a squash player who, having been summarily beaten by his opponent, is frustrated, humiliated, and angry at the loss. He is so overwhelmed by these feelings that he finds himself wanting to take his racket and smash his opponent in the face. Of course, if the squash player were fully rational, he would not have these overwhelming feelings: it is, after all, just a game. Nor would his fully rational self desire to smash his opponent in the face with his racket. Rather, one would imagine that the squash player's fully rational self would be a good sport about the loss and go shake his opponent's hand. According to the example model, then, the angry, frustrated, humiliated squash player who wants to smash in his opponent's face ought to walk over and shake his opponent's hand. This cannot be right, Smith contends:

> Striding over and shaking my opponent by the hand might be the last thing I have reason to do, especially if being in such close proximity to him, given my anger and frustration, is the sort of thing that would cause me to smash him in the face. Rather, we might plausibly suppose, what I have reason to do in my uncalm and uncool state is to smile politely and leave the scene as soon as possible. (2012, 101)

And this latter course of action, Smith contends, is what would be offered by the squash player's fully rational self on the advice model.

I am not going to defend Smith's version of the internalism requirement. Rather, I want to employ Smith's distinction between the advice and example models in order to provide an advice model of correct construal. There are a few reasons for turning to Smith's model. For one, virtue ethics tends to give a prominent role to the moral exemplar, that is, the fully virtuous person, and this role tends to be understood as an example model. Virtue ethics has faced a number of criticisms for this employment of exemplars and the example model, which I discuss below. All of these criticisms, I suggest, highlight a more general problem with example models, a problem that goes beyond the concerns of rationality, narrowly construed, and which Smith illustrates with the case of the squash player: the example model is problematic because it fails to take into account our individual shortcomings. An advice model, by contrast, is able to take our shortcomings into

account.  Before presenting the advice model of correct construal, let me first provide some background on the use of moral exemplars in virtue ethics.

## Virtue Ethics, Moral Exemplars, and the Example Model

The most prominent employment of a moral exemplar in the contemporary virtue ethics literature is probably Hursthouse's description of right action: "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances" (1999, 28). As Daniel Russell outlines, the conceptual connection between correct action and a fully virtuous individual faces three main types of criticism: 1) that even a fully virtuous individual will fail to get things correct 100% of the time; 2) that thinking of a fully virtuous individual will often fail to help us, the less than fully virtuous, get things right; and 3) that it might be a mistake for us to aspire directly towards the ideal of the fully virtuous person (2009, 104-107).  As these objections illustrate, Hursthouse's "qualified agent" account (Swanton 2001) is almost always taken to be an example model of right action.[2]  It is worth examining each of these types of objection in a bit more detail for, as will become clear, these objections are primarily objections to the link between *correctness* and the virtuous person, and so are likely to apply not only to a notion of right action, but to correct construal as well.

The first kind of objection against the conceptual link between correctness and a fully virtuous individual asserts that even the fully virtuous will not get things right all of the time.  This type of objection is usually fleshed out in one of two ways.  One way focuses on the fact that even the fully virtuous may not always act in character.  For example, a virtuous agent may on a particular occasion uncharacteristically lash out in anger.  However, this should not mean, the objection goes, that lashing out in anger is thereby the right thing to do in those circumstances.  The other way that the objection gets fleshed out is through a focus on the epistemic limitations of the individual.  Even

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[2] I say 'taken to be' because I am not convinced that Hursthouse takes herself to be offering an example model.

the fully virtuous are still subject to epistemic limitations. As a result of those limitations, they will make mistakes and will sometimes get things wrong. Take Christine Swanton's example of the virtuous policy maker, who must make decisions in the face of unprecedented circumstances and numerous unknowns:

> The Aristotelian virtuous agent possesses phronesis, but phronesis, with its connotations of fine sensibilities and discriminatory powers, is impotent in the face of massive ignorance of the entire human species. No matter how well motivated and practically wise the virtuous policy maker, if her policies prove environmentally disastrous, one would think, they cannot be regarded as right. (2001, 35)

Like the virtuous policy maker, sometimes we must take leaps of faith, or try things out without knowing exactly what the consequences will be (see Segvic 2009, 169). As Swanton points out, even in cases where one has done all that one could possibly do, if things go horribly awry, there seems to be something mistaken in claiming that one's course of action was nonetheless right.[3]

Both of these objections protest that, in order to forge a link between correctness and the virtuous individual, one would need to idealize virtue to such an extent that it becomes an implausible ideal for humans. Indeed, to construct an ideal of a virtuous person whose practical deliberation "issues in nothing but right conduct" (McDowell 1998g, 52) does seem to place that ideal beyond the capabilities of human beings. The same goes for any sort of requirement of omniscience. If we want virtue to be a human ideal, then we must allow that even the fully virtuous are going to act out of character occasionally, make mistakes, and get things wrong.

Hursthouse allows for some fallibility on the part of the fully virtuous, but it does not look to be enough. She limits the link between correctness and the fully virtuous person to what the virtuous would *characteristically* do in the circumstances.[4] This takes care of cases where the virtuous

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[3] This is not to say, of course, that the individual is therefore blameworthy in any way, which is an important distinction that Swanton draws out.

[4] This reflects a revision of her earlier specification of right action as "what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances" (Hursthouse 1991, 225).

may act out of character. But there is still the issue of epistemic limitations, where a virtuous agent, through no fault of her own, lacks knowledge and therefore, it seems, fails to get things right. The conceptual link between rightness and the virtuous person, then, remains problematic on the example model.

The second kind of objection to the link between correctness and the fully virtuous individual is that thinking about the fully virtuous individual is often quite unhelpful when trying to determine the right thing to do. This kind of objection encompasses a number of different worries regarding the example model. One concern is that, because we are less than fully virtuous, we sometimes get ourselves into situations in which the virtuous would never find themselves. If the virtuous would never be in the given situation, then there would seem to be no answer to the question, 'What would the fully virtuous do in this case?' As a result, the objection goes, there would seem to be no right thing for one to do in the situation. A similar worry arises when we find ourselves considering possible ways of improving our less than virtuous character. Even granting that the virtuous never stop working on their character, the less than fully virtuous may need to improve their character in ways that the fully virtuous would have no reason to consider, such as following a twelve step program, for example. Once again, the lack of an answer to the question, 'What would the fully virtuous do in this case?' because the fully virtuous would never face such a case, leads some to object that the example model is unable both to specify a right course of action and to provide action guidance in these kinds of situations.

Even if we do find ourselves in a situation that a fully virtuous person could conceivably be in, there are two further concerns encompassed by this type of objection. First, even if there is a rather definite course of action that the virtuous person would pursue in the situation in which we find ourselves, we may be so far removed from the mindset of the virtuous that we have absolutely no idea what the virtuous might do in the situation (Louden 1984, 229). The fact that there is an

answer to the question, 'What would the fully virtuous do in this case?' is of no use to us because we have no way of getting to that answer.  And so we are left, the objection goes, without action guidance.  Alternatively, what the virtuous would do in that situation may be not beyond our comprehension, but beyond our abilities as less than fully virtuous (Russell 2009, 106).  We saw something like this in the example of the squash player.  The squash player's fully virtuous self would be able to walk over and politely shake his opponent's hand, while the actual, less than virtuous squash player would be unable to get that close to his opponent without smashing him in the face with his racket.  In cases like this, it seems, what is right for the fully virtuous may not be right for those who are less than fully virtuous.

These various concerns appear to fall into two groups: 1) concerns that the example model fails to adequately or appropriately specify a right course of action, and 2) concerns that the example model fails to provide action guidance.  The latter is, I think, a bit of a red herring, as Hursthouse's account of right action was never intended, on its own, to provide action guidance (Hursthouse 1999, 28).[5]  In virtue ethics, the meat of action guidance is to be found in the virtue and vice vocabulary as employed in what Hursthouse calls 'v-rules' (1999, 35-39), such as 'Do what is honest; do not do what is dishonest.'  Indeed, the depth and richness of vice vocabulary, with its ability to specify the many ways in which one might go wrong, is one of the theory's selling points (see Hursthouse 1999, 41-42).  If we set aside the concerns regarding action guidance, however, the worries about the specification of right action remain.  There is still a way in which the conceptual link between rightness and the virtuous person, then, remains problematic on the example model.

The third kind of objection to the link between correctness and the fully virtuous individual, that it might be a mistake for us to aspire directly towards the ideal of the fully virtuous person, is

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[5] That an account of right action in virtue ethics will fail to provide action guidance on its own is not restricted to Hursthouse's or example model accounts (see Swanton 2001, 33).

raised by Swanton (2003, 64-65). Although it might be the case that children become virtuous by performing virtuous actions, this does not make it the case that all adults can become virtuous in that way. She worries that attempts to model oneself directly on a fully virtuous individual could prove disastrous for a person with a less than fully virtuous character, and may lead one farther away from virtue rather than closer to it. In attempting to give the outward appearance of virtue without possessing the required psychological underpinnings, one's efforts may go astray in various ways, resulting in harm to oneself or others.

Perhaps the best way to get a handle on Swanton's worry is to consider the context of addiction. We do not usually recommend that the alcoholic directly emulate the temperate. The temperate enjoy a glass of wine with dinner or a cocktail during happy hour with coworkers. By putting herself into social drinking situations, however, the alcoholic is more likely to exacerbate rather than alleviate her drinking problem. Rather, the right thing for the alcoholic to do is probably to abstain altogether from alcohol and from contexts in which one encounters alcohol. And, indeed, Aristotle himself seems to acknowledge this general point. In considering how it is that one can reach the mean state that is virtue, he says, "We must also examine what we ourselves drift into easily […] We must drag ourselves off in the contrary direction; for if we pull far away from error, as they do in straightening bent wood, we shall reach the intermediate condition" (1109b1-7).

Something similar may apply in some cases of developing virtue. It might be more appropriate in some cases for the vicious, say, to follow a course of action other than one that directly emulates the virtuous. Swanton's worry, then, appears to be another variation of the objection that what may be right for the virtuous may not be right for those who are less than fully virtuous. Rather than focusing on instances where the virtuous action may be beyond our abilities, she draws attention to the ways in which following the example model may be detrimental to the improvement or development of our character.

Bracketing the complaint about action guidance, which I argued is not really relevant, we can see how the objections outlined above resemble Smith's complaint against the example model: in failing to take into account our shortcomings, the example model's link between correctness and an ideal is problematic. We can also see how the above objections against an example model of right action would apply to a similar account of correct construal. Just as the fully virtuous will fail to act correctly 100% of the time as a result of epistemic limitations, they will also fail to construe situations correctly 100% of the time. Thinking about how the fully virtuous might construe the situation in which I find myself may fail to specify what it means for me to construe the situation correctly. Finally, attempts to construe a situation as a fully virtuous individual would construe it may lead me, being less than fully virtuous, astray in potentially harmful ways.

## An Advice Model of Correct Construal

At this point, let me introduce the advice model of correct construal and defend it against the objections outlined above. On an advice model of correct construal, Smith's fully rational individual is replaced by a fully virtuous one. We still have, then, two possible worlds: the 'evaluated' world, in which an individual finds herself faced with a particular set of circumstances, and the 'evaluating' world, which contains the individual's fully virtuous self. An individual correctly construes a situation if she construes it as her fully virtuous self, possessing the relevant knowledge about the situation and looking on her actual self from the evaluating world, would characteristically (i.e., behaving in character) desire her actual self to construe the circumstances that she faces in the evaluated world. We can imagine, then, one's fully virtuous self advising one on how to construe the situation at hand, not unlike a caddy helping a golfer read the green. How does such a model do in the face of the objections elaborated above? Let me take them up in turn, in the reverse order in which they were presented.

Given the accounts of virtuous construal and the advice model that I have elaborated, the correct construal of a situation for a less than fully virtuous individual need not be the same as the correct construal of that same situation for a fully virtuous individual. In that sense, then, the advice model does not demand that the less than fully virtuous always emulate directly the construal of a fully virtuous individual, and so avoids Swanton's concerns that such emulation can have harmful consequences for those who are less than fully virtuous. The model does not hold that the correct construal is how the virtuous person would construe the situation if she were in those circumstances; it is therefore not calling upon the individual to strive to construe the situation as if she were fully virtuous. The advice model recommends a construal for the actual individual, shortcomings and all, and so never recommends our "being virtuous beyond our strength" (Swanton 2003, 64). We can illustrate this with the example of the alcoholic. Suppose several of her friends are getting together at the local pub. If she were fully temperate she would, it seems, correctly construe this as an opportunity to spend time with friends. In looking at her actual self, however, her fully virtuous self seems likely to recommend a different construal of the situation to her actual self. Given her actual self's deep-seated tendencies towards intemperance and the significant temptations that a social drinking context would present, her fully virtuous self would recommend that her actual self construe this as a situation to be avoided.

It is worth highlighting, particularly in light of Swanton's worry about being asked to be virtuous beyond one's strength, that the construal recommended by the advice model actually *preserves* the strength of the individual. Recall that the CAUs outlined in the CAPS model include strategies one has for organizing one's behavior as well as one's own internal states. In the case of temperance—which, along with patience and courage, is one of the primary virtues of self-control— one family of such strategies falls under what psychologists call "situation selection" (Duckworth,

Gendler, and Gross 2014, 206).[6]  In short, this type of strategy involves deliberately choosing to place oneself in situations that enable self-control by, for instance, allowing one to direct one's attention in desired ways with more ease or placing oneself in the midst of more amenable social cues.  By recommending that the alcoholic construe the situation as one to be avoided, then, the advice model actually makes it easier for her to act temperately.

Recall that the second type of objection, that thinking about the fully virtuous individual is often quite unhelpful when trying to determine the right thing to do, encompasses a number of different concerns.  One concern is regarding the failure to provide action guidance, which, in the case of an account of right action, I argued was a red herring.  This particular version of the objection also fails to apply to an advice model of correct construal.  The advice model is an account of correct construal, of what it is to get the construal right.  Like virtue ethical accounts of right action, an account of correct construal is not meant, on its own, to provide action guidance, nor is it offered as a heuristic that an individual could use to determine what the correct construal is in a given situation.  It may, indeed, be the case that a less than virtuous individual has no idea how her fully virtuous self would advise her to construe the situation at hand.  That she has no idea, however, in no way undermines the claim that there may, in fact, be a way for her to construe the situation that counts as correct.  To reiterate what I said above, action guidance is to be found in the employment of the virtue and vice vocabulary, particularly in v-rules.  Note, too, that the virtue and vice vocabulary can offer guidance in construing a situation as well.  Just like with action, the meat is to be found, I think, in the vice vocabulary.  For example, in some situations failing to attend to a child's crying would be callous; similarly, focusing exclusively on our own desires would be, in many

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[6] I should note that not all psychologists are happy to put these sorts of strategies under the umbrella of self-control. Those who endorse an ego-depletion model of self-control, for instance, conceive of self-control much more narrowly as brute will power that, much like a muscle, weakens over extended use (see, e.g., Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice 2007). The model of self-control that I am working from is, by contrast, a process model.  Since the CAPS model is itself a process model, this would seem to be the more appropriate model of self-control on which to draw.

situations, selfish. The vice vocabulary is able to point out the various ways in which our attention, and thereby our subjective construals of situations, can go astray.

What about the other versions of this objection, the ones that worry about the specification of what is correct? Here it looks as though the advice model holds a distinct advantage over the example model. While the advice model maintains a link between correctness and the fully virtuous person, the link is attenuated to allow the model to account for individual shortcomings. By specifying correct construal as how one's fully virtuous self, possessing all of the relevant knowledge of the situation, would characteristically want one's actual self to construe the situation, the advice model can accommodate the fact that we get ourselves into situations in which the virtuous would never find themselves, or that our shortcomings might require us to construe a situation differently than the fully virtuous would construe it. The fact that there may be no answer to the question, 'How would the fully virtuous person subjectively construe these circumstances?' because the virtuous would not be in those circumstances, then, is no obstacle for the advice model.

Finally, there is the issue that even the fully virtuous do not get things right 100% of the time. One thing worth emphasizing is that the fully virtuous individual in the advice model is not an actual individual. Rather, the fully virtuous individual in the evaluating world is an idealized version of the actual individual in the evaluated world. The model, then, is not a matter of asking, 'What would Socrates do?' in a given situation (Hursthouse 1991, 227) where Socrates, being fallible, might get it wrong. It remains the case, however, that we are always subject to epistemic limitations of some sort or another.[7] Let me provide a few examples to illustrate how the advice model handles various kinds of epistemic limitations.

In many cases, recognizing my own epistemic limitations will be part and parcel of getting the construal right. One imagines that, for instance, acknowledging one's limitations would be

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[7] I take these limitations to include know-how as well as propositional knowledge.

crucial to construing correctly situations in which one needs help. I might, however, fail to recognize my own limitations due to my less than virtuous character, and this may cause me to misconstrue situations. Perhaps, for example, I am conceited and so have an inflated view of my own abilities. As a result, I often misconstrue situations as occasions to save the day or to showcase my talents. The advice model would correct for this lack of self-knowledge, which stems from shortcomings in my character. My fully virtuous self is not conceited and so does not have an inflated view of my abilities. Furthermore, she would want my actual self to stop misconstruing situations in these ways.

The lack of knowledge that results from shortcomings in one's character may not always be a lack of self-knowledge. For example, say I cheated on my professional licensing exam and in reality do not have the requisite expertise to certify that a building is structurally sound. Furthermore, since this is not a case of a lack of self-knowledge, suppose that my actual self is perfectly aware that I lack the requisite expertise. Now suppose that someone approaches me with a job to certify several new constructions in the city. My actual, unscrupulous self may construe this as an opportunity to make money (by taking the job). On the advice model, however, my fully virtuous self would take my actual self's lack of knowledge into account in the recommended construal. This is not a matter of merely supplying the missing information, as in the case of a lack of self-knowledge. Rather, my fully virtuous self would recommend, given my lack of knowledge, that I construe this situation not as an opportunity to make money, but perhaps as an opportunity for honesty, to come clean about my license.

Finally, there will be cases where I lack relevant knowledge through no fault of my own. One thing worth noting is that not all epistemic limitations of this sort will affect one's construal of a situation. For instance, a lack of knowledge may cause me to miss the target of virtue in my actions without causing me to misconstrue the situation. For example, I may not know, through no

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fault of my own, that the pharmacist accidentally mislabeled your medications. As a result, I give you the wrong dosage, and so fail to help you as I intended to do. I did not, however, fail to construe the situation correctly as an occasion to help a friend. Sometimes, however, one's lack of knowledge might affect one's construal of a situation. Suppose, for instance, that one gets fed misinformation from a usually reliable source and that this causes one to misconstrue the situation. This is one reason that the further condition on the fully virtuous self in the advice model is needed: the evaluating world contains one's fully virtuous self *in possession of the relevant knowledge of the situation.*

This further condition may cause concern: does this knowledge requirement not idealize virtue to an extent that it becomes implausible for humans? I do not think it does, for several reasons. For one, let me reiterate that the advice model of correct construal is merely an account of what it means to get the construal of a particular situation right. In and of itself, it makes no claims about actual virtuous individuals, and it certainly does not entail either that the fully virtuous are omniscient or that they always, without fail, get the construal right. It is clear on the advice model, however, that the virtuous will reliably tend to get things right most of the time: it is only in cases of lack of knowledge through no fault of one's own that they might go wrong, or when operating out of character, so to speak. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that failing to construe a situation correctly does not entail that one is therefore blameworthy in any way. Since getting a construal wrong is not necessarily reflective of a shortcoming in one's character, there is room for actual virtuous individuals to make mistakes.

## Objections to the Advice Model

The advice model of correct construal appears to hold up well against the objections lodged against example models. A few objections have been raised directly against advice models in the context of reasons, however. It is worth examining these objections to see: 1) if these objections would apply to an advice model of correct construal and 2) if so, how the model may handle them.

One worry raised regarding the advice model is that giving advice is actually quite complicated, and what one's idealized self may desire one to do and what that idealized self may advise one to do might come apart (Wiland 2003, Arkonovich 2011).  As parents of toddlers and teenagers know all too well, advising someone *not* to φ may, at times, be the best way to get that person to φ.  Recall that the advice model is actually spelled in out in terms of what one's idealized self would *desire*, not advise.  The imagery of giving advice is meant to be illustrative, not literal.  I see no reason, therefore, for the model to have to accommodate the various psychological games we play to get other people to accept our advice.[8]

Fleshing out the model in terms of desires, however, raises its own set of concerns.  One worry is that even an idealized individual may have conflicting desires in a given situation.  Take Smith's example of both wanting to make your father happy and wanting not to make your mother miserable (2001, 256).  In some situations, it may be impossible to do both.  Might we not see something similar regarding desires to construe situations in various ways?  Might, in a given situation, my fully virtuous self desire both that I construe the situation as an occasion to φ and as an occasion not to φ?  If so, we have reason to worry about the advice model's ability to specify a correct construal of a situation, as one's idealized self may desire multiple, incompatible construals.

Such a worry may seem most compelling in situations that call for one to risk life or limb.  Surely, the objection goes, a part of my idealized self would want me to run away and remain unharmed rather than stay and fight, risking serious injury or death.  But if the story I told in the previous chapter about silencing is plausible, then we would not expect one's fully virtuous self to desire multiple construals in situations in which there is a clear requirement of virtue.  Because of the way that possession of the virtues shapes one's practical reasoning, my fully virtuous self would

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[8] I should emphasize that this is my position, not Smith's.  Smith seems to want to retain a notion of advice-giving, which may leave him vulnerable to this objection.

not desire both that I construe the situation as one to stand firm *and* as one to flee.  Even if my argument for silencing takes care of situations in which there is a clear requirement of virtue, however, the fact that silencing does not occur in many situations means that the worry still stands.

One general point worth emphasizing is that coming to a construal is a process.  In forming a construal of a situation, we are reaching a judgment. An individual, as well as her fully virtuous self, may bring all sorts of desires to a situation, but that does not mean that she will therefore desire multiple construals.  Return to Smith's example of both wanting to make your father happy and wanting not to make your mother miserable, but being unable to do both.  That you desire to make your father happy may not change the fact that *this* is an occasion not to make your mother miserable.  We might expect, then, that desires for incompatible construals will occur less often than do conflicting desires in general.[9]

Furthermore, just because there may not be one right thing to *do* in a given situation does not mean that there is not a correct construal of that situation.  Consider irresolvable dilemmas, where, faced with options A and B, one has no (moral) grounds for opting for A over B.[10]  Take Hursthouse's example, mentioned in the previous chapter, of having to buy my daughter a birthday present: I have several options, all of which appear equally good.  There is, then, no one right thing for me to do in this situation.  There is, however, a correct construal of the situation: my daughter's birthday is an occasion to give her a gift.  As Hursthouse says, "it would certainly be very mean not to, given our relationship, her age and hopes, my financial circumstances, and so on" (1999, 66-67). To construe the situation otherwise would be to get things wrong.  Even in the case of irresolvable dilemmas, then, we seem unlikely to get desires for incompatible construals.

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[9] See Smith's discussion of this issue of conflict in relation to reasons (2001).
[10] For discussion of irresolvable dilemmas, see Hursthouse (1999, 63-71).

Finally, for some situations, there may not be a single correct construal. At least, there seems no reason to rule out the possibility of truly ambiguous circumstances, where one's fully virtuous self, armed with the relevant knowledge, is still unable to make heads or tails of the situation at hand. Perhaps one might encounter a situation like this in times of social and political upheaval, when chaos and uncertainty prevail. Although one would expect such circumstances to be exceedingly rare, it is worth asking how the advice model would fare in such cases.

There are two ways for the advice model to go, depending on the situation. One possibility is that the advice model may recommend withholding judgment. If there is no pressing need for me to form a decided view of the situation, perhaps my fully virtuous self recommends that I bide my time and see how things play out. In a sense, then, we do get a correct construal in this case: my fully virtuous self desires that I construe this as a situation to wait and see. If I am pressed to form a view of the situation, however, then I think the advice model would recommend picking one of the possible construals and going with it. If the situation is truly ambiguous, and my fully virtuous self has no grounds for favoring one construal over another, then this would seem to be the most reasonable recommendation. Even in ambiguous circumstances, then, we have little reason to think that my idealized self will desire incompatible construals of a situation.

There is another concern regarding the advice model that must be addressed: to what extent is my idealized self in the evaluating world a version of *me*? If my actual self is fairly continent, then a fully virtuous version of myself does not seem like too much of a stretch. Perhaps my fully virtuous self likes material objects a little bit less and is a bit more courageous and generous. In that case, my fully virtuous self would be easily recognizable as a version of me. But what if I was thoroughly vicious? What if I had all the wrong ends and related schemas? In that case, it is not obvious that my fully virtuous self would resemble my actual self much at all. A full answer to this question would require an exploration of issues of identity that go well beyond the scope of this

project. Let me instead provide a general constraint on the idealization that occurs within the advice model: my fully virtuous self should differ from my actual self as little as possible.

Some may question why the fully virtuous individual in the evaluating world needs to be a version of me at all. Would not any sufficiently informed, fully virtuous individual do the job? I suppose that there is no need to be overly insistent that the fully virtuous individual be a version of *me*, so long as the fully virtuous individual is sufficiently informed. But note that a correct construal is still a *subjective* construal. Other aspects of myself that are not related directly to virtue might affect construals, for example, whether I am shy or outgoing, goofy or reserved.[11] Whoever the fully virtuous individual is in the evaluating world, then, she will have to have intimate knowledge of all aspects of my personality. So while there seems no need to be adamant that the fully virtuous individual in the evaluating world be a version of me, as long as the fully virtuous individual is sufficiently informed in this robust sense, I take it that a version of me is most plausibly informed in this sense. I shall continue, then, to treat the fully virtuous individual in the advice model as a version of me.

It is the case, however, that the less virtuous I am, the less the fully virtuous version of myself will resemble my actual self. This leads to another potential problem for the advice model: would my idealized self really desire that my actual self construe a situation in a way that is beyond the capacities of my actual self? Steven Arkonovich (2011) raises this sort of objection in relation to the advice model. His worry is that one's actual self may be so far removed from one's idealized self that one's actual self would be completely unable to understand what it was that one's idealized self

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[11] I say 'directly' here because some aspects of personality, if sufficiently extreme or pathological, may interfere with the manifestation of virtue. So, for example, while it certainly seems as though one could be shy and virtuous, it may be much less likely that one could be, say, agoraphobic and virtuous. I take up the question of the agoraphobic individual again in Chapter 5.

would desire for one's actual self, and that this lack of understanding would undermine the idealized self's desire. Let me provide an example to illustrate the problem.

Suppose that Billy really enjoys dogfighting. His fully virtuous self desires that Billy see that this is not a sport, that dogfights are not events to be enjoyed, that he is inflicting real suffering upon these animals, etc. Billy's actual self, however, is in no psychological position to recognize such things. Having been raised in a culture in which dogfighting is considered an acceptable pastime, Billy revels in the matches and ruthlessly 'trains' his dogs. If Billy were, all of a sudden, appalled at the sight of a dogfight, he would be completely at sea. He would have no idea how he came to this view of dogfighting and would be unable to make sense of his newfound feelings of revulsion. The problem, according to Arkonovich, is that, in desiring that Billy see dogfighting for the horrible activity that it is, Billy's fully virtuous self is wishing his actual self into a "state of befuddlement" (2011, 416). And surely, Arkonovich argues, his fully virtuous self would not want *that*.

In regard to an advice model of correct construal, I do not find Arkonovich's worry compelling.[12] The more vicious I am, the more appalled my fully virtuous self is likely to be by the state of my actual self's character, and the more pressing it probably would seem to my fully virtuous self that I construe situations correctly. From the perspective of one's fully virtuous self, I imagine that a disjointed experience would be a small price to pay for seeing the situation aright. If the desire for my actual self to construe the situation in a particular way entails a perplexing, conversion-like experience (cf. McDowell 1998b), then so be it.

## Correct Construal and Externalism: Avoiding Subjectivism

Arkonovich's worry does, however, point to an important feature of the advice model of correct construal: correct construal is not restricted by what my actual self is in a psychological

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[12] Arkonovich is arguing in the context of an advice model for internal reasons; I will not assess his argument in that context.

position to recognize. As a result, I shall argue, the notion of correct construal presented here is, in an important sense, an external one. This is significant because the externality of correct construal prevents virtue ethics from collapsing into a form of subjectivism.

Let me begin with a brief account of the internal-external distinction in question here. This debate largely takes place within the context of reasons, but I shall once again set talk of reasons aside after introducing the distinction. Bernard Williams distinguishes two interpretations of the statement, '*A* has reason to φ': 1) the 'internal' interpretation, on which *A* has reason to φ only if φ-ing would advance some motive that *A* has, and 2) the 'external' interpretation, on which the claim, '*A* has reason to φ,' is not falsified by a lack of the relevant motive (1981). Williams wants 'motive' to be read broadly, to include not only desires, but also "dispositions of evaluation, patterns of emotional reaction, personal loyalties, and various projects, as they may be abstractly called, embodying commitments of the agent" (1981, 105). On the internal interpretation, the idea is that *A* has reason to φ only if there is a "sound deliberative route"[13] from *A*'s current set of motives to *A* being motivated to φ. On the external interpretation, what *A* has reason to do is not restricted by the motives that *A* currently has.

The contrast between the internalist and externalist positions becomes clearest, perhaps, in the case of the thoroughly wicked person. We can imagine someone who is completely selfish and anti-social, a misanthrope to the core. The internalist is going to say that if there is no sound deliberative route from this person's current motives to a motivation to be kind or generous, then there is no reason for this person to be kind or generous. The externalist, on the other hand, is going to insist that the motives of this particular individual do not matter. There is reason for

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[13] Williams does not provide a clear account of what counts as a sound deliberative route. Providing such an account is an important project for internalism. Since I am taking up an externalist position, however, I will not be concerned with such an account.

individuals to be kind and generous and, in particular, there is reason for *this* individual to be kind and generous, regardless of her current motives.

Williams argues that, in fact, there are no external reasons. All reasons, he contends, are internal in the sense described above, a position that prompted a well-known response by McDowell in support of the possibility of external reasons (1998b). As I am going to set aside talk about reasons, I shall not concern myself with whether or not there can be external reasons. Instead, I argue that the notion of correct construal as presented in the advice model is an external notion in the sense elaborated by Williams and that this externality prevents virtue ethics from collapsing into a form of subjectivism.

We have seen the various ways in which the construal of a situation that is recommended by the advice model is limited by various psychological features of the actual individual facing the situation, including both limitations in character and epistemic limitations. Because the correct construal is the construal desired by one's fully virtuous self, however, there is an important way in which the correct construal is *not* limited by the current motives of the actual individual, and so is external to that individual.

It seems clear that, given a CAPS conception of traits and the process of encoding spelled out in the previous chapter, there may not be a sound deliberative route—however that notion gets fleshed out—from an individual's current motives to the correct construal of the situation at hand. Recall that the CAUs that constitute a trait are schemas, which direct our attention towards and away from various features of the situations that we encounter and according to which we categorize and interpret those features and the situations themselves. As we saw in the last chapter, this means that someone who is vicious will attend to different features of a situation and categorize those features differently than a virtuous person will. Furthermore, the difference between the virtuous and the vicious is not merely a matter of attention. Even if one could get a vicious individual to pay

attention to (only) the features to which the virtuous would want them to attend on the advice model, they may not have the appropriate schemas with which to interpret those features. Recall, too, that schemas have a prototype structure and are developed over the course of multiple particular experiences. This means that acquiring schemas is not (merely) a matter of deliberation. The notion of correct construal, then, is external in the sense elaborated by Williams, as it is not limited by an individual's current motives.

The externality of correct construal prevents virtue ethics from collapsing into a form of subjectivism. Let me quickly remind readers of the worry. The descriptive nature of the CAPS model and its emphasis on subjective construal allows us to identify traits as they are subjectively construed. Recall the example of gang members presented in the first chapter. Gang members, presumably, have a strong sense of loyalty. A CAPS conception of traits might allow us to identify the trait of 'loyalty as construed by this particular gang member,' or 'loyalty as construed by this particular gang.' Virtue ethics, however, needs to be able to adjudicate between different conceptions of loyalty. If it cannot, we would be stuck with a form of ethical subjectivism, where moral standards are particular to a given individual or group.

The external notion of correct construal as elaborated by the advice model presented here provides a method of adjudication. It allows us to move away from descriptions of how individuals actually construe situations to normative claims regarding how situations ought to be construed. The gang member may, indeed, construe this situation as demanding a demonstration of loyalty to her gang. The advice model allows us to say, when appropriate, that the gang member gets the construal wrong. The advice model, not the individual or group in question, provides the standard of correctness, and so virtue ethics is spared a collapse into subjectivism.

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## Specifying the Virtues

As we saw in the first chapter, the CAPS model provides us with an empirically plausible answer to the question 'What is a personality trait?' Recall that the model outlines five main types of cognitive-affective units (CAUs): 1) encodings, including constructs of the self, other people, and situations; 2) expectancies and beliefs about the social world, including beliefs about one's own self-efficacy and about expected outcomes in particular situations; 3) affects, which include feelings, emotions, and affective as well as physiological responses; 4) goals and outcomes, including desirable and undesirable outcomes, as well as life projects; and 5) competencies and self-regulatory plans, which include the potential behaviors one can do and the strategies one has for organizing one's behavior as well as one's own internal states (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 252-253). These CAUs are activated and inhibited both by external stimuli, such as the setting in which an agent finds him/herself, and internal stimuli, such as the agent's affective state or goal. Different CAUs are activated or inhibited in different situations and/or on different occasions, and activating or inhibiting one CAU can activate or inhibit others. For instance, a particular belief may in turn activate a related desire. When a set of CAUs has been repeatedly activated in a particular pattern, that set becomes organized into a network, and the relationships between those units are solidified, forming a personality trait that results in stable, distinctive, and predictable patterns of behavior (Mischel 1999, 43).

The two previous chapters focus on virtue as a whole, the general state of having an excellent character. At this point, the question becomes pressing: What are the specific CAUs that allow the virtuous to get things right in the ways outlined in these chapters? This is clearly a large and difficult question. One way to make the question a bit more tractable is to individuate the

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virtues. This would allow us to focus our attention on the CAUs that constitute particular virtues, such as honesty, generosity, or courage.

It is also worth noting that individuation of the virtues is both important and useful for virtue ethics itself, particularly with regard to action guidance and habituation into virtue. As seen in the previous chapter, an account of correct construal may provide an account of rightness, but it does not on its own provide much by way of action guidance. Rather, action guidance in virtue ethics is to be found in the virtue and vice vocabulary, which can be formulated into what Hursthouse calls the v-rules. Failure to individuate virtues would leave us with a single, and rather uninformative, v-rule: 'Do what is virtuous; do not do what is not virtuous.' Virtue ethics needs a robust virtue and vice vocabulary if it is to have informative, action-guiding v-rules. And as Sarah Broadie notes, the particular virtues are indispensable for those concerned with successfully habituating someone into virtue: "anyone in charge of a develop*ing* person is surely helped by a lively sense of the specificities of different kinds of situation, and the different kinds of human weakness that have to be overcome for decent responses to be possible in each" (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 23). There are, then, important, practical reasons to individuate the virtues.

So it is time to move from speaking of virtue in general to providing an account of the virtue*s*, plural. This chapter lays the groundwork for such an account. I begin by addressing the question of individuation in light of Aristotle's much-maligned doctrine of the reciprocity of the virtues. I argue that a CAPS conception of virtue lends itself to a commitment to the reciprocity thesis. In light of that commitment, I outline three requirements for a successful method of individuating the virtues. Next, I examine some potential methods for individuation that have been offered in the recent literature and argue that none is satisfactory. I suggest, then, a return to Aristotle's method of individuating the virtues by their objects which, I argue, does satisfy the three requirements. After defending Aristotle's method from recent criticisms, I employ it in spelling out

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a framework for 'thin' and 'thick' accounts of particular virtues, whereby we can begin to specify the CAUs that constitute the virtues.

## Individuation vs. Unity/Reciprocity

The move from discussing virtue in general to attending to particular virtues immediately raises the question of the extent to which the particular virtues are structurally related to one another. In the ancient Greek ethical tradition, the virtues are understood to form some kind of unity. There are many versions of the unity doctrine.[1] The Socratic version is perhaps the boldest, holding that virtue really is one thing, namely knowledge, and speaking of particular virtues merely highlights different aspects of that one thing. A slightly more modest version is attributed to Aristotle: the virtues may not all be one, but they are integrated to such an extent that to have one virtue fully is to have all of them.[2] Terence Irwin helpfully distinguishes the Aristotelian version by referring to it as 'the reciprocity of the virtues' (1988), and I shall follow suit. I shall focus my attention on the reciprocity thesis as it seems better suited than a unity thesis to a CAPS conception of virtue, given the variety of CAUs that constitute the virtues.

The reciprocity thesis has, for the most part, been abandoned by contemporary virtue theorists.[3] Several different claims are offered in the literature against the reciprocity of the virtues. Some argue that it seems perfectly reasonable that an individual could be truly excellent in one domain of her life but not in others. Those who argue along these lines tend to go in for what is known as a limited unity thesis, advanced most notably by Neera Badhwar, which holds that "the

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[1] See, for example, Hursthouse's comment about Timothy (now Sophie Grace) Chappell's work identifying something like 30 versions (1999, 153 n. 9).

[2] It is difficult to say exactly how much more modest the Aristotelian version of the thesis is compared to the Socratic one, at least as far as questions about individuals possessing virtue are concerned. Marguerite DesLauriers argues that, for Aristotle, the virtues cannot be one because the intellectual virtue and the virtues of character stem from different faculties (2002). McDowell, on the other hand, seems to accept the Socratic version in his otherwise Aristotelian elaboration of how it is that the virtuous see situations in a distinctive sort of way: "we use the concepts of the particular virtues to mark similarities and dissimilarities among the manifestations of a single sensitivity, which is what virtue, in general, is…" (1998g, 53). In either case, a person either has (all of the) virtue(s) or she does not.

[3] The obvious exception is McDowell. For a defense of the doctrine, see Christopher Toner (2014).

virtues are *disunited across different domains* (areas of practical concern), but *united within domains*"
(Badhwar 1996, 308). Others argue that an individual could have one virtue without having all of
the others. These philosophers tend to go in for the even more modest weak unity thesis: "to have
any particular virtue, you must at least be alive to the moral considerations that pertain to the other
virtues" (Watson 1984, 60).

Still others take a bolder stand against the reciprocity of virtue. Some argue that some
virtues are actually incompatible, such that one person cannot possibly possess both. Common
examples of incompatible virtues include forthrightness and tactfulness, and caution and spontaneity
(see Badhwar 1996, 306 and n. 5). Finally, some argue against reciprocity by focusing on the way in
which the reciprocity thesis is meant to ensure that the virtuous are overall morally excellent. As
Gopal Sreenivasan puts it, a "core intuition" behind the thesis is that "true virtue cannot be
something that leads its possessor morally astray" (2009, 199).[4] The idea is that, together, the virtues
form a kind of complete system of checks and balances so that, for example, one's generosity does
not cross into injustice. For every moral consideration, then, there must be some virtue that is
sensitive to it. If there is a consideration that is not covered by a virtue, so to speak, then even the
fully virtuous could go astray in that regard, and so the virtues would not be reciprocal in the way
that the thesis claims. Sreenivasan, for example, argues that no virtue is characteristically sensitive to
rights, and so the virtues are not reciprocal (2009).

The Aristotelian commitment to *phronêsis* as what allows the virtuous to get things right in
relation to each of the particular virtues entails *some* degree of reciprocity between the virtues. As a
result, almost all contemporary virtue theorists who are committed to practical wisdom go in for

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[4] Sreenivasan's way of putting this point is preferable to McDowell's claim that "virtue issues in nothing but right
conduct" (1998g, 52). See my discussion in the next chapter regarding how the virtuous may on occasion act from
virtue yet still miss the target of virtue and so fail to get things right.

either a limited or weak unity thesis (e.g., Hursthouse 1999, 153-157, Wolf 2007, Russell 2009, 336).[5]

I think that this is a mistake, especially if virtue ethics is to take on board a CAPS conception of traits. The literature on the reciprocity of the virtues is large and complex, so I shall limit myself to arguing for two points: 1) if we set aside questions about the attribution of virtue to particular individuals, as I argue we should, then there seems little reason to prefer a limited or weak unity thesis; and 2) the reciprocity thesis looks particularly well-suited for a CAPS conception of virtue, given its emphasis on subjective construal.

Those who opt for a limited or weak unity thesis do not appear to be disputing the structural relationship of the virtues themselves. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the philosophers in this discussion accept the notion of *ideal* virtue being reciprocal.[6] For instance, Badwhar allows as an exception to her limited unity thesis "the limiting cases of a perfectly virtuous or perfectly vicious individual" (1996, 319). And in her discussion of the unity of the virtues, Hursthouse sets aside the ideally virtuous, who are "good without qualification" (1999, 153). As Christopher Toner points out, those who opt for a limited or weak unity thesis understand the claim as "about actual persons, who are not perfect but are virtuous enough to be virtuous indeed" (2014, 211). They are worried not so much about the structural relationship of the virtues to one another, then, but rather about the point at which one can plausibly attribute to an individual the possession of a particular virtue. Russell is probably the most explicit on this point, as he distinguishes between what he calls "model" and "attributive" levels of the unity thesis (2009, 367-373).

The question of attribution is one that I am happy to keep open. Moreover, I doubt that there is a single answer to the attribution question, so opting for a limited or weak unity thesis seems

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[5] Michael Slote is an example of a virtue ethicist who is *not* committed to *phronêsis* in this way. This allows him to take up one of the bolder positions against reciprocity: Slote contends that some virtues appear to be incompatible with each other (2011, 30-31).

[6] Susan Wolf might be an exception here. She argues that "perfect and complete possession of one virtue requires at least the knowledge that is needed for the possession of every other" (2007, 150) but perhaps not the virtues themselves.

unlikely to settle the issue. For one, we can have a variety of different aims when attributing virtue to others. For instance, we may attribute virtue in a robust manner in order to identify someone as a moral exemplar. Or we may attribute virtue more thinly as a form of praise or acknowledgement of an individual's success in a given context or area of her life. We may even attribute virtue proleptically[7]: if one finds the empirical evidence convincing, we ought, perhaps, to be regularly attributing virtue to those who are being habituated in order to build and reinforce in the learner a sense of virtuous identity.[8] Given the variety of aims that we may have, our standards for attribution seem likely to vary depending on context. Consider, by analogy, the ways in which we might attribute ourselves with a particular skill.[9] Suppose that several of my colleagues are organizing an after-work basketball league, and ask me if I play. In such a situation, I may reasonably consider myself a basketball player, since I played on my small college's intramural team and have a decent grasp of basic plays, strategies, and so on. Later, when I discover that my colleagues all played Division I ball at top-ranked schools, I may no longer, in that context, consider myself a basketball player. Similarly, it seems unlikely that there would be a single answer as to when someone is, to use Russell's language, virtuous enough to be virtuous *tout court*. In some contexts, the weak unity thesis may suffice; other contexts might require the limited unity thesis. And at other times, we may choose to hold ourselves to an even higher standard.

There are a couple of more reasons why I do not think that we ought to get too hung up on the question of attribution. First, full virtue is not the only praiseworthy state of character. One point that can sometimes get lost in discussions of virtue is that a lack of virtue does not entail the presence of vice. Not all states of character that are short of full virtue are bad. Aristotle notes, for example, that continence is a generally good and praiseworthy state (1145b9-10, 1150a35-38,

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[7] Bernard Williams introduces the notion of a "proleptic mechanism" (1989).
[8] See Mark Alfano's Chapter 4 (2013).
[9] These thoughts are influenced by Annas' discussion (2011, 65).

1151a28-29). There is a broad continuum between full virtue and complete vice, and one can fall short of complete excellence in various ways while still being a decent, generally good human being who is praiseworthy in many ways. There may not be so much riding, then, on our ability to hang the label 'virtuous' on particular individuals. A related point has to do with the aspirational nature of virtue ethics: being able to be truly attributed with the possession of a virtue is not like crossing the finish line of a race. The attribution of virtue does not mark the end of striving towards moral improvement, after which one can cease to concern oneself with the state of one's character. Habituation is an ongoing process (1180a1-3). As a result, the question as to when one is virtuous enough to be virtuous *tout court* does not strike me as terribly pressing.

Setting aside the question of attribution, then, let me offer some considerations for why a commitment to the reciprocity of the virtues makes sense for an account of virtue that places central importance on an individual's subjective construals of the situations that she encounters. Take as an example the virtues of kindness and fairness. Suppose that one child in a group will be very upset if she does not receive two cookies. Out of kindness, then, I may be inclined to give the child two cookies in order to make her happy. But suppose that I have just enough cookies to give one to each of the children in the group. In this kind of situation, McDowell argues, my kindness must be informed by fairness, for if I acquiesce to the one child's feelings in a way that is unfair to the others, I have failed to exhibit virtue. McDowell concludes:

> So we cannot disentangle genuine possession of kindness from the sensitivity which constitutes fairness. And since there are obviously no limits on the possibilities for compresence, in the same situation, of circumstances of the sorts proper sensitivities to which constitute all the virtues, the argument can be generalized: no one virtue can be fully possessed except by a possessor of all of them, that is, a possessor of virtue in general. (1998g, 52-53)

Gary Watson rejects McDowell's argument for reciprocity:

> This conclusion does not follow. Proper sensitivity to others' welfare means that characteristically one will act rightly where others' welfare is concerned. But nothing follows about one's behavior in other contexts. One may regularly go astray where others' welfare is

> not at stake. So it is consistent with the possession of benevolence (as proper sensitivity to the well-being of others) that one fails to possess some other virtue. (1984, 59)

I suspect, however, that Watson fails to appreciate McDowell's point. Recall the McDowellian view of practical reasoning that I develop in Chapter 2: in a situation in which virtue demands a response, the virtuous individual takes in the situation as a whole, and the CAUs that constitute the virtues direct her attention such that she arrives at a single subjective construal of the situation. This construal then engages with a concern of the individual to yield action. When we think of McDowell's point above in terms of subjective construal, we can see how an isolated sensitivity to others' welfare is unlikely to yield reliably right action in the independent way that Watson suggests.

Recall that the construal of the situation at which an individual arrives depends upon the features to which the individual selectively attends. What Watson seems to fail to appreciate is that being *properly* sensitive to any one feature of a situation requires being properly sensitive to *all* of the features of that situation. That is because all of the features of the situation lie before me, and given the limited nature of attention, I must selectively attend to some of those features and not others. I cannot be properly sensitive to others' welfare, for example, unless I am properly sensitive to my own welfare, because if I pay more or less attention to my own welfare than I ought, then I am going to pay correspondingly less or more attention to the welfare of others, or to some other feature or features of the situation at hand, than I ought. As discussed in Chapter 2, these differences in attended features will result in different degrees of applicability of various schemas to the situation, and so can affect individuals' construals of the situation. The McDowellian point is that an individual is going to have to be properly sensitive to much more than just the welfare of others if she is going to construe the situation correctly. And since there is no way to know in advance which ethically relevant features might be present in any given situation, we are going to have to be properly sensitive to everything if we are going to get the contruals right reliably. To the extent that an individual lacks one or more virtues, her view of situations will be, in some way,

myopic. And that is liable to lead her astray, *even in* situations where the welfare of others' is a relevant feature.[10]

One might be inclined to raise the worry once again regarding the demandingness of this psychological picture. Let me make a couple of points to alleviate concern. Properly attending to the appropriate features of situations will, for the most part, not be effortful for a virtuous individual, as the CAUs that constitute the virtues are directing the individual's attention. Habituation into virtue includes fostering habits of attention and so proper attention will be, for the fully virtuous, like second nature (see McDowell 1998e). Nor does the view require the virtuous to have superhuman powers of attention. The idea, rather, is that the virtuous individual makes proper use of the limited attention that she has.

If virtue ethics is to take on board a CAPS conception of traits, with its emphasis on subjective construal, then, it would seem that we ought to go in for the reciprocity thesis. But what about the bolder claims lodged against reciprocity: that at least some virtues are incompatible or that the virtues fail to cover all moral considerations? Unlike the concerns raised in favor of limited or weak unity, these objections *do* appear aimed at the structural relationship of the virtues, and it is unclear that a theoretical commitment to *phronêsis* is sufficient, on its own, to preclude these possibilities. What we need is a method of individuating the virtues that can avoid these objections.

## Requirements for Individuating the Virtues

We have at the outset, then, two requirements for a successful method of individuating the virtues. First, the method must avoid incompatibility among the virtues, and second, it must provide good reason to think that the virtues do or can cover all ethical considerations. The need for the virtues to cover all ethical considerations poses another challenge for a successful method of

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[10] See also Toner's discussion of how the lack of one particular virtue can limit acts within the sphere of another virtue to being at best continent (2014).

individuation: might we end up with too many virtues?  Russell identifies what he calls 'the enumeration problem': if there is an infinite number of virtues, no person or action can be overall virtuous (Russell 2009, 148).  The problem is that, if there is an infinite number of virtues, we can never be sure that an action or a person is overall virtuous, since there will always be another virtue against which to check said action or person.  And if we cannot say that an action is right or an individual virtuous, virtue ethics will be unable to provide action guidance or assessment.

I am not sure that the enumeration problem is as significant of an issue as Russell makes it out to be: even if the virtues must cover all ethical considerations, we have little reason to think they would be infinite in number.  But a finite number of virtues, if large enough, may run into the same kinds of problems regarding action guidance and assessment that concern Russell.  While a huge, yet finite list of virtues may not make action guidance and assessment impossible, it may very well make it intractable.[11]  This potential for intractability is, I think, a legitimate concern, given the way in which the resurgence of virtue ethics has produced an abundance of virtues.  Some virtue ethicists, like Christine Swanton, fully embrace pluralism and are especially open-handed with the virtues.  In addition to the traditional, canonical virtues, the literature is rife with environmental virtues (e.g., Sandler 2006), feminist virtues (e.g., Barnhill 2012), parenting virtues (e.g., Kirkham 2010), business virtues (e.g., van Wensveen 1995), burdened virtues (Tessman 2005)—the list goes on.  The rate at which the virtues have multiplied in the literature over the past few decades suggests that there is no clear end to the number of virtues that one can devise.  Such long lists of virtues can, indeed, begin to feel unwieldy and could make action guidance and assessment quite difficult, for reasons similar to those raised by the enumeration problem.

We have, then, three requirements for a successful method of individuating the virtues.  Any successful method of individuation must: 1) avoid incompatibility between virtues; 2) provide reason

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[11] Thanks to Jonathan McKeown-Green for raising this point.

to think that the virtues do or can cover all ethical considerations; and 3) provide reason to think that the number of virtues is limited in a way that is amenable to action guidance and assessment. Let us turn now to possible methods for individuation.

## Potential Criteria for Individuation

One finds several possible criteria for individuation in the contemporary literature.[12] The data from the situationist studies discussed in the first chapter have prompted some to suggest individuating the virtues by context. For example, Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May's study (1928) of deceit among school-age children found that a child who is reliably truthful with her friends may not be reliably so with her parents. And a child who frequently cheats on tests may never pick up unclaimed money left sitting out on a table. Perhaps, then, it is a mistake to place all of these things under a single virtue of honesty; perhaps there are a number of different virtues at work. There are two ways that the virtues could be carved up according to context: virtues could be understood as situation-specific (e.g., Doris 2002) or as domain-specific (e.g., Badhwar 1996).[13] Domains are areas of one's life, for instance 'family' as opposed to 'work.' Situations are more particular, such as 'at a conference' or 'on an airplane.'

It is far from clear, however, that carving up the virtues in this way tracks actual differences in virtue itself: while a person may be honest at work but not with his/her spouse, it is not obvious that honesty-at-work is really something different from honesty-with-family. Badhwar herself seems to echo this point with her example of autonomy: "if a person's autonomy extends over many domains, then she is a highly autonomous person" (2009, 276). If we are to recognize autonomy across different domains, then whatever autonomy is, it has to be the same, or at least quite similar, across those domains. But if that is the case, it does not look as though the *domain* is individuating

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[12] See Russell for an overview (2009, 180-188).
[13] I take this distinction from Neera Badhwar (2009).

autonomy from other virtues. Individuation by situation does not appear to fare any better. We have little reason to think that there is only one virtue for a given situation: cannot one exercise kindness, generosity, and patience, say, at a conference or on an airplane? Once again, the context does not appear to be doing the individuation. As Russell points out, the compartmentalization of virtue according to context seems to be a reflection of how individuals tend to develop virtue, rather than a reflection of virtue itself (2009, 180).

Another proposed method of individuating the virtues is according to their corresponding emotions, a view espoused by J. O. Urmson (1973). As Hursthouse points out in her critique of Urmson, however, it is implausible that each virtue corresponds to (only) one specific emotion (1980, 66). As she notes, Aristotle identifies courage as associated with *two* emotions, namely fear and confidence. Urmson's solution is to distinguish two separate virtues: courage and caution (1973, 229-230). But even if Urmson's solution works for courage, his method of individuation still seems problematic for other virtues. For example, few would deny that honesty is a virtue, yet what single emotion corresponds to it?

Russell argues that the virtues ought to be individuated according to their characteristic reasons (2009, 183-188). Virtue ethicists frequently discuss characteristic reasons for acting from this or that particular virtue, and they often generate examples of reasons that are characteristic of one particular virtue or another. For example, Hursthouse offers the following suggestions:

> What are reasons 'typical of' a virtue? They will be the sorts of reasons for which someone with a particular virtue, V, will do a V act. So, thinking of the sorts of reasons a courageous agent might have for performing a courageous act, we can come up with such things as 'I could probably save him if I climbed up there', 'Someone had to volunteer', 'One can't give in to tyrants', 'It's worth the risk' […] For honesty we get such things as 'It was the truth', 'He asked me', 'It's best to get such things out into the open straight away'. And for justice we get such things as 'It's his', 'I owe it to her', 'She has the right to decide', 'I promised'. And so on and so forth. (1999, 128)

These characteristic reasons, however, are usually for illustrative purposes only, employed to shed light on the practical reasoning of the virtuous. Russell goes way beyond this typical usage of

characteristic reasons: his claim is that each virtue has its own *distinctive* range of reasons, such that the virtues can be individuated according to those reasons.

There are at least two reasons to be skeptical about Russell's proposed method of individuation. For one, many of the reasons that we would generate as characteristic of a particular virtue will also be characteristic of that virtue's associated vices. For instance, 'It was the truth' may, indeed, be a reason to be honest. But imagine a politician being confronted by a reporter who has pictures of the politician engaging in illicit activities. Here, 'It was the truth' might be a reason to lie in the face of (true) accusations. Similarly, 'I owe it to her' may be a reason to be just, or it may be a reason for me—quite *unjustly*—to avoid letting my sister see the wad of cash that is in my wallet. 'Someone had to volunteer' may be a reason to courageously step forward or to cower in the back corner. These examples suggest that many of the reasons that we generate as characteristic of one virtue or another are not characteristic of the virtue *per se*. As such, they can support both virtuous and non-virtuous behavior, and so will not be distinctive of the virtue. What *is* distinctive of the virtuous is that they take certain reasons as reasons *for particular sorts of responses* to the situation at hand. Unfortunately for Russell, that distinctive relationship between reasons and responses cannot be captured by characteristic reasons alone. Indeed, this is why the individual's subjective construal of the situation is so important: As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the things it does is determine, at least in part, what the reasons are reasons *for*.

Moreover, we do not exercise the virtues in isolation. Although I have already argued in favor of the reciprocity of the virtues, even someone committed to only a weak unity thesis is likely to acknowledge this point. For instance, situations calling for honesty often will also call for courage. "It's best to get such things out into the open straight away," may be, then, not only a reason to be honest; it may *also* be a reason to be courageous.[14] In addition, a number of virtues may

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[14] Courage might be a special case, although I doubt it. See the debate between Williams (1995) and Hursthouse (1995).

be responsive to the very same reason in a given situation. For example, imagine one day coming across a stranger in need. Let us suppose, not implausibly, that your response in this situation will involve courage, compassion, respectfulness, generosity, and benevolence. I suspect it will involve them all for the same reason: here is a person who needs (my) help. For almost any situation in which one finds oneself, if one virtue is responsive to a particular reason, then other virtues are very likely to be responsive to that same reason as well. Reasons, then, do not look capable of individuating the virtues.

## Aristotle: Individuation According to Object

Contexts, emotions, and reasons all look problematic as the basis of individuating the virtues. I suggest, then, a return to Aristotle, who individuates the virtues according to their objects. This way of individuating the virtues reflects a broader methodology within Aristotle's psychology whereby capacities are individuated according to their objects (DesLauriers 2002, 144). In II 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle outlines the objects of the virtues: fear and confidence are the objects of courage, pleasures and pains belong to temperance, the giving and taking of money to generosity, truth-telling to honesty. What kind of thing is the object of a virtue? Aristotle does not say, but from the examples that he provides in II 7, it seems clear that he takes 'object' to be a rather broad category. The contemporary virtue ethicists who have followed Aristotle in individuating the virtues by their objects typically take an object of a virtue to be something that falls within the virtue's sphere of concern, something to which the virtue demands a response. 'Object' here is construed broadly to include things within the individual, like emotions, outside the individual, like other people, animals, natural and manmade objects, and perhaps even abstract things like knowledge or beauty (Swanton 2003, 20). Recently, however, Aristotle's method of individuation with respect to the virtues has been criticized, most notably by Marguerite DesLauriers (2002). In

this section, I shall defend Aristotle's method against DesLauriers' objections, before turning to consider whether his method can satisfy the requirements outlined earlier in this chapter.

DesLauriers raises two objections to Aristotle's method of individuating the virtues. First, she argues, virtues are desires for the good; however, it is often not the object itself that is good, but the circumstances make it so. For example, whether a desire to donate money is a desire for the good will depend on where the donation is going, whose money it is, and so on. If I steal the money in order to donate, or donate to an organization that I know has bad ends, then my desire is not a desire for the good. If we individuate the virtues according to their objects only, DesLauriers argues, we fail to distinguish them as desires for the good. In addition, DesLauriers argues that the objects as elaborated by Aristotle do not seem to track the boundaries between virtues accurately. For instance, both generosity *and* justice are concerned with the distribution of money (DesLauriers 2002, 115). Specifying the object of generosity as the giving and taking of money, then, fails to distinguish it from justice.

DesLauriers' solution to her first objection is to individuate the virtues according to the objects desired *as well as* the circumstances in which they are desired. This will ensure, she claims, that the specified desire is a desire for the good. By adding in circumstances, DesLauriers is essentially advocating for the individuation of virtue by context, more specifically by situation. For example, she ventures that "desires that correspond to the judgments of *phronêsis* and have to do with the distribution of goods that are the spoils of war to the citizens will be just desires…" (DesLauriers 2002, 115). Here divvying up the spoils of war specifies a circumstance in which desires regarding the distribution of goods occur. But surely there are other circumstances in which desires regarding the distribution of goods occur, for instance the distribution of tax revenue. If the virtues are individuated according to object-circumstances dyads, then it would seem that, on DesLauriers' view, we would have spoils-of-war justice *and* tax-revenue justice. And so it looks as

though DesLauriers' proposed method of individuation faces the same problem as the other attempts to individuate according to context that were discussed earlier: it is not clear that spoils-of-war justice and tax-revenue justice are tracking actual differences in virtue.

Furthermore, adding in circumstances in this way fails to solve the problem of good objects as DesLauriers has set it out. The "distribution of goods that are the spoils of war to the citizens" still does not tell me that such a distribution is *good*. If, for instance, the spoils were distributed only among the ruling elite with none going to the soldiers who actually fought the war, then such a distribution would not, in fact, be just. To describe the circumstances with enough specificity to indicate how the object is good would require a detailed elaboration. Spoils-of-war justice and tax-revenue justice would not suffice; we would need something like equal-share-of-spoils-for-all-foot-soldiers justice and tax-benefits-according-to-one's-need justice. This will certainly yield an unmanageably long list of virtues. Notice, however, that what actually ensures that the object is good in DesLauriers' specification is the bit about *phronêsis*; if the desire is in accord with *phronêsis*, then of course it will be a desire for the good. But if *phronêsis* does all of the work to make clear that the object is good, then there would seem to be no need to specify circumstances.

Moreover, individuating the virtues according to their objects does not appear to be problematic in the ways that DesLauriers suggests. While she is certainly right to point out that most objects are not good in themselves, but rather rendered so by the circumstances in which they are chosen, it is not clear that the objects of a virtue need to be specified *as* good when individuating virtues. If—as is the case on an Aristotelian understanding of virtue—virtue is taken to be an *excellence* in acknowledging and responding to the objects of virtue, then there is no need to spell out what makes the objects good in particular situations. The notion of excellence ensures the goodness of the object without specifying the circumstances. We would, of course, need an account of what

makes for excellence in the acknowledgement and response to those objects. But such an account is essential to our *understanding* of the virtues, not to their individuation.

DesLauriers' second problem with individuating the virtues according to their objects is that the objects as elaborated by Aristotle fail to track the boundaries between virtues accurately. She is right to worry about Aristotle's elaboration of the objects of virtue. For instance, he specifies the object of generosity as the "giving and taking of money" (1107b10), but—in addition to the fact that it fails to specify *whose* money—this specification is surely too limited. One can, after all, be generous with one's time. Something along the lines of 'the distribution of an individual's own resources' might be more fitting. Some effort will be required, then, to specify the appropriate scope of a given virtue. But we have no reason to think that revised elaborations of the objects of virtue could not carve the virtues up more accurately than Aristotle does while retaining his method of individuation.

Individuating the virtues according to their objects, then, seems to maintain its promise. And, indeed, many contemporary virtue ethicists follow Aristotle in individuating the virtues in this way. Swanton, for example, individuates the virtues according to their fields, where the field of a virtue "consists of those items which are the sphere(s) of concern of the virtue, and to which the agent should respond in line with the virtue's demands" (2003, 20). In other words, a virtue's field consists of the objects of that virtue. Since the term 'field' has become commonplace in the contemporary literature, I shall henceforth refer to a virtue's field instead of its objects. I turn now to considering whether individuating the virtues according to their fields can satisfy the three requirements for a successful method of individuation.

There are at least two reasons to think that individuating the virtues according to their fields would be capable of covering all moral considerations. First, as mentioned earlier, we can employ Aristotle's method of individuation to specify broader fields for some virtues in a way that Aristotle

himself may not have recognized. For instance, we can recognize generosity as being concerned with more than just money, or courage with more than just the physical risks of battle. More importantly, though, Aristotle's method of individuation is capable of accommodating moral considerations as we come to recognize them. This is brought out in his comments regarding nameless virtues: "Most of these cases are also nameless, and we must try, as in the other cases also, to supply names ourselves, to make things clear and easy to follow" (1108a17-19).

Furthermore, this method of individuation *does* look as though it can cover moral considerations without producing an intractable number of virtues. One reason is that the fields of some virtues will be quite broad, while others will be more fine-grained, constituting subfields of the broader virtues. Take, for example, the virtue of politeness, whose field constitutes a subfield of the field of the virtue of respectfulness. The field of respectfulness is quite broad. For our purposes here let us stipulate the field as 'the status of people, animals, plants, and objects.'[15] The field of politeness can be roughly spelled out as 'the culturally-situated status of individuals.' Similarly, the fields of many environmental virtues are likely to be subfields of the field of the virtue of respectfulness. This mix of broad and fine-grained fields prevents this method of individuation from yielding an infinite or intractable number of virtues: we can simply continue to generalize fields until we reach a tractable number of virtues.

There is another reason to think that the number of virtues will remain tractable. Earlier, I commented on the diversity of the objects of the virtues that Aristotle offers in II 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Martha Nussbaum, however, identifies something that they all have in common: they are the kinds of things that will figure into more or less every human life. "The point," she contends, "is that everyone makes some choices and acts somehow or other in these spheres: if not properly, then improperly" (1988, 36). For Nussbaum, this is crucial in establishing the non-relative

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[15] I take the notion of respect as oriented toward status from Swanton (2003, 22).

nature of the virtues. But we can also see how the fact that fields of the virtues must play a role in more or less any human life will limit the number of virtues.

Finally, virtues individuated according to their fields will not be incompatible. Often, claims of incompatibility are interpreted "superficially," as Philippa Foot puts it (1983, 397), where the demands of one virtue are taken to conflict with the demands of another. Here one is often presented with examples in which an individual supposedly cannot, in a particular—usually quite contrived—situation, be both honest and kind, say.[16] There undoubtedly will be hard cases where sorting out the virtuous thing to do will be difficult. But notice that these are particular cases. How to be both honest and kind in this particular situation is a very different question than whether a particular individual can be both honest and kind. The mere existence of hard cases does not entail the incompatibility of the virtues.

Furthermore, the fact that those who argue for the incompatibility of the virtues often resort to traits that are controversial at best as virtues undermines their position. As mentioned earlier, common examples of incompatible virtues include forthrightness and tactfulness, and caution and spontaneity (see Badhwar 1996, 306 and n. 5). These examples are tricky because our everyday notions of them are, I suspect, significantly thinner than an Aristotelian notion of virtue. For one thing, unlike the Aristotlian understanding of virtue, there is not a notion of excellence built into our everyday understanding of these concepts. Both 'forthright' and 'tactful,' for instance, may merely describe how one delivers information, and that delivery may be excellent or not depending on the situation. None of this is to say, of course, that we could not build a normative account of forthrightness or tactfulness, but it seems to me that any attempt to elaborate accounts of them as virtues would result in their fields being subfields of honesty. For instance, suppose that the field for honesty is "divulging and disseminating information" (Swanton 2007, 214). Tactfulness, then,

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[16] Slote devises one such example (2011, 30-31). For a reply, see Ben Bryan (2013).

might highlight an aspect of this divulging and disseminating that has to do with sensitivity to one's audience.  In that light, honesty and tactfulness lose the superficial appearance of incompatibility.  In a similar vein, caution and spontaneity are not obviously virtues: one can easily be overly cautious or too spontaneous.  They may, however, highlight important aspects of a number of different virtues.  One can imagine, for example, that one would need to possess the right mix of caution and spontaneity if one were to be fully courageous, generous, or patient.  We have little reason to think that, once these notions were fleshed out within an Aristotelian understanding of virtue, that they would be incompatible traits.

Individuating the virtues according to their fields does not appear to be problematic in the ways that DesLauriers and Russell claim.  Furthermore, this method of individuation looks as though it meets the three requirements outlined earlier in this chapter.  It would seem, then, that we have ourselves a successful method of individuating the virtues.  We can now move on to providing the framework for a CAPS account of the virtues.

## Developing CAPS Accounts of the Virtues

The virtues are *excellences* of character.  In order not to lose sight of this point, I shall follow Aristotle and spell out a CAPS account of virtue in two steps.[17]  The first step is to offer a thin account of the virtue in question.  The thin account is intentionally simple: it individuates the virtue by specifying its field and asserts that the virtue is consistent excellence[18] in acknowledging and responding to the items in its field.  Once one has specified the thin account of a virtue, one can then go on to the second step, which is to elaborate a fuller or 'thick' account.

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[17] For a description of Aristotle's process of specifying thin and thick accounts of virtue, see Martha Nussbaum (1988). Swanton (2007) also elaborates thin and thick accounts of virtue in this way.

[18] Nussbaum and Swanton both say 'being well-disposed' instead of 'consistent excellence.'  I use 'excellence' in order to avoid any confusion with the psychological notion of 'disposition' as a mere behavioral tendency.

We can now spell out thin accounts of some of the virtues mentioned earlier. The thin account for generosity would be: 'To be generous is to be consistently excellent with regard to the distribution of one's own resources.' The thin account of respectfulness would read: 'To be respectful is to be consistently excellent in acknowledging and responding to the status of people, animals, plants, and objects.' Similarly, politeness would be 'consistent excellence in acknowledging and responding to the culturally-situated status of individuals.' Honesty would be 'consistent excellence in divulging and disseminating information.' At first glance, these thin accounts are rather unremarkable and may appear almost too thin to be of much use. But the thin account of a virtue serves a crucial role.

By identifying the field of the virtue and specifying the virtue as excellence with regard to that field, the thin account firmly anchors the CAPS account of the virtue in an Aristotelian understanding of virtue as excellence. This is important for two reasons. First, it allows normativity to get its foot in the door right from the start, as we are concerned from the beginning with what constitutes excellence. This is not Mischel and Shoda's descriptive project of elaborating traits as possessed by particular individuals. Rather, it is an attempt to spell out what constitutes human excellence.

Second, the thin account prevents slippage into other notions or usages of 'virtue'. As we saw in the first chapter's discussion of the different uses of terms such as 'trait' and 'disposition' in philosophy and psychology, it is easy for confusion to abound when one uses terms that have multiple meanings. Aristotle's notion of virtue is hardly the only one. The thin account ensures that our account remains an *Aristotelian* account of virtue, rather than, for example, a consequentialist account (e.g., Driver 2001). It also prevents slippage into more everyday, less philosophical uses of 'virtue,' where saying things like, 'He is too honest,' or, 'She is honest to a fault,' are commonplace,

but fail to make sense on an Aristotelian understanding of virtue as excellence (Swanton 2007, 213-214).[19]

Once one has specified the thin account of a virtue, one can then go on to elaborate a fuller or 'thick' account. Swanton offers what is probably the most developed thick account in the contemporary literature. She elaborates her thick accounts in terms of relevant general rules and emotional and motivational dispositions (Swanton 2007, 214). In more recent work, she also includes exemplars (Swanton 2013). The rules that Swanton has in mind are the kinds of 'mother's knee rules' introduced by Hursthouse to identify the imperatives often aimed at young children (Hursthouse 1999, 39). Such general rules for honesty, for example, would probably include, 'Don't lie,' 'No fibbing,' 'Own up,' 'Don't exaggerate,' 'Tell the truth,' etc. For Swanton, these general rules are characteristically unsophisticated and should not be considered absolute. The general rules just listed for honesty, therefore, should not be taken as specifying that no one should *ever* tell a lie, or that one should *always*, in *every* situation, tell the truth, nor should they be viewed as offering specific guidance about how to act here and now.

Unlike Russell's overwhelmingly cognitive standards of virtue, and Nancy Snow's exclusively motivational picture, Swanton's thick account includes both cognitive and affective elements and is appealing for this reason, as it would seem to be more in line with a CAPS conception of traits. However, general rules and moral exemplars, I argue, are not appropriate elements of a CAPS account of virtue. The thick account purports to be an account of what that particular virtue *is*—that is, of the virtue "as such" (Swanton 2013). However, Swanton's account includes both constitutive elements of virtue—namely, the relevant emotional and motivational dispositions—as

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[19] For discussion of how our everyday understanding of virtue does not always map onto the Aristotelian conception, see Hursthouse (1999, 13-14).

well as tools employed in the acquisition of virtue, such as general rules and exemplars, which are *not* constitutive of virtue.

There are other reasons why general rules look problematic as part of a thick account. For one, the account of virtue in question is supposed to provide an account of virtue that is disassociated from contextual particulars. Relevant general rules, then, would also need to be 'context-less,' so to speak. In many cases, however, the kinds of rules we tell children are often already quite context-specific. Take, for example, the virtue of politeness. In our culture one general rule for politeness would be, 'Say 'please' and 'thank you,'' a general rule that is already taking at least one significant contextual feature, namely culture, into account. When one attempts to specify truly general rules for politeness—perhaps, 'Greet others in a culturally appropriate manner'—the results end up not looking much at all like the imperatives aimed at young children. Their context-specificity means that kinds of general rules Swanton has in mind do not belong in a thick account of virtue.[20]

Furthermore, even more abstract, appropriately context-less rules like, 'Greet others in a culturally appropriate manner,' seem unable to give us the kind of *psychological* account demanded by a CAPS conception of traits. All of the rules discussed so far are action-oriented—often in the form of, 'Do this,' or 'Don't do that'—and therefore draw attention away from the kinds of psychological features so crucial to the CAPS model. Central to a CAPS understanding of virtue is the idea that virtuous behavior will manifest itself in different ways across different situations, ways that cannot be captured by simple, action-oriented rules. As discussed in the first chapter, a CAPS conception of traits embraces nominal inconsistency, that is, differences in behavior across situations. An

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[20] And, of course, the v-rules, which *are* appropriately context-less, are of no help here, as 'Do what is honest; don't do what is dishonest' gets us no closer to an account of what honesty *is*.

adequate account of virtue must embrace nominal inconsistency, too, and general, action-oriented rules appear unfit for that task.

It seems clear, then, what the thick accounts of the virtues must contain if virtue ethics is to take on board a CAPS conception of traits: a specification of the CAUs that constitute the virtue in question. A thick CAPS account of a virtue, then, should be spelled out in terms of: 1) encodings, including constructs of the self, other people, and situations; 2) expectancies and beliefs about the social world, including beliefs about one's own self-efficacy and about expected outcomes in particular situations; 3) affects, which include feelings, emotions, and affective as well as physiological responses; 4) goals and outcomes, including desirable and undesirable outcomes, as well as life projects; and 5) competencies and self-regulatory plans, which include the potential behaviors one can do and the strategies one has for organizing one's behavior as well as one's own internal states (Mischel and Shoda 1995, 252-253). Developing thick accounts of the virtues will be a significant project in and of itself and is more than I could possibly accomplish here. In the next two chapters, I sketch some elements of CAPS accounts of courage and patience in order to illustrate what such accounts might look like and to highlight some of the features of these accounts.

## Conclusion

This chapter lays the groundwork for CAPS accounts of particular virtues. I argued that the reciprocity thesis looks particularly well-suited to a CAPS conception of virtue. I then outlined three requirements for a successful method of individuating the virtues. Although several different methods have been proposed in the recent literature, Aristotle's method of individuating the virtues according to their fields is the most promising, and looks able to fulfill all three requirements. Using this method of individuation, I went on to lay out the framework for CAPS accounts of the virtues: a thin account, which identifies the field of the virtue and specifies the virtue as excellence with regard to that field, and a thick account, which spells out the CAUs that constitute the virtue. The

thin account is crucial, I argued, as it anchors the CAPS account in an Aristotelian understanding of

virtue.  In the next two chapters, I turn to the virtues of courage and patience as examples.

# – 5 –
## A Neo-Aristotelian Account of Courage

In the previous chapter, I presented the framework for a CAPS account of the virtues: a thin account, which identifies the field of the virtue and specifies the virtue as excellence with regard to that field, and a thick account, which spells out the CAUs that would allow an individual to acknowledge and respond excellently to the items in that virtue's field. In this chapter, I sketch some elements of a CAPS account of courage in order to illustrate what such an account might look like and to highlight some of the features of such an account. Courage provides a useful example for a couple of reasons. First, it is as canonical a virtue as there is, found on practically every list of virtues since ancient times. Indeed, it is the first virtue that Aristotle discusses in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and he provides a detailed account of courage. If a CAPS account of virtue works at all, then, it had better work for courage. In addition, the cognitive and affective aspects of virtue seem particularly tightly intertwined in the case of courage. Almost all accounts of courage recognize that courage involves excellent affective responsiveness, usually taken to mean fearing appropriately, as well as judgments regarding what is and is not worth the risk. Courage, then, provides a nice example of why Russell's purely cognitive picture and Snow's purely motivational picture are inadequate on their own, yet essential parts to any adequate account.

When it comes to the virtue of courage, however, a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicist can feel stuck between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the account of courage that Aristotle provides in the *Nicomachean Ethics* strikes our contemporary sensibilities as antiquated, with its overt masculinity—the Greek, *andreia*, literally translates as 'manliness'—and almost exclusive focus on war. On the other hand, contemporary discussions often portray courage in ways that are theoretically problematic for a neo-Aristotelian: as not necessarily constitutive of a good human being, for example, or as a form of self-control in the sense of overcoming contrary desires (usually

fear).  In what follows, I am going to suggest some ways that a neo-Aristotelian can modify

Aristotle's account of courage so as to bring it more in line with some of our cotemporary

sensibilities while remaining consistent with Aristotle's overall ethical framework.  I will argue that

commitment to that ethical framework, however, means that any acceptable neo-Aristotelian

account will be considerably more discriminating in its attribution of courage than most

contemporary accounts are.  But, I want to suggest, this is actually a valuable feature of the account.

Finally, I will examine some of the CAUs that, I contend, would be part of courage understood as a

CAPS trait.

## Aristotle's Account of Courage

Let me begin with an overview of Aristotle's account of courage.  In II 7 of the *Nicomachean*

*Ethics*, Aristotle briefly introduces courage as the mean regarding feelings of fear and confidence

(1107b1).  This gloss reflects two of Aristotle's underlying commitments regarding virtue in general.

The first is that virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency.  So, he goes on to tell us there,

someone who is excessively confident is not courageous but rash, and someone who has excessive

fear and who is deficient in confidence is a coward.  The courageous, by contrast, experience just the

right amount of fear and confidence towards the right things, for the right end, in the right way, and

at the right time (1115b17).  This idea that virtue is a mean between extremes and that the virtuous

get things right along these various dimensions is known as Aristotle's doctrine of the mean.  The

second is that the virtues are to be individuated according to their fields.  I defended this method of

individuation in the previous chapter and shall employ it here.

Aristotle begins his more detailed treatment of courage in III 6-9 by reiterating that courage

is the mean regarding feelings of fear and confidence, but he quickly qualifies that claim: courage, he

argues, is concerned with fear only in relation to certain things.  Unfortunately, rather than clearly

delineate those things that do fall within the scope of courage, Aristotle mostly points to the things

that he wishes to exclude from courage's sphere of concern. Via this series of exclusions, Aristotle looks to be responding to the conception of courage that we get from Plato in the *Laches*. Aristotle wants a more narrow scope for courage than the one elaborated by Socrates, who says:

> I wanted to find out not just what it is to be brave as an infantryman, but also […] as any kind of member of the forces; and not just what it is to be brave during a war, but to be brave in the face of danger at sea; and I wanted to find out what it is to be brave in the face of an illness, in the face of poverty, and in public life; and what's more not just what it is to be brave in resisting pain or fear, but also in putting up stern opposition to temptation and indulgence… (191d)

Here we see an exceptionally wide scope for courage, encompassing not only fear in relation to the risks of war, but also of public life, the natural world, and illness. One could even be courageous, according to Socrates' account, in sticking to one's diet in the face of temptingly delicious baked goods.

In contrast to Socrates, Aristotle rules out poverty, illness, and death at sea from the scope of courage (1115a18-19, 28-29). He asserts, "it is wrong to fear poverty or sickness or, in general, [bad things] that are not the results of vice or caused by ourselves" (1115a18-19). And when facing death at sea, the brave person is fearless not because of courage, but rather, because "he has given up hope of safety" (1115b2). Setting aside whether Aristotle is right about these specific claims, his comments suggest his motivation for excluding these items from the sphere of courage. For Aristotle, virtuous actions must be chosen and this choice must be the result of deliberation (1139a21-1139b5). But poverty, illness, and encountering storms at sea are not the kinds of things that we can generally choose to subject ourselves to or not. In these situations, the deliberative choice that is so central to the exercise of virtue appears to be missing (1105a32-33, Brady 2005, 199). Rather, Aristotle seems to think that the best we can do in these sorts of situations is to passively endure or accept whatever comes our way. By contrast, courage, for Aristotle, is something more than the serene acceptance of what comes one's way. This is evidenced by his claim that courage calls on us to use our strength (1115b4-5).

Aristotle excludes a number of kinds of people from the scope of courage. Citizen soldiers, Aristotle claims, are not virtuously courageous, although they can closely resemble the courageous (1116a18-29). While their motivations are good—they aim to avoid shame and to gain honor—it seems that they fall short of true virtue because these motivations are entirely external. Unlike the truly courageous, citizen soldiers do not stand firm because that is the fine thing to do; rather, they are primarily concerned with what others think of them. Likewise, soldiers who are compelled to fight also fall short of true courage: they act purely out of fear of their superiors and stand firm only to avoid punishment (1116a30-1116b2). By contrast, the courageous, Aristotle says, "must be moved by the fine, not by compulsion" (1116b3).

Those who have experience handling certain kinds of situations can also appear to be courageous without truly being so; Aristotle singles out foreign mercenaries (see Irwin's comment: 1999, 213) in this regard, although he notes that they are not the only ones (1116b5-24). These people only appear courageous because their experience allows them to better distinguish apparent risks from genuine ones and, furthermore, their experience has allowed them to develop their skills so that they are more capable of handling the situation than the inexperienced. Together, this means that they will appear less fearful and more confident than most. When faced with genuine risk, however, they fail to stand firm and instead reveal themselves as cowards.

Similarly, those who are hopeful or optimistic (compare Irwin's translation to Rowe's 2002) might have only apparent courage (1117a10-16). In particular, those who believe themselves impervious to harm, whether mistakenly or not, may resemble the courageous in their confidence and optimism.[1] But they do not have courage proper. This kind of hopeful or optimistic person only stands firm because she believes that she is not actually at risk. When she discovers otherwise, she, like the experienced person just discussed, runs away. In the same vein, the ignorant are not

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[1] Aristotle comments that the courageous are both confident and hopeful (1116a3-4).

courageous either (1117a24-28) for if they stand firm at all, it is only because they are unaware of the risks. Aristotle once again contrasts these sorts of superficial confidence with that of the truly courageous, who, knowing the risk, stand firm because that is the fine or noble thing to do.

Aristotle also distinguishes the truly courageous from "those who act on spirit" (1116b25-1117a9). These individuals lack proper courage, he argues, because they act on feeling alone, rather than in accordance with reason. Theirs is the same kind of apparent courage displayed by animals when they feel threatened. In acting from spirit alone, one is merely reacting in an instinctive or impulsive kind of way, rather than actively choosing to aim at the fine, as the truly courageous do. Like the cases of poverty, illness, and death at sea, the deliberative choice required for the exercise of courage looks to be missing in those who act on spirit.

So much for Aristotle's account of what does *not* count as courage. Notice, however, that the reasons that he provides for eliminating these cases add considerable content to his conception of courage: Courage requires a deliberative choice to aim actively at a fine or noble end.[2] It is, therefore, constitutive of a good human being. Furthermore, the courageous are internally motivated by the fine, rather than incentivized by external goods or threats. And they are confident in the face of real, genuine risks to themselves.

Aristotle provides only one example of what he considers courage proper and that is facing death in war (1115a30-35). This, together with his focus on citizen soldiers, foreign mercenaries, and the like has led many scholars to conclude that Aristotle restricts the scope of courage to the context of war. Michelle Brady argues for an even further restriction of the scope of courage: true courage for Aristotle, she claims, is facing death in battle in order to preserve the *polis* (2005, 199).

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[2] Aristotle comments that those who respond well in emergencies seem more courageous than those who have advance warning; the idea is that this kind of instantaneous response is more revelatory of one's character (1117a17-22). Many, including McDowell, have taken this to require an attenuation of the deliberation requirement. McDowell, for instance, contends that the deliberation requirement can be fulfilled so long as one can reconstruct reasons for acting (1998g, 66 n. 22). See also Hursthouse (2006b). I am reluctant to attenuate the deliberation requirement in this way, but that is a discussion that falls outside the scope of this project.

There are a few reasons, however, to resist Brady's exceedingly narrow interpretation. First, as she herself acknowledges, Aristotle never explicitly names preserving the *polis* as the only legitimate end for courage. Furthermore, there is considerable scholarly disagreement over whether facing death in battle is a definition, an ideal, or merely a paradigmatic example of courage for Aristotle (e.g. Pearson 2009, 126 n9, Pakaluk 2005, 161-164).[3] Finally, one of Brady's primary motivations for her interpretation is to explain why Aristotle narrows the scope of courage from the one elaborated in the *Laches* (2005, 199). But as we have already seen, Aristotle's exclusions can be explained in terms of choice and the ability to show one's strength without going so far as to allow only one legitimate end for the virtue of courage. So while Brady is surely right that preserving the *polis* would count as a noble end proper to true courage, we have no reason to think that it is the *only* such end. That said, it is difficult to find sufficient textual evidence to deny that Aristotle restricts the scope of courage to the context of war.

As we have seen, fear is a primary concern of courage. It is not so clear in Aristotle's account, however, the extent to which the courageous feel fear, if they feel fear at all. It would seem that Aristotle thinks that the courageous feel some fear on some occasions for at least two reasons: 1) he says that it is right to fear some things, and so presumably even the courageous will fear those (1115a12); and 2) he recognizes that it is possible to be excessively fearless (1115b25). However, he also claims that, barring exceptional circumstances, the courageous feel considerably less fear than the average person, for, he says, "the brave person is unperturbed, as far as a human being can be" (1115b11). Based on the text, then, Aristotle looks noncommittal regarding whether or not the courageous feel fear.

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[3] Brady herself appears to pull back from her bolder claim towards the end of the article, where she concedes that facing death in battle may be the paradigmatic, not only, context for the exercise of courage (2005, 204).

There may, however, be reason to deny that the courageous feel fear, at least when exercising their courage, namely, the preservation of Aristotle's distinction between virtue and continence. Recall that the continent are not fully virtuous, although they do reliably act in accordance with virtue. But, unlike the virtuous, they must overcome contrary desires in order to do so (1152a1-3). For example, if I am virtuous, I happily share my sandwich with my spouse at lunch. If I am only continent, I still share, but I have to make myself do it; I really would prefer to eat the whole sandwich myself.

Aristotle explicitly draws the virtue/continence distinction only in regard to the virtue of temperance (1149a21-24). But as Brady points out, the virtues of temperance and courage are a distinctive pair among the virtues elaborated by Aristotle, as they are both virtues of the non-rational parts of the soul, and Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes their similarities (2005, 193). So even if one did not want to extend the virtue/continence distinction to all of the virtues of character as some virtue ethicists do (e.g., McDowell 1998a, g), there looks to be good reason to preserve it in the case of courage. And the most straightforward way to preserve the distinction is to argue, as Brady does, that the courageous do not feel fear in exercising courage, while the continent feel and overcome fear (see also: Zavaliy and Aristidou 2014, 177). It seems that a reasonable reading of Aristotle's account could hold that—whatever they may or may not fear in other contexts—the courageous do not experience fear in the exercise of courage.

Since the courageous fear appropriately, they are also "correspondingly confident."[4] Aristotle does not say in his ethics what confidence is, but he does discuss it in the *Rhetoric*, where he says: "[confidence is] expectation of safety accompanied by the impression of it as near, while fearful

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[4] It is worth noting that Aristotle recognizes that fear and confidence have a certain degree of independence from one another (1115b25-1116a8, see also: Rachman 2004, 466-467). This seems right. Someone who is severely depressed, for instance, could perhaps be fearless without being confident. And it would seem that in Aristotle's example of death at sea the courageous person is fearless "[f]or he has given up hope of safety" (1115b2), suggesting that he is not confident. So although fearlessness and confidence often go together, they need not necessarily do so.

things either do not exist or are far away. Confidence is inspired by dreadful things being far off and sources of safety being near at hand" (1383a17-20, Pearson's translation, 2009, 123). Confidence for Aristotle, then, involves subjectively construing a situation in a certain way. In particular, it involves construing a situation as one in which the individual is "safe from something they regard as fearful" (Pearson 2009, 124). Given Aristotle's focus on facing death in war (1115a30-35), Giles Pearson must be right that the courageous person's confidence cannot be in her physical safety (2009, 126-129). The key to understanding the courageous person's construal of safety, Pearson contends, is the reason for which the courageous individual stands firm: the courageous person, Aristotle says, "stands firm against what is and appears frightening to a human being; he does this *because it is fine to stand firm and shameful to fail*" (1117a17-18, emphasis added). The courageous individual construes herself as safe from shame or disgrace (Pearson 2009, 131). This sounds right: even if the courageous never actually experience fear of shame, they can acknowledge shame as something fearful, and construe themselves as safe from it.

Aristotle wraps up his discussion of courage by addressing the question of pleasure in relation to the exercise of courage. He acknowledges that facing death in battle is not pleasant, even for the courageous:

> [T]he brave person will find death and wounds painful, and suffer them unwillingly, but he will endure them because that is fine or because failure is shameful. Indeed, the truer it is that he has every virtue and the happier he is, the more pain he will feel at the prospect of death. For this sort of person, more than anyone, finds it worthwhile to be alive, and knows he is being deprived of the greatest goods, and this is painful. But he is no less brave for all that; presumably, indeed, he is all the braver, because he chooses what is fine in war at the cost of all these goods. (1117b8-15)

Here, Aristotle acknowledges that courage may be an exception to his claim that the exercise of virtue is pleasant.[5] The courageous, just like the rest of us, find death and wounds painful and

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[5] And he seems to contradict his earlier claim that the courageous person "stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful" (1104b8).

would prefer, all things being equal, not to be subjected to them.  Indeed, the more virtuous the individual is, the more pain she experiences at the prospect of losing what she recognizes to be a good and worthwhile life.

While these sentiments sound quite reasonable, they are a bit puzzling in light of the virtue/continence distinction: How can the courageous individual experience pain at the exercise of courage and be greatly pained by the prospect of losing her life, yet lack any desire to act contrary to the demands of courage?  On the face of it, this sounds psychologically unrealistic.  Unfortunately, Aristotle does not provide an answer to this question.  And this might explain, at least in part, why, as we are about to see, most contemporary accounts appear to abandon the continence/virtue distinction.

## Problematic Features of Contemporary Accounts

Courage remains a canonical virtue, but the contemporary literature reveals a number of departures from the Aristotelian account.  Some are unsurprising, welcome, and straightforwardly unproblematic for a neo-Aristotelian: for instance, we accept that women are just as capable of cultivating and exhibiting courage as men are, and thereby reject the overt masculinity of Aristotle's conception.  Other departures, however, pose theoretical challenges for a virtue ethicist who wishes to remain within Aristotle's ethical framework.  I am going to outline three such departures, each of which constitutes a prominent feature of many contemporary accounts of courage.

The first is a tendency in the contemporary literature to view courage as what has become known as an 'executive virtue.'  In short, the idea is that, in allowing an individual to face risk and overcome fear, courage allows her to more effectively pursue and execute her ends, whatever they may be (Dent 1981, 574, Pears 2004, Shade 2014, 212-215).  When understood as an executive virtue, courage is more akin to a psychological skill that—unlike an Aristotelian virtue of character— can be put to use towards either good or bad ends.  This executive view of courage has led some to

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argue for the possibility of 'the courageous villain,'[6] who maintains her composure in pursuit of her

nefarious ends, as well as for the courage of at least some terrorists.[7] The theoretical problem for an

Aristotelian of accepting courage as an executive virtue is pretty clear: in being able to be put

towards bad ends, courage ceases to be an unqualified virtue, that is, it is no longer constitutive of a

good human being.

Another significant departure from Aristotle's account of courage has to do with fear. Most

contemporary accounts view overcoming fear as a central feature of the exercise of courage

(Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester 2010, Rachman 2004, Zavaliy and Aristidou 2014). This view of

courage as overcoming fear conceives of courage primarily, if not exclusively, as a matter of brute

will power or self-control. The courageous, on this view, are those who stand firm when doing so is

exceedingly difficult for them. For Aristotle, by contrast, if I have to overcome fear in order to act

in accordance with virtue, then I am not fully virtuous but rather continent. A neo-Aristotelian,

then, cannot accept this feature of contemporary accounts of courage without giving up on the

distinction between virtue and continence.

The third departure that I want to address has to do with the practical reasoning of the

courageous. It is popular among contemporary views to portray the courageous individual as

performing a sort of calculation or weighing up of the risks against the end or ends to be achieved

when deciding whether or not to stand firm (e.g., Pears 2004, 7-9, Jacobson 2005, 402). This picture

of practical reasoning seems to elide the distinction between the virtuous and the continent,

however: both would consider reasons to avoid the risk, which would be more or less promptly

outweighed by reasons to stand firm. If the reasons to avoid the risk are able to exert motivational

force on the continent such that they experience desires to act contrary to the demands of courage,

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[6] See Phillippa Foot's discussion of this question (2009, 14-18).
[7] Regarding the debate over whether terrorists can be courageous, see Pears (2004), Kateb (2004, 39), Shade (2014, 215-216), Zavaliy and Aristidou (2014, 180).

it would seem that the virtuously courageous would also feel that conflict, however slight.[8]  This

picture of practical reasoning may make sense of why the courageous stand firm despite

experiencing pain at the prospect of losing their life, but it does so, once again, at the expense of the

virtue/continence distinction.

## A Neo-Aristotelian Account of Courage

Given the theoretical problems posed by contemporary accounts of courage, what can a

neo-Aristotelian who wants to move away from the antiquated aspects of Aristotle's account do?

The most obvious option would be to go along with the contemporary accounts and give up on the

distinction between virtue and continence.  I think, however, that this would be a mistake.  Instead,

let me suggest a few modifications that a neo-Aristotelian can make to Aristotle's account, all of

which allow us to preserve the virtue/continence distinction.  Afterwards, I will elaborate some of

the implications of the neo-Aristotelian account, including the value of holding onto the distinction.

The first has to do with the question of scope.  Although it is far from clear that Aristotle

would recognize risks beyond the battlefield as legitimately falling under the concern of courage, we

have little reason to construe the relevant risks so narrowly.  Indeed, construing the personal risks

more broadly so as to include physical dangers, personal vulnerabilities, and social risks seems a

straightforward way to make an Aristotelian account more consistent with our contemporary

notions of courage. [9]  So although soldiers and firefighters may be contemporary paradigms of

courage, on a neo-Aristotelian account, courage need not involve risk to life and limb.  The risks

involved could be emotional, such as one's vulnerability in confessing one's love for another, or they

could be social, such as risking one's reputation or social standing to stand up for someone else.

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[8] See McDowell's discussion of this issue (1998g, 55) as well as Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[9] Regarding the scope of personal risk in relation to courage, see Putman (2001, 465), Sanford (2010, 443), and Shade (2014, 216-217).

Another move that the neo-Aristotelian can make has to do with experiencing fear in the exercise of courage. I do not think that a commitment to the continence/virtue distinction entails a commitment to the notion that the courageous never feel fear when exercising courage. Rather, the distinction entails only that *if* the courageous experience fear, that fear cannot be an impetus to act contrary to the demands of virtue (see Brady 2005, 193). Acknowledging the ways in which the virtuously courageous might experience fear provides another opportunity to bring the Aristotelian account more into line with our contemporary notions.

So let us entertain the possibility that the courageous, at least sometimes, experience fear. What kinds of things might they fear? Pearson argues that the courageous fear shame or disgrace (2009), as Aristotle lists these as things that it is right to fear (1115a12). Howard Curzer contests this reading because, he argues, a disposition to feel shame appropriately is only a virtue—or 'semivirtue' (see Burnyeat 1999, 215)–for those still in the process of acquiring a virtuous character (2012, 22). Pearson anticipates this objection by arguing that *actually* feeling shame is not proper to the courageous, because that would mean that one had voluntarily acted shamefully, but fear of acting shamefully *is* proper to the courageous, as it reflects their sensitivity to moral concerns (2009, 132 n.18).

I find Pearson's argument unsatisfactory. If shame requires *voluntarily* acting contrary to virtue, then it is not something that the fully virtuous would have reason to fear, because they certainly are not in danger of doing *that*. So although the courageous could acknowledge that shame is something fearful, that is, something that one ought to fear,[10] they seem unlikely ever to be in a position to actually experience such fear. I do, however, think that this discussion of shame puts us in the vicinity of something that the courageous can legitimately fear, namely, missing the target of

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[10] As I conceded earlier.

virtue. The idea is not that the courageous fear voluntarily acting contrary to virtue, but rather that they fear, in the particular situation at hand, not getting things right. Let me elaborate.

Christine Swanton defines hitting the target of virtue as "a form (or forms) of success in the moral acknowledgement of or responsiveness to items in its field or fields, appropriate to the aim of the virtue in a given context" (2001, 38-39). It is possible that an individual may act from virtue, that is, make a choice that exhibits that individual's excellence of character, yet miss the target of the virtue, in other words, still get things wrong. Of course, given the doctrine of the mean, a virtuous individual will not miss the target of virtue very often. But it may happen occasionally, and so may be something that the virtuous legitimately fear. Take Swanton's example of the virtuous policy maker (2001, 35). As virtuous and practically wise as she may be, the virtuous policy maker is still subject to the limits of human knowledge. No matter how thoughtful, informed, and virtuously made her decision to enact a particular environmental policy may be, if that policy turns out to be disastrous due to unforeseen consequences, then she has missed the target of virtue.

It seems quite reasonable that something similar could occur in the exercise of courage. In a situation where one realizes that one is operating at the limits of one's knowledge or abilities, even someone who is fully virtuous could legitimately fear missing the target of virtue. In situations in which they find themselves blindsided by unforeseeable circumstances, or are suddenly thrust into a role that they do not usually occupy, the courageous might legitimately fear that their best-informed, virtuously motivated action might yet fall short in some way.[11] Suppose, for example, that a courageous individual with no flight experience suddenly finds that she is the only one capable of attempting an emergency landing of the plane. Since she is courageous, she acts from courage by, among other things, handling her feelings of fear and confidence and acknowledging the risks and

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[11] Here we see the importance of distinguishing particular courageous acts, that is, acts that hit the target of virtue, from the character trait of courage.

the end involved.  Yet whether or not she hits the target of the virtue by successfully landing the plane might be a matter of significant luck, and it seems perfectly reasonable that she might fear that she will fail to land the plane successfully.

It is worth pointing out that missing the target of virtue is something "caused by us," and so is not obviously ruled out by Aristotle as something improper to fear.  Moreover, fear of missing the target of virtue is significantly different than the fear experienced by the continent.  The continent are afraid of assuming the risk involved, and so have (and resist) desires not to act.  They have to overcome their fear in order to act.  The courageous, by contrast, do not overcome their fear in this way.  Unlike the continent, the courageous are not afraid of assuming the risk.  Rather, the fear of the courageous is fear of not getting things right.  But this fear does not provide an impetus not to act, the way that the continent's fear of assuming risk does.  This is because the surest way for the courageous to miss the target of virtue is to do nothing at all.  Certainly, then, they will have no desire to do that.

So far, then, we have two ways in which the neo-Aristotelian can modify Aristotle's account to bring it more into line with our contemporary sensibilities: 1) we can construe the personal risk with which courage is concerned broadly, to include physical and social risks, as well as personal vulnerability; and 2) we can acknowledge the possibility of the courageous experiencing fear in the exercise of courage insofar as they may fear missing the target of virtue.  Let me suggest one more move that a neo-Aristotelian can make: she should adopt the McDowellian view of practical reasoning that I elaborate in Chapter 2 and deny that the courageous individual goes through a process of weighing reasons, whereby the ends outweigh the risks involved, in deciding to stand firm.

Recall that the virtuous, on this view, recognize multiple dimensions of worthwhileness, but "that worthwhileness along the dimension marked out by the concept of *eudaimonia* [a life of

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virtuous activity] is worthwhileness *par excellence*" (1998d, 41-42). For the virtuous person, faced with the practical question of how she ought to live here and now, *this* is the dimension of worthwhileness that matters; the others simply fall away, or are 'silenced.' Silenced considerations fail to operate as reasons in the individual's practical reasoning. The virtuous, then, do not recognize reasons to act otherwise than in accordance with virtue. This is significant because it allows us to maintain the virtue/continence distinction while making sense of how the exercise of courage and the prospect of losing one's life might be painful for the courageous.

The courageous have no contrary desires to overcome because, in situations that really do demand a courageous response, they do not recognize any reasons to act otherwise than courageously. The continent, however, do not experience silencing in the reliable way that the virtuous do, and so reasons to, say, run away and save oneself are able to exert motivational force over them. Moreover, recall that the phenomenon of silencing is quite narrow in scope: considerations are silenced in the virtuous person's *practical reasoning*. They fail to operate as reasons in decisions regarding what one should do. But that does not mean that these considerations cannot or should not be acknowledged in other ways.

Suppose that a virtuously courageous person puts her life on the line for some noble end in a situation that clearly demands such a response. Since she is fully virtuous, she is completely unconflicted about the fact that putting her life on the line is, indeed, the thing to be done. The fact that she might lose her life in this endeavor is silenced in her practical reasoning; it plays no role in her decision regarding what she ought to do. But it is not as though she is unaware that she is putting her life on the line or of what she stands to lose in so doing. And just because these considerations fail to enter into her practical reasoning does not mean that she cannot acknowledge them at all. She can still recognize that it is unfortunate that she finds herself in this position and that she stands to lose a significant amount of goods that are worthwhile in various ways, just not

the way that matters the most. And she may, indeed, feel pain or sadness about that fact, without those feelings providing her with any reason to act otherwise than she is doing.

The three moves that I have suggested for the neo-Aristotelian can move Aristotle's account of courage closer to our contemporary sensibilities. It allows for the exercise of courage in a wider variety of contexts, more in line with our contemporary notions of where and how an individual might be courageous. It allows that the courageous might experience fear in the exercise of courage in situations where they might fear missing the target of virtue, bringing the account closer to the contemporary tendency to link courage with fear. And it maintains the virtue/continence distinction while allowing that the courageous might yet have affective responses to the loss of worthwhile goods.

## Implications of the Account

The neo-Aristotelian account, however, will still depart from our contemporary notions of courage in significant ways. Let me highlight a few of those ways and argue that these departures are actually valuable features of the account.

First, the neo-Aristotelian account retains the idea that courage requires a fine or noble end. Given virtue ethics' commitment to practical wisdom and to the ways in which the virtuous tend to get things right, the end in question must *actually* be fine or noble, not merely apparently so. This means that the account has no room for 'the courageous villain.' The cat burglar tiptoeing across the fire escapes 20 stories up is not courageous. Neither, I suspect, are terrorists. Now some have suggested that attempts to restrict courage to good ends would be "a merely verbal manoeuvre" (Dent 1981, 575), but this dismissal is too quick.

The question of the courageous villain calls to mind Aristotle's distinction between cleverness and practical wisdom. The clever are excellent at means-end reasoning, as are the practically wise. But cleverness can be employed towards any end, good or bad, whereas the

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practically wise have a clear conception of which ends are truly worthwhile. Something similar can be said of the so-called 'courageous' villain: she is not courageous, but merely daring. Aristotle himself appears to draw this distinction in his discussion of courage when he remarks that adulterers, who are not courageous, "do many daring [*tolmāra*] actions because of lust" (1117a2). Like the truly courageous, the daring person might be skilled at dealing with feelings of fear and confidence, but, like the merely clever, she lacks an understanding of which ends are truly worthwhile. In that sense, she falls short of excellence in a significant way. The distinction between the courageous and the daring, therefore, is substantive, not merely verbal.

Furthermore, it looks like a valuable distinction to draw. First of all, it dismantles the apparent paradox of the courageous villain or courageous terrorist. Moreover, restricting the courageous to those who have a correct conception of what is worthwhile, to those who aim at fine or noble ends, does not mean that we are suddenly incapable of praising (in, perhaps, a non-moral way?) those who are (merely) skilled at handling feelings of fear and confidence. Just as we can praise the hedge fund whiz kid as clever without implying that she has some considered view about what constitutes a good life, we can surely praise the BASE jumper as daring without committing ourselves to the view that her pursuit is ethically worthwhile. When we praise someone as courageous, however, we are claiming something more than that they are skilled at handling feelings of fear and confidence: we are highlighting an aspect of their character that makes them *good*.

An important aspect of the requirement of personal risk warrants comment: taking a risk involves making a choice. In accepting risk as a central requirement for courage, therefore, we are accepting Aristotle's distinction between courage and serene acceptance. Merely being exposed to danger—a natural disaster, for example—is not the same as taking a risk. It is not something about which we can make a choice. This is not to say, of course, that in the face of a natural disaster one cannot subsequently make choices and take risks—to help others, say—and be courageous. And in

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that sense, I do not think that maintaining the distinction between courage and serene acceptance is all that out of line with our contemporary sensibilities. Take illness, for example. I am not so sure that we tend to credit someone's serene acceptance of her illness as courage. Yet, in the face of illness, there are lots of ways in which one might still take risks and exercise courage in relation to that illness: for example, in confronting social stigmas, in deciding to participate in experimental drug trials, or in reaching out to make amends with estranged family members. I think that we tend to credit individuals who do these sorts of things with courage, and the neo-Aristotelian account that I have outlined here can accommodate that.

The neo-Aristotelian account looks as though it will also push against some common intuitions regarding the question of who is more courageous, the novice or the expert.[12] For example, some people think that the lifeguard, who possesses the requisite training and experience, is less courageous than the novice swimmer who dives in, despite her uncertainty in her swimming abilities, because she sees that something must be done to save the drowning child. The Aristotelian insistence that courage requires real, genuine risk, together with the denial that the virtuously courageous overcome fear make clear that this is, in many ways, a false choice.

Presumably, the idea is that, due to her training and experience, the lifeguard is not facing a real, genuine risk in saving the child or, perhaps, not as much of a risk as the novice swimmer faces. If this is the case, however, that hardly counts *against* the lifeguard's courage. An *appropriate* lack of fear does not make one thereby less courageous. It would not be appropriate for the lifeguard to feel fear in a situation that she can confidently handle if such a situation does not pose a significant risk for her, given her skill set. Of course, it does not provide much evidence that she *is* courageous either. Yet I would argue that there is still a sense in which she is acting courageously, even if that sounds a bit odd: she is appropriately confident given her skill set and she accurately perceives the

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[12] This issue is raised by Plato in the *Laches* (193a-d).

minimal risk that the situation presents her.  In short, the lifeguard is getting things right regarding fear and confidence in relation to personal risk, and that is what the courageous do.  Consider, by contrast, a case in which a person did not get things right in that regard.  Suppose that someone did feel fear even though she was completely capable of handling the situation.  In that case, I think it would be fairly easy to identify her as lacking courage.  In short, *both* the novice *and* the expert may very well be courageous; the situations in which each faces real, genuine risk will vary, however, such that one might exercise courage in a situation where the other does not.

Finally, I want to suggest that maintaining the continence/virtue distinction is a valuable feature of the neo-Aristotelian account.  Part of its value is found in its insistence that the courageous do not overcome fear.  Take the real-life example of the agoraphobic woman who took care of her elderly mother when she fell sick, which involved going outside repeatedly to get food and medicine (Rachman 2004, 151).  The agoraphobic woman is not virtuously courageous because she is continent, at least as the psychologist Stanley Rachman portrays her: "She dreaded each excursion and experienced intense fear, but she persisted nevertheless" (2004, 151).[13]  This clearly seems to be a real-life case of an individual facing a personal vulnerability for the sake of a fine or noble end.  And for that, it should be emphasized, this woman is undoubtedly praiseworthy, even if she falls short of full virtue.  Aristotle comments repeatedly that being continent is quite good and a praiseworthy state (1145b9-10, 1150a35-38, 1151a28-29).  Acknowledging that she yet falls short of full virtue should in no way, then, take away from the respect or admiration that we have for her for facing her phobia.  Nor does it seem unreasonable to acknowledge that she still has a ways to go towards excellence.  Would anyone deny that she would be in a better state if she did not have to struggle against this intense fear?

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[13] I should note that not all neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists agree with me on this point (e.g., Foot 2009, 12).

This gets to, I contend, why the virtue/continence distinction is a valuable feature of a neo-Aristotelian account.  For one thing, continence is exhausting.  There is a considerable amount of psychological research on how brute will power is similar to muscle strength insofar as it gets 'tired' and less effective with prolonged use.[14]  While consistently and reliably doing the right thing is certainly praiseworthy, it would seem to be better, other things being equal, if one did not have to fight oneself day in and day out in order to produce those results.  A life of continence is not bad, by any stretch.  But if we are aiming at excellence, it seems that we can do better than continence.  And acknowledging the virtue/continence distinction allows us to recognize what is praiseworthy about continence without undermining our notions of virtue or excellence.

## The CAUs of Courage

Turning to the framework for a CAPS account of virtue that I outlined in the previous chapter, we can specify the thin account of courage: Courage is consistent excellence in responding to and acknowledging feelings of fear and confidence in relation to personal risk-taking.  We can now ask what CAUs might be part of the trait as it has been elaborated.  A complete answer to this question is clearly too big of a task to attempt here.  Let me instead focus on two CAUs—one cognitive, one affective—that, I contend, have significant roles to play in the trait of courage.

Earlier I argued that Pearson was right to suggest that the courageous construe themselves as safe from shame or disgrace.  But why is it that the courageous are able to construe themselves in this way?  I want to suggest that it is because they have what psychologists call 'high self-efficacy.'[15]  Self-efficacy includes "beliefs in one's abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (Wood and Bandura 1989, 408).  Since it is primarily a matter of one's beliefs, self-efficacy would be a cognitive unit of courage.

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[14] See work on the 'ego-depletion' model of self-control (e.g., Baumeister et al. 1998, Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice 2007).
[15] For discussion of self-efficacy and courage in a non-Aristotelian context, see Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester (2010).

Research has shown that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to perceive fearful situations as less threatening, to experience less stress when facing fearful situations, and to persevere in the face of fearful situations (Bandura 1997). In short, high self-efficacy attenuates the link between the perception of risk and feelings of fear. For the courageous, I want to suggest, the situational demands towards which their beliefs about their self-efficacy are oriented just are the demands of virtue, and this is why they are able to construe themselves as safe from disgrace. In short, the courageous are confident because they believe that they can muster the internal resources needed to meet the demands of virtue in the situation at hand.

The second CAU to which I want to draw attention is the affective unit of hope. As psychologist Barbara Fredrickson puts it, "negative emotions have long been known to narrow people's attention, making them miss the forest for the trees (or the suspect's style of dress for the gun)…" (2001, 221). The idea is that negative emotions narrow one's attention and cognition and limit one's thought-action repertoires—in the case of fear, for instance, to a flight-or-fight response.[16] In short, negative emotion is a bit like putting on blinders. By contrast, some psychologists argue, positive emotions cannot be linked to specific action tendencies (Fredrickson 2001). Rather, "positive emotions broaden the scopes of attention, cognition, and action and […] build physical, intellectual, and social resources" (Fredrickson 2001, 220). This has become known as the 'broaden-and-build theory' of positive emotions. Some psychologists have suggested that hope is one such positive emotion (Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester 2010).

The broaden-and-build theory has several important implications in the context of hope and courage. First, the broadening of attention allows the individual to call to mind a wider variety of thoughts and actions in a given situation, allowing her to deal better with the situation at hand

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[16] One might argue that this suggests that the courageous *would* have to overcome the fear of missing the target of virtue. I would counter, however, that that fear would produce a fight, not flight, response.

(Fredrickson 2001, 221).  Significantly, the resources that one acquires via this broadening of attention, cognition, and action outlast the experience of the positive emotion itself, which leads to the 'build' aspect of the theory.  Over time, the experience of positive emotions can continually expand one's set of personal resources, whether intellectual, psychological, physical, or social, so that one develops an ability to handle better the situations that come one's way (Fredrickson 2001, 219). A consistent experience of a positive emotion like hope, then, can contribute to diminishing an individual's experience of fear and increase her feelings of confidence by bolstering her personal resources.

Furthermore, hope may prevent an individual from being overwhelmed by fear. Fredrickson's research suggests that positive emotions can "undo" or "loosen the hold" of a negative emotion (2001, 222).  After inducing negative emotion in subjects, Fredrickson found that individuals who then experienced positive emotions—elicited by a short film—returned more quickly to their baseline cardiovascular state than did subjects who were shown neutral or negative films.  She attributes this to positive emotion's broadening of attention, suggesting that "positive emotions may help people place the event in their lives in broader context, lessening the resonance of any particular negative event" (2001, 222).  We can see how this is likely to play out in regard to hope and courage.  The experience of hope in a fearful situation may help the courageous individual view the situation at hand in the context of her fine or noble end, thereby lessening the effects of any fear she might be experiencing.

Even with just these two CAUs, we can start to get a picture of the courageous person's psychology.  Her belief in her abilities to rise to the demands of virtue means that the courageous individual does not fear facing real, genuine risk in the pursuit of fine or noble ends.  Rather, she is appropriately confident that she will respond well to the situation at hand.  Her deliberative choice to aim at fine or noble ends, together with her confidence in her own self-efficacy allow her to

experience hope.  This hope, in turn, allows her to deal with any fear she might have about missing the target of virtue, either by broadening her attention so that she can clearly see the variety of options available to her, by helping her to build up the personal resources that she has at her disposal, or by loosening fear's grip on her, allowing her to keep her wits about her and her noble end in sight.

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## Is Patience a Virtue?

'Patience is a virtue,' so the saying goes.  The ease with which we identify patience as a virtue, however, belies the fact that there are actually several significant challenges to developing a neo-Aristotelian account of a virtue of patience.

First, on an Aristotelian understanding, virtue is both instrumentally good *and* good in itself. Yet a primarily—and often, exclusively—instrumental view of patience is pervasive in the philosophical literature, both historically—for instance in the work of Aquinas, Hutcheson, and Hume (for discussion, see Bommarito 2014)—as well as in the contemporary literature.  Jason Kawall, for example, proposes patience as an other-regarding epistemic virtue, valuable for its ability to produce knowledge (2002).  Michael Slote also envisions patience as an other-regarding virtue, valuable "as much for its usefulness to those who have it as for its beneficial effects on other people" (1992, 104).  Joseph Kupfer explicitly labels patience as an instrumental virtue, valuable insofar as it helps us achieve goals and makes our other virtues more efficacious (2007, 277-278). And Robert Adams categorizes patience as what he calls a "structural virtue," where it is entirely a matter of "psychic strength" (2006, 33-34).

One tradition in which patience *is* afforded a more central place among the virtues and is seen as valuable in itself is Christian ethics.  Here, however, some worry that this valuing of patience depends upon a theistic world-view.  As Anthony Rudd notes, on the Christian view patience centrally involves hope, specifically the hope of eternal life: patience "is a way of living in the expectancy of a fulfillment that is still to come" (2008, 501).  Although this understanding of patience may be non-instrumental, it requires a conception of God and of eternity, and of our telos as aspiring to approximate God's attitude of patient love towards the world.  As Stanley Hauerwas and Christopher Pinches put it, "our ability to take the time to enjoy God's world […] depends on

our recognition that it is indeed God's world" (1997, 177). These are not beliefs that a secular virtue ethics can take on board, although of course it would hope not to preclude such beliefs. We have, then, our first challenge for a neo-Aristotelian virtue of patience: Can we provide a secular account of patience as not merely instrumentally valuable, but also valuable in itself?

A related issue is that these instrumental views of patience make it seem more like a psychological skill than a virtue of character. Significantly, this skill conception of patience allows that it—*unlike* bona fide Aristotelian virtues—can be put to use towards either good or bad ends: the stalker can wait patiently for her obsession to leave the house while the social activist patiently waits for her turn to speak at the community board meeting. An Aristotelian virtue, however, must be constitutive of a good human being. If patience is to be a virtue, therefore, we need an account of it that entails goodness in its possessor.

Furthermore, there is the challenge of specifying a field, or sphere of concern, for a virtue of patience. Any satisfactory specification of a field must accomplish three things. First, it must make clear the way in which the virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency. While patience seems readily distinguishable from the deficiency of impatience, it will be important also to be able to distinguish virtuous patience from problematically excessive forms of passivity. Secondly, the field must allow us to distinguish between those who are virtuously patient and those who are merely continent, who act patiently but must overcome desires not to do so. This may seem particularly challenging in the case of patience. If it is a virtue, it would look to be a virtue of self-control along with temperance and courage. And as we saw in the previous chapter in regard to courage, when it comes to self-control, some think that continence is as good as it gets, that self-control is itself an overcoming of contrary desires. Conceiving of patience as a virtue distinguishable from continence, then, will likely require some revision of our ordinary understanding. Finally, there is a wide diversity of phenomena that we tend to attribute to patience. Any satisfactory field, then, must

make clear how it is that these diverse phenomena hang together, so to speak, such that it makes sense to claim that a single virtue is responsive to this set of things.

I am going to work backwards in addressing these challenges. I will begin, then, by illustrating some of the different phenomena that we attribute to patience before elaborating a field and thin account for patience that, I contend, capture these diverse phenomena in a way that allows us to make the necessary distinctions between virtue, continence, and problematic passivity. Finally, I will show how this account moves us away from a purely instrumental view of patience and point to some ways in which patience, as a neo-Aristotelian virtue, is both valuable in itself and constitutive of a good human being.

## Varieties of Patience

Perhaps the most common or basic notion of patience is as an ability or capacity to wait calmly, without becoming frustrated or, say, fidgeting uncomfortably. The patient individual, according to this understanding, can easily get in line, wait her turn, alternate in traffic, and so on. To borrow Kupfer's example, the model airplane builder must be patient and wait for the glue to dry on the wings before moving on to work on the tail, or else the whole model will be ruined (2007, 265). This notion of patience is perhaps best characterized as a sort of passive endurance: the patient calmly endure delays and disruptions. For example, the patient food shopper can wait calmly as the novice cashier looks up each and every produce code.

Our understanding of patience, however, encompasses more than just a capacity to wait.[1] One can, for instance, *act* patiently. Think, for example, of the professional calligrapher who carefully forms each letter for stack after stack of wedding invitations. Or consider the musician who slowly lets the movement build each time she plays the song—in every rehearsal and every

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[1] Matthew Pianalto (2014, 90) identifies his excessive focus on one's capacity to wait as a shortcoming of Kupfer's (2007) account. Nicolas Bommarito, too, acknowledges that patience encompasses more than waiting (2014, 270).

performance, night after night.  In these cases, we get a more active conception of patience that seems to be closer to a kind of perseverance rather than endurance.  Note, however, that this active/passive, endurance/perseverance distinction is far from hard and fast.  Think, for instance, of the nature photographer who spends all morning crouched in the tall grass, enduring the itchy plants, annoying bugs, and glaring sun, persevering until the right shot presents itself.

In addition to endurance and perseverance, another aspect of patience involves tolerance. Consider, for example, the preschool teacher who remains unruffled in the face of 20 small children clamoring for his attention.  His equanimity under a constant barrage of questions and interruptions, and his ability to organize the chaos and to move his students through a lesson in spite of it all makes us want to pat him on the back and say, 'You have the patience of a saint.'

Finally, the model builder and nature photographer examples remind us that the scope of patience is not restricted to the realm of the interpersonal.  I can be patient with things in my environment, like the elevator whose doors open and close slowly or the printer that takes forever to warm up.  I can be patient with myself, say, when attempting to learn a new skill.  Or, like the calligrapher, I can be patient with the task at hand, giving enough time to allow it to be done well.

## Patience and Temporality

We have, then, various conceptions of patience as a capacity to wait, endure, persevere, and/or tolerate.  It would appear, from the examples I have given, that all of these candidate capacities have a decidedly temporal component to them.  Indeed, it would seem that a certain sort of orientation or attitude towards the passage of time is exactly what allows them to hang together under the umbrella of patience.  But the temporality of patience has been disputed, and so requires further examination.

Nicolas Bommarito gives two examples which, he argues, undermine the case for a temporal component in an account of patience (2014, 271).  The first is of a woman who suffers from short-

term memory loss. At any given moment, she is unable to remember anything that happened more than a few minutes ago. Bommarito asks us to suppose that someone insults this woman and that she responds both calmly and with grace. He claims, first, that we can praise this woman as patient and, secondly, that there is no temporal component to her patience, since her memory—and hence her endurance of the insult—will last only a few minutes. Bommarito's second example is of a parent who calmly deals with his special needs child while knowing full well that his child's behavior is unlikely to improve. Here, Bommarito claims, the parent is patient because of how he acts in the moment; given the child's special needs, it is clear that the parent is not, for instance, waiting for some sort of improvement in the child's condition or behavior. Bommarito argues that these "non-temporal" examples show how individuals can be rightly attributed with patience because of how they handle a situation *in the moment* and therefore undermine our conception of patience as temporal.

I do not find Bommarito's examples or argument convincing. For one, handling a situation calmly and graciously is not on its own evidence of patience. While patience certainly involves calmly dealing well with the situation at hand, so do many other virtues, like courage, justice, and respectfulness. So while the woman with memory loss may be polite, gracious, respectful and/or courteous,[2] her adept handling of the insult does not seem to give us reason to attribute patience to her. Indeed, her inability to sustain attention towards a goal would seem to be a good reason *not* to attribute her with patience.

Nor is it obvious to me that his example of the parent of a special needs child lacks a temporal component, as Bommarito claims. Unfortunately, he does not flesh out the example with any details. But consider how sometimes, if a child is having a meltdown, there is simply nothing to

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[2] I use 'may' here very tentatively. The woman's memory loss might be sufficient to bar her from Aristotelian virtue altogether. It is important to emphasize, however, that even if she did fall short of full virtue as a result of her memory loss, this would by no means make her a moral failure or unable to be morally praiseworthy in any way.

do but to ride it out.  Getting frustrated or angry oneself is sure only to make things worse.  So even if there is no expectation, as Bommarito stipulates, of improvement in the child's condition or behavior, there are ways in which the parent can make things better or worse.  And calmly providing the child with the time and space to work through her feelings may be the best way to make things better, at least for now.  To me, then, Bommarito's example of the parent may well be a paradigmatic instance of patience, temporally understood: a parent who endures, perseveres, and tolerates the right amount, in the right way, out of love for his child.

## Patience and Anger

It is worth addressing Bommarito's objections to temporality because they point to a particular understanding of patience that, I wish to argue, fails to capture what is characteristic and distinctive of the (putative) virtue.  "They [the woman and the parent] are patient," Bommarito argues, "because of how they deal with frustrations in the moment, failing to get angry at a cause of suffering" (2014, 271).  Here Bommarito's Buddhist influence comes into full view, as he draws on the Buddhist virtue of *kṣānti*, which is often translated as 'patience,' 'forbearance,' or sometimes 'tolerance' (see Bommarito 2014, 271 and n. 15).  Matthew Pianalto elaborates a similar understanding of patience as a kind of letting go of anger but does so from a Stoic perspective.  For him, patience is a sort of detachment that prevents us "from being blown about by anger or despair" (2014, 100).  I should emphasize that I am not here offering a critique of either Buddhist or Stoic ethics.  But if contemporary, neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics is looking to provide an account of patience as a virtue, I contend that it would do well to look elsewhere in specifying the virtue's field.

Surely, it is the case that, in certain situations, patience involves a slowness to anger.  But it is hardly the only virtue that does; think of justice, loyalty, or respectfulness.  Slowness to anger, then, is not a particularly distinctive feature of patience.  Moreover, there are other virtues whose scopes

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seem more squarely oriented towards anger: Aristotle's virtue of *praotes*[3] (1125b), for example, or Hume's virtue of meekness (see Pettigrove 2012). Another concern that I have about specifying the field for patience as oriented towards anger is that there are many circumstances in which one can exercise patience where anger just does not seem to enter the picture. More to the point, one can be *im*patient in contexts where, it seems, one simply has nothing to get angry about. Here I have in mind the model builder, the nature photographer, the calligrapher, and the musician. These are not, generally, the kinds of occupations that one takes up for prudential or financial reasons. These people likely have a passion for their craft and love what they do. Certainly they can be impatient and either rush their work or simply give up, but I am doubtful that this impatience can (always?) be characterized as anger.

Imagine, for example, that our calligrapher is stuck at the shop late one evening. She has to finish a stack of invitations for a charity fundraiser because they are due to be delivered to the client in the morning. As the clock ticks closer and closer to her children's bedtime, the calligrapher finds herself becoming impatient. While she may feel antsy and be eager to get home to see her kids, she might not experience any anger at all. She is doing what she loves and she knows it, even if she regrets that the workload managed to pile up in such a way that it is keeping her from her family on this particular night. Now someone may point out that, if the pile-up is a result of her lack of foresight, say, the calligrapher might get angry at herself for having let things get this way. That is true, she might. All I want to claim, however, is that although she *might* get angry at herself, it seems perfectly reasonable that in this situation the calligrapher experiences impatience without any anger at all. Suppose, for instance, that all of this work is not the result of any failure on her part and that she knows—despite her desire to tuck her kids into bed—that she is lucky to have too much work

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[3] '*Praotes*' is sometimes translated as 'patience,' although its field is limited to anger; its excess, *orgilotes*, is translated as 'irascibility.' Thanks to Rosalind Hursthouse for discussion of this point.

rather than too little.  She could, of course, get angry at her own impatience—if, say, it leads to her making more mistakes, slowing her progress down even further—even though her impatience is not itself anger.

Consider, too, cases in which one might be impatient while waiting for something good to happen.  Suppose, for instance, that one is waiting in the audience for one's name to be called for a prestigious award.  The award ceremony drags on and on: as yet another speaker takes the podium, one feels as though one simply cannot take the wait for much longer.  It seems like a mistake to characterize this sort of impatient anticipation as anger.

It looks, therefore, as though Kupfer's description of impatience as "anger in the modality of time" (2007, 279) is overly narrow.  We can be and, I suspect, often are impatient without being angry.  All of this suggests that a focus on anger simply does not capture something that is especially characteristic of patience.  Patience, it seems, must be something other than a particular orientation towards anger.

Finally, I should note that Bommarito's specification of patience as "failing to get angry at a cause of suffering" (2014, 271) looks as though it will make it exceedingly difficult to distinguish the virtuous from the continent.  It would seem that, at least in some cases, the experience of suffering is exactly what distinguishes the fully virtuous from the continent.  For the virtuous person who waits her turn in the checkout line at the grocery store, waiting in line should *not* be a cause of suffering.  If it was, she would be continent, not virtuously patient.  Indeed, it would seem that one of the ways in which a virtuous individual would evince patience is by *not* becoming agitated by the kinds of things that often drive the rest of us crazy.  I will say more about this below.

## A Thin Account of Patience

So what *is* distinctive and characteristic of patience?  We see in the literature a notion of the patient as understanding their own limitations, in particular, their limited ability to control others

and/or their environment (e.g., Callan 1993, 526).  Of course, lots of other virtues involve this kind of understanding of our limitations.  Indeed, having this kind of "perspective," as Bommarito puts it (2014, 278), seems central to practical wisdom itself and so would be part of any virtue.  To claim that patience consists in a general understanding of one's limitations,[4] then, would appear to grant it an outsized role, one more befitting practical wisdom than a single virtue of character.

I do, however, think that this attention to the limits of our abilities gets us looking in the right direction.  *Pace* Bommarito, I contend that the waiting, enduring, persevering, and tolerating aspects of patience are able to hang together because they all evince a particular orientation towards the passage of time.  Patience, it would seem, involves the recognition and acknowledgement of our limitations in shaping the *temporal* aspects of the world to our liking.

Specifying the field of patience only in terms of our limitations, however, would yield an overly narrow field.  Our abilities may be limited, but they are not non-existent.  If patience is to be understood as an excellence of character, then, it must involve acknowledgment of both our limitations *and* our abilities.  In light of this, I propose the following provisional field and thin account of the virtue:  Patience is consistent excellence in responding to and acknowledging the appropriate time needed to achieve a desired outcome.  The account is thin because it does not spell out what consistent excellence amounts to or what exactly constitutes 'appropriate.'  Let me make a few points about this field and thin account to show how they meet the challenges presented at the outset of this paper.

The exercise of patience is goal-oriented in the sense that there is a desired outcome that one hopes to achieve, at least in part via one's patience.  'Desired outcome,' however, should not be equated with the mere satisfaction of my immediate desires (*contra* Kupfer 2007, 265).  For one, both the active and passive conceptions of patience can be reflected in the desired outcome.  For

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[4] As I worry Bommarito (2014) and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Pianalto (2014) do.

example, a more passive desired outcome could be something as general as not wanting to make a scene, or not wishing to cause offense. An example of a more active desired outcome would be a comfortable retirement and the worker who incrementally saves a portion of her paycheck over the course of her career with that goal in mind.[5] Finally, 'desired outcome' can be quite other-oriented, like in the case of the preschool teacher. The teacher has a desire for his students to learn, grow, mature, etc., but the desired outcome is really an outcome for *them*, rather than for the teacher. This account, then, looks able to accommodate the diversity of phenomena that we tend to attribute to patience.

That the outcome is desired provides us with one way of distinguishing virtuous patience from some forms of problematically excessive passivity. It indicates that the outcome towards which the exercise of patience is directed is endorsed by the individual and not simply externally imposed. Here I have in mind the ways in which, as Eamonn Callan notes, patience has historically been recommended as a virtue to women and to the poor in an effort to maintain their submission and exploitation (1993, 538). Of course, some individuals may endorse problematic forms of passivity as a result of upbringing, misplaced loyalty, or other reasons. That the time granted be appropriate is meant, in part, to guard against problematic forms of passivity that might be endorsed by the individual. More generally, the qualifier 'appropriate' ensures that virtuous patience falls within the mean of excess and deficiency.

### Patience and Continence

The proposed thin account can also distinguish the virtuously patient from the merely continent. Recall that holding onto this distinction looks particularly challenging for a virtue of patience which, along with temperance and courage, would be one of the virtues of self-control.

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[5] This example illustrates economists' more narrow (and active) conception of patience as a capacity for sustained effort towards a long-term goal, where one is motivated by future consequences (see, e.g., Skog 2001).

These virtues of self-control are tricky for the Aristotelian because at first glance, it just does not look plausible that one can act correctly *without* overcoming desires to the contrary. When it comes to self-control, it often seems as though continence is as good as it gets. The literature on the virtues of temperance and courage show that there are two ways that a neo-Aristotelian might go in an effort to preserve the distinction between the fully virtuous and the continent.

One option is to concede that the fully virtuous may have some of the same affective responses as the continent and to provide an explanation of how it is that the virtuous, unlike the continent, need not overcome those responses in order to respond to the situation in accordance with virtue. Many virtue theorists choose to go this route with courage, as we seem loath to deny completely that the courageous feel fear. As I argue in the previous chapter, we might think that the courageous do feel fear in certain situations, but that they do not fear the assumption of risk, as the continent do. Rather, they fear that, despite acting from virtue and to the best of their abilities, they might still get things wrong. Since the surest way to get things wrong in this kind of situation is by doing nothing at all, this fear is not an impediment to responding to the situation at hand and so does not need to be overcome the way that the continent individual's fear does.

The other option is to deny that the fully virtuous have the same response as the continent and to provide an explanation of how it is that there are no contrary desires for the virtuous to overcome. McDowell goes this route with temperance. Recall that the virtuous, according to McDowell, recognize multiple dimensions of worthwhileness, but "that worthwhileness along the dimension marked out by the concept of *eudaimonia* is worthwhileness *par excellence*" (1998d, 41-42). For the virtuous person, faced with the practical question of how she ought to live here and now, *this* is the dimension of worthwhileness that matters; the others simply fall away, or are 'silenced.' The virtuous, therefore, have no contrary desires to overcome. McDowell's example is of being faced with the opportunity to eat yet another donut:

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> That the pleasure [of eating the donut] is available is a fact about the situation, at the disposal of a temperate person no less than anyone else […] But on this occasion what matters about the situation, as the practically wise person correctly sees it, is not the opportunity for pleasure but, say, the fact that this would be his fifth donut at one sitting. The practically wise person registers, but counts as irrelevant to the question what to do, an instance of a kind of consideration (that the pleasure is available) that does bear on that question in other circumstances. His counting it as irrelevant shows in his being unmoved by it, by contrast with the merely continent person […] who has to overcome temptation in order to get himself to do the right thing. (1998d, 46-47)

The idea here is that the temperate person recognizes just as well as anyone else the deliciousness of the donut. But that deliciousness fails to be a reason for him to eat the donut, because to do so would be intemperate. And so, unlike the continent person, the temperate person feels no temptation to eat the donut.

I suspect that patience is more like temperance than courage and that we ought to take the McDowellian line. The virtuously patient recognize full well the ways in which waiting, enduring, persevering, and/or tolerating can induce frustration. But they do not experience that frustration when such responses would be impatient, just as the temperate do not experience temptation to act intemperately.

Many are likely to find this implausible, as they have in the case of temperance. Surely, someone will object, even the virtuously patient will experience and have to overcome frustration when, say, faced with a long line and a single open window at the post office. One would have to be approaching godliness or sainthood not to. Here, however, we can see the benefits of conceiving the virtues as CAPS traits. Recall that one of the categories of CAUs outlined by the CAPS model is competencies and self-regulatory plans, and that these include strategies that an individual has for organizing her behavior and internal states. Some recent work in psychology on the variety of self-control strategies that individuals employ suggests that the claim that the patient do not experience frustration might be more plausible than it first appears. Let me briefly mention two such strategies that, I suspect, are particularly important to the virtuous/continent distinction.

To continue with the post office example: our virtuously patient individual is stuck in line waiting to mail a package. One strategy that she might use is what is known as 'attentional deployment' (Duckworth, Gendler, and Gross 2014, 208). Basically, this strategy involves directing one's attention away from features of the situation that might increase the likelihood that one will become frustrated and/or towards features of the situation that remind oneself of the desired outcome, thereby undermining potential feelings of frustration. A patient person employing this strategy, then, would *not* continually count the number of people in front of her in line, or stare intently at the light over the window, waiting for it to indicate when the next person can step up, as a continent person might do. Rather, she would direct her attention away from the window (a potential source of frustration) and, say, towards the small child in the stroller behind her, with whom she engages in a playful round of peek-a-boo. Or she may think about all of the goodies she has put in the package that she is waiting to mail and how happy her sister, who is away at college for the first time, will be to receive it.

Another strategy that our virtuously patient post office patron might employ is what psychologists call 'cognitive change' (Duckworth, Gendler, and Gross 2014, 209-210). This strategy involves construing the situation in a way that reduces the likelihood of frustration. Instead of thinking about her time in line as a delay that is keeping her from the other things that she needs to do that day, as a continent person might, our patient individual may instead see the time as an opportunity to relax a bit after all of the other errands she has run that morning, as a chance to collect her thoughts and reorient herself towards the remainder of the day.

The virtuously patient, I suspect, are going to be particularly adept at employing these self-control strategies and this is in large part what allows them to avoid the experience of frustration *when such frustration would be impatient.* That last bit is an important qualification. Frustration or even anger may well be called for in situations where continued endurance or tolerance, say, would cross

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into a form of problematically excessive passivity. Let me be quick to add, however, that since the virtues do not operate in isolation, other virtues will play a large role in determining the kind of response one might have to inappropriate demands on one's time. One ought not, for instance, take out one's frustration at the bureaucratic inefficiencies of government agencies by being rude and condescending in one's dealings with the lone teller at the post office window, who is simply doing the best she can with the limited resources at her disposal. Furthermore, I should note that a patient individual need not be explicitly aware of these self-control strategies: it is certainly not the case, for instance, that our patient post office patron must have some explicit thought along the lines of, 'I should use attentional deployment here.' Rather, one imagines that the patient person's employment of these strategies will be—as the result of her habituation into virtue—fairly effortless, like second nature (see McDowell 1998e).

Employing these strategies would allow the virtuously patient person to recognize the annoying features of a situation that requires patience without actually becoming annoyed. This recognition is important, as it makes clear that patience is not a matter of, say, cultivating a fondness for waiting in line. All things being equal, the virtuously patient person, just like the rest of us, would rather not spend a considerable portion of her morning waiting to mail a package at the post office. But that does not change the fact that the thing for her to do here and now is to wait patiently. And because she has the virtue of patience, she can meet this demand without having to overcome desires to the contrary.

I hope I have said enough to suggest that the claim that the virtuously patient do not overcome contrary desires is more plausible than it might at first appear and, furthermore, that the thin account that I have proposed can distinguish between the virtuously patient and the (merely) continent: While the continent may consistently respond to and acknowledge the appropriate time to achieve desired outcomes, the fact that they must overcome desires *not* to grant that time means

that they fall short of excellence in a significant way.  This is not to say, of course, that the continent are not or cannot be morally praiseworthy, just that they are not fully virtuous.

## Patience: Good in Itself and Constitutive of Goodness

I have argued that the proposed thin account can capture the diversity of phenomena often attributed to patience while both ensuring that virtuous patience is a mean between excess and deficiency and allowing us to distinguish virtuous patience from continence.  We still have the questions of whether patience is only instrumentally valuable, whether it is good in itself, and whether it entails goodness in its possessor.  Let me turn to those questions now.

One might worry that the goal-oriented nature of the account I have proposed actually supports a purely instrumental view of patience.  After all, according to this account, is patience not just a means to a desired end?  To that I say, no, patience is not *just* a means to an end; it is also good in itself.  Bommarito notes that patience is "a way of relating to the world" (2014, 278).  In light of the thin account, we can sharpen this claim a bit: patience is a *good* way of relating to the temporal aspects of the world.  As such, I contend, it is choiceworthy in itself.  Let me offer a few examples in support of this idea.

Consider how one might choose patience even in situations where it may not be of much instrumental value. [6]  One might realize, for example, that voicing one's displeasure at having to wait for a table and constantly bugging the maître d' of the restaurant will get one seated more quickly, yet nonetheless choose to wait patiently for one's name to be called.  Even supposing that one could somehow remain within the bounds of general politeness in prodding the maître d', being patient still seems like the better way to be in this situation.  Or think of how experienced parents always counsel harried new parents to enjoy those early days, to cherish the moments, because it all goes by

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[6] Examples like this are a bit tricky because, of course, one does not turn a character trait on and off like a switch. They are meant merely to highlight the non-instrumental value of patience.

so quickly. Here again, impatience could conceivably be of greater instrumental value than patience: it may, in fact, allow you to get more done when dealing with a toddler who takes an hour and a half to feed herself breakfast. But there is nonetheless something choiceworthy about taking the time to acknowledge *this* day with *this* child, who is just a little bit different from how she was yesterday, and who will be just a little bit different tomorrow. And this acknowledgement is choiceworthy not only for what it might get one—satisfaction with the experience of parenting, say, or a sense of pride in one's child's progress—but simply because it is the proper orientation towards a developing human life that is unfolding before one's eyes. Finally, imagine being stranded on a desert island, faced with nothing much to do but pass the time until next week when the tour boat will return.[7] You could be patient or impatient: you will not be affecting other people and it will not get you rescued any sooner. Yet between the two, patience still looks to be the choiceworthy option for how to spend the amount of time that you have on the island. Here again, being patient just seems like the better way to be.

As to the question of whether the proposed account of patience entails goodness in its possessor, the qualifier 'appropriate' once again does some work for us: There is *no* appropriate amount of time for some things, and that includes bad ends. This is important, as it moves us away from the view of patience as a psychological skill that can be put in service of any old aim. Patience *qua* virtue aims only at the good and so entails goodness in its possessor. It is another way in which a neo-Aristotelian virtue of patience is going to depart from ordinary usage: the stalker is *not* patient in waiting for her obsession to leave the house.[8] This departure from ordinary usage, however, is not as counter-intuitive as it might at first appear.

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[7] Thanks to John Hacker-Wright for this example.
[8] I do not mean this example to suggest that we can never attribute virtue to an individual who falls short of full virtue in some way. On the contrary, it often makes good sense to attribute virtue to those who are not fully virtuous—for example, to praise a child for being generous, kind, etc., when her behavior warrants it, even though she is merely beginning to acquire virtuous habits and is not yet in possession of any virtue. I take the stalker, by contrast, to be someone who is in no way on the path towards virtuous patience and in no way morally praiseworthy in that regard.

Consider, for example, Aristotle's distinction between cleverness and practical wisdom (1144a25-1144b1). Both the clever and the practically wise are excellent at means-end reasoning. Cleverness, however, can be employed towards either good or bad ends, whereas practical wisdom aims only at those ends that are truly worthwhile. We see something similar with the distinction between the virtuously courageous and the (merely) daring, which I discuss in the previous chapter. The daring person is skilled, like the courageous person is, at handling feelings of fear and confidence. But the daring person is like the clever person in that she lacks an understanding of which ends are truly worthwhile. In distinguishing the virtuously patient from those who, like the stalker, are merely calculating or shrewd, then, the neo-Aristotelian account of patience is in line with other Aristotelian virtues.

Some have alleged that restricting virtue to good ends in this way is mere word play (e.g., Dent 1981, 575), but this overlooks what is substantive about the distinction: in lacking a clear understanding of which ends are truly worthwhile, the clever, the daring, and the calculating or shrewd all fall short of excellence in a significant way. And this brings us to the crucial Aristotelian point: In attributing a virtue to someone, I am doing more than simply claiming that she is skilled in this or that particular way; rather, I am highlighting a particular aspect of her character that makes her *good*. Patience is no exception in this regard.

Here is a worry that someone might have about the account of patience that I have developed here: Must the virtuously patient life be slow? Is it possible, say, for the get-up-and-go New Yorker to be patient? There are a few things to say here. First, even among virtuous individuals, some will be happy to have the exercise of patience as a more integral part of their daily lives than others will. And virtuous individuals may have different preferences when it comes to the exercise of patience. For instance, some may more happily take on interpersonal varieties of patience, while others may prefer more solitary exercises of patience. One is not impatient, for

example, merely because one does not wish to muster consistently the kind of equanimity required to be a preschool teacher and so chooses another profession. So long as one appropriately acknowledges and responds to the appropriate time needed to achieve the ends that one *does* choose, then one can be patient.

But suppose that one just really likes living a fast-paced life and that as a result *all* of the ends that one chooses are ones that can be quickly attained. Could such an individual be said to be patient? If an individual is allotting appropriate time for these ends and the ends are good, then the fact that achieving said ends takes little time would not in itself seem to pose any particular problem for patience. That said, it is important to remember that the virtues do not operate in isolation, nor are they acquired in isolation. While all and only quickly-attained goals may not pose a problem for patience *per se*, such choice of goals looks likely to be problematic for the acquisition and exercise of other central virtues and, more generally, for the living of a good life. Consider the kindness, compassion, and generosity needed to develop meaningful friendships. It seems quite unlikely that one could attain these things through choosing only quickly-gained ends.

Moreover, the social world in which we live seems quite unlikely to accommodate only quickly-achieved ends. No matter how carefully one chooses one's ends, one will at various points likely be stuck in traffic, have to deal with inefficient bureaucracy, wait for a loved one, etc. And when such a situation is thrust upon one, one must decide what one's desired outcome is for that situation. Furthermore, even quickly-attained ends could, one imagines, be attained still more quickly. Witness, for instance, the move of internet retail sites from two day shipping, to one day, to same day; Amazon is down to one hour delivery in some metro areas. Fast can always be faster, and so there is room for impatience and, therefore, a need for patience, even for those who only go in for quickly-attained ends. It would seem as though any reasonable conception of a good life will

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recognize that there are some dimensions of worthwhileness that are more important than the dimension of being quickly attained.

We have, then, a neo-Aristotelian account of patience as consistent excellence in responding to and acknowledging the appropriate time needed to achieve a desired outcome. That the time be appropriate ensures that patience is a mean between vices of excess and deficiency and allows us to distinguish the virtue of patience from problematic forms of passivity. It also restricts the exercise of patience to good ends, thereby entailing goodness in its possessor. Finally, the notion of excellence employed allows us to distinguish the fully virtuous from the continent as well as to acknowledge the ways in which patience is good in itself. It appears as though patience is, indeed, a virtue.

# A CAPS Account of Virtue

At this point, we have a fairly clear picture of the CAPS conception of virtue. We have seen the way in which virtue, on this view, allows an individual to subjectively construe situations in a distinctive way as well as the way in which the individuated virtues are reciprocal. And we have seen some ways in which one might draw on the CAPS model to develop empirically plausible accounts of individual virtues. In this chapter, I want to return to some of the questions posed at the outset of this dissertation in order to show how the CAPS account of virtue can respond. First, I want to address the issue of nominal inconsistency. I shall argue that, although the CAPS account of virtue allows for significant nominal inconsistency, this inconsistency is situated within a normative framework such that real limits are imposed on what can count as a legitimate manifestation of virtue. I will then turn to allaying concerns that taking on board a CAPS conception of traits might undermine virtue ethics' action guidance and assessment capabilities. Finally, I explore some of the implications for neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics of taking on board a CAPS conception of traits.

## Nominal Inconsistency

Recall that a CAPS conception of traits allows for significant variations in behavior, and that these variations are considerably more wide-ranging than the occasional slip-up or exceptional circumstances that one might think are allowed by the virtue ethicist's typical qualification that generalizations regarding the virtuous hold only 'for the most part.' The CAPS account of virtue, therefore, also allows for a robust nominal inconsistency. Let me highlight a few features of the account that create space for this kind of nominal inconsistency.

First, it is worth once again emphasizing the narrowness of scope that I have granted to the phenomenon of silencing. Claims about the virtuous reliably experiencing silencing, I argue in Chapter 2, are restricted to situations in which there is a clear requirement of virtue. There will be

many situations, however, in which there is no clear requirement of virtue. In such situations, the virtuous might construe the same nominal situation differently, according to individual tastes, skills, interests, other personality traits, and so on. Recall the example of a trip to the beach from the first chapter: while I construe such an excursion as hot and uncomfortable, plenty of others would construe it as relaxing and restorative. As a result of these differing construals, one would expect us to act quite differently. There looks to be considerable space for nominal inconsistency, then, in situations where there is no clear requirement of virtue.

Even in cases where there is a clear requirement of virtue and so only one applicable schema for construing the situation, however, there appears to be room for nominal inconsistency in action. Suppose, for instance, that there is a clear requirement of virtue to oppose the destruction of a local historical landmark. One person might march in a protest, while another may start a petition, and a third may compose an open letter to the editor. Here again, exactly how an individual responds to a demand of virtue is likely to vary according to differences between individuals.

Think, too, of the variety of strategies that are part of the CAUs that constitute the virtues. A few have been discussed in this dissertation: situation selection in relation to temperance (Chapter 3) and attentional deployment and cognitive change with regard to patience (Chapter 6). Situation selection suggests that some manifestations of virtue might not involve responding directly to a situation, but rather avoiding it altogether. Moreover, we can see how different personalities might employ different strategies. For instance, a more extroverted patient person might opt for attentional deployment while in line at the post office and so may begin chatting with the person behind her in line. A more introverted patient person, however, might prefer to employ cognitive change, which does not require her to interact with anyone. The overall message here is that we should not underestimate the creativity that individuals may employ to deal with the situations that

they encounter. All of this suggests that there is considerable room, even in many cases where there is a clear requirement of virtue, for nominal inconsistency.

It must be emphasized, however, that virtue ethics does not lose its normativity by taking on board a CAPS conception of traits and allowing for this kind of nominal inconsistency. As was highlighted repeatedly in the cases of courage and patience, any CAPS account of a particular virtue will be firmly grounded in an Aristotelian notion of excellence. While it is true that neo-Aristotelians will have to flesh out this notion of excellence—whether in terms of eudaimonism or a version of naturalism, for example—it is not as if any response at all can count as excellent. At the very least any manifestation of virtue must be a manifestation of goodness, as opposed to, say, mere skill, and this does real work in constraining what can count as a virtuous response. Take courage, for example. Recall the provisional thin account of courage set out in Chapter 5: courage is consistent excellence in acknowledging and responding to the items in its field, which include fear and confidence in relation to personal risk. Whatever this excellence turns out to be, it certainly does not include, for example, the kind of (false) confidence in one's invincibility that we often see in the young. Nor can stealing for the thrill of it count as courageous. The account also rules out the severely risk-averse. None of this is meant to provide an extra-ethical argument for constraints on nominal inconsistency.[1] Within the framework of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, however, the CAPS account of virtue places real limits on nominal inconsistency.

## Action Guidance and Assessment

At several points in this dissertation, we have seen how the CAPS account of virtue leaves virtue ethics' action guidance abilities intact. Action guidance is found primarily in the employment of virtue and vice vocabulary and its role remains unchanged in taking on board a CAPS conception of traits. It is worth highlighting, however, that the clearer our understanding of those virtues and

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[1] In general, virtue ethicists tend not to go in for extra-ethical justification. See, e.g., Hursthouse (1999, Chapter 11).

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vices becomes, the more effective their action guidance seems likely to be. And there is good reason to think that the CAPS account of virtue will be particularly useful on this front.

Think, for instance, of the ways in which the virtues of courage and patience, discussed in the previous chapters, have been conceptualized in the contemporary literature as psychological skills involving the employment of brute willpower. This understanding of these virtues would result in significantly different readings of the v-rules than one would get with the CAPS account. Take, for instance, 'Do what is courageous.' If I understand that to mean 'Use brute willpower to overcome your fear,' then I have set myself a very difficult task that will draw down a limited psychological resource, namely brute willpower, and do nothing to diminish my experience of fear. If, on the other hand, I understand the v-rule as 'Be confident in your ability to do the right thing,' I am in quite a different psychological position, one that is much more likely to diminish my feelings of fear. And we can see something similar happening in the case of patience. If I take, 'Do what is patient,' to be, 'Grit your teeth and bear it,' I may be less likely to be able to follow through than if I take it to be, 'Employ an attentional or cognitive strategy to undermine feelings of frustration.'

Now some might worry that this last point advocates for an overly intellectualized understanding of virtue. Must we become philosophers or psychologists in order to get action guidance from the v-rules? Of course not. I am in no way claiming that familiarity with the CAPS model or with a detailed philosophical account of the virtues is necessary in order for the v-rules to be action-guiding. Indeed, psychologists came to the process model of self-control, upon which I drew in defending my account of patience, in large part through personal experience and observations of the ordinary people around them (Duckworth, Gendler, and Gross 2014, 202-203). The point is simply that thinking carefully about virtue from within the CAPS model looks to be one promising way to get clearer on how the v-rules might guide action. And this strongly suggests that

taking the CAPS model on board is more likely to enhance rather than diminish virtue ethics'

abilities to provide action guidance.

Regarding assessment, the CAPS account of virtue is compatible with all three major

approaches to right action that have been developed in the virtue ethics literature: the qualified agent

account (Hursthouse 1999), the motive-based account (Slote 1996), and the target-centered account

(Swanton 2001).  The CAPS account of virtue provides a more detailed picture of the psychology of

a virtuous person, and so in no way undermines the qualified agent claim that a right action is one

that a virtuous person would characteristically do in the circumstances.  And since motives and

desires are among the CAUs that constitute the virtues, it does not undermine the motive-based

account, either, which holds that an action is right if it expresses a virtuous motive or, at least, does

not express a vicious motive.  The target-centered account holds that an action is virtuous with

respect to a particular virtue if it hits the target, that is, realizes the end of, that virtue, and that an

action is right if it is overall virtuous.  Once again, in fleshing out the psychology of the virtuous, the

CAPS account in no way undermines the target-centered account.

It is worth noting that it is a contested question within the virtue ethics literature whether

virtue ethics needs an account of right action at all.  Some, like Julia Annas, are happy to eschew an

account of right action altogether (2011, 41-51), while others, like Glen Pettigrove, see an important,

albeit limited, role for such an account (2011).  I think that cases such as Swanton's virtuous policy

maker, discussed in Chapter 5, make clear the usefulness of an account of right action.  In some

circumstances, acts from virtue may still get things wrong and it seems important to be able to say

why.  For that reason, the motive-based account of right action looks to fall short.  By basing right

action purely on motive, the account looks unable to recognize the possibility of virtuously

motivated actions getting things wrong.[2]  And we saw in Chapter 3 the problems facing the qualified

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[2] See Swanton (2001, 35-37) for a more detailed critique of Slote's account of right action.

agent account. So although the CAPS account of virtue is compatible will all three approaches to

right action, I think there are clear reasons to prefer the target-centered approach.

Another thing worth noting is that the advice model of correct construal elaborated in

Chapter 3 provides an additional means of assessment, if not of action assessment. It highlights an

important way in which virtue ethics, in taking on board a CAPS conception of traits, does not lose

its normativity, nor collapse into a form of subjectivism. While correct actions often stem from

correct construals and wrong actions from wrong construals, that is not always the case and so

assessing construals will not be enough on its own. But being able to assess construals would seem

to be an important tool in the cultivation and development of virtue. In light of the account of

practical reasoning elaborated in this dissertation, developing habits of attention and construal look

to be integral to the process of cultivating virtue.

## Implications of the CAPS Account of Virtue

Let me now turn to some of the implications for virtue ethics of taking on board a CAPS

conception of traits. One is that virtue ethics will have to give up some general claims regarding the

actions of the virtuous. Three points are important to make here, however: 1) virtue ethics need

only give up a very specific type of generalization about actions; 2) giving up these generalizations

does not undermine the action-guiding capabilities of the v-rules; and 3) giving up these

generalizations does not entail that virtue ethics must give up on the notion of the virtuous acting

reliably.

The generalizations that are incompatible with a CAPS conception of virtue are those that tie

virtue to the performance of particular token actions. It is common in the virtue literature to see

claims along the lines of, 'The courageous tend to stand firm,' or, 'The honest tend to tell the truth,'

and 'The generous tend to give.' A charitable reading of these claims would take them to be

elliptical so that adherence to the doctrine of the mean is understood to be implied. So the claim

about the courageous is really that the courageous tend to stand firm at the right time, in the right way, for the right end, and so on.  Taken at face value, however, one can see how these elliptical claims are problematic and misleading.  Honest people do not go around spewing truths, and a person who did so would probably be overly frank rather than virtuously honest.  Nor do the courageous stand firm over every little thing.  In light of the nominal inconsistency allowed by the CAPS account of virtue and in particular the variety and creativity with which virtuous individuals might handle the situations that they encounter, these generalizations look particularly problematic.  Taken at face value, these kinds of generalization make it seem as though, if you put an individual possessing virtue X into situation Y, then we can expect them to do Z.  But of course, with the exception of perhaps an exceedingly small range of situations, this is not really what one would expect to happen, especially on a CAPS understanding of virtue.

This is not to say that we must give up all generalizations regarding virtuous behavior.  A more promising route would seem to be found by looking at the kinds of things that the virtuous tend *not* to do.  Here it seems that there are a lot of generalizations that can be made without being problematically misleading, for instance: 'The courageous are not afraid of innocuous things,' and 'The honest tend not to deceive.'  And as we elaborate CAPS accounts of particular virtues, we may find more generalizations that can be made.  For instance, we might think it reasonable to say that the temperate tend not to put themselves willingly into situations of significant temptation.  And here, too, we see opportunities to develop the kind of if…then behavioral profiles outlined by Mischel and Shoda.  We might, for instance, be able to say that, if faced with an unexpected delay, the patient tend to employ cognitive change or attentional deployment strategies.  Much more work, both philosophical and empirical, remains to be done on this front, but the road ahead looks promising.

This brings me to my second point: giving up generalizations that tie virtue to the performance of particular token actions does not undermine the action-guiding capabilities of the v-rules. For one, if these claims are, indeed, elliptical as I suspect they are, then we are much better served by the more complete claim fleshed out in terms of the doctrine of the mean. Moreover, it is not as though giving up these claims leaves us with an impoverished understanding of virtue. As just discussed, there are many other generalizations that might yet be made. In short, when it comes to understanding virtue, these generalizations do not seem to be worth the trouble that they potentially bring with them.

Third, in giving up generalizations regarding the performance of particular actions, virtue ethics in no way gives up the notion that the virtuous act reliably. Even if we cannot say that the generous tend to give, we can still conceive of virtuous individuals as reliably generous. In light of the varieties in personalities, personal tastes, and in the actual organization of the virtues within their moral identities, what that generosity substantively amounts to in each of the lives of these virtuous individuals is likely to be quite different. For instance, Jane may be reliably generous with her time while pinching her pennies to save for college, while John, who is juggling a family and career, donates regularly to a few charities while guarding his Saturdays as 'family day.' Each is generous in his/her own way, and we seem quite able to recognize the generosity in each of their lives. While there may not be *particular* actions that all virtuous agents will reliably perform, then, it does not follow that virtuous individuals do not act reliably. They reliably respond well to the items in the fields of concern of the virtues, even if the ways in which they respond vary from person to person.

Furthermore, giving up these generalizations regarding particular actions may actually be quite helpful in disentangling reliability from frequency. Just because I do not do something very frequently does not mean that I do not do it reliably, and this seems particularly relevant to a virtue

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like generosity.[3] So once again, giving up on this particular type of generalization would seem to enhance, rather than diminish, our understanding of virtue.

Another significant implication for virtue ethics of taking on board the CAPS model has to do with developing empirically plausible accounts of the virtues and vices. As I hope the accounts of courage and patience that I begin to elaborate in the previous chapters makes clear, the CAPS model itself does not provide us with any specific answers as to what psychological elements constitute the virtues. But it does suggest how we might find such answers. One way is by looking to the process-oriented work in psychology, as I did drawing on Hannah, Sweeny, and Lester's work on a CAPS conception of courage and on Duckworth, Gendler, and Gross' work on their process model of self-control. Care will be needed in incorporating this work into accounts of neo-Aristotelian virtues, as the psychologists are rarely operating under an Aristotelian conception of virtue, but I suspect that there is much of interest here for virtue ethicists. Another avenue that the CAPS model opens up for virtue ethicists is via the taxonomy of CAUs outlined by the model. The categories of CAUs provide a structure for more careful philosophical reflection. Reflecting on affective CAUs, for instance, might lead us to pay more attention to the role of hope in courage than we otherwise might. Reflecting on what strategies possessors of particular virtues might employ may lead to a more realistic understanding of how virtuous individuals structure and navigate their environments. The CAPS model provides a roadmap, so to speak, for virtue ethicists wishing to pursue a more detailed view of the psychology of the virtues.

Taking on board the CAPS model also makes clear just how significant virtue ethics' vested interests in social and political justice are. I should say at the outset that virtue ethics, with its emphasis on good upbringing and the social nature of human beings, has always acknowledged, to a greater or lesser extent, a vested interest in social and political justice. What I want to highlight here

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[3] Mark Alfano discusses this issue and distinguishes between what he calls high- and low-fidelity virtues (2013).

is a couple of ways in which a CAPS account of virtue draws attention to the demandingness of those particular interests.

Take courage as an example. Recall that one of the CAUs outlined in the CAPS account of courage is self-efficacy, which, I argued, ought to be understood as confidence in one's ability to do the right thing. Psychologists have identified two other kinds of efficacy beliefs that influence one's self-efficacy: collective efficacy and means efficacy (Hannah, Sweeney, and Lester 2010, 134-135). Collective efficacy has to do with a group's beliefs about its capabilities as a group (Bandura 1997, 477). The idea is that, for example, if I am a basketball player, my own self-efficacy will be higher if I believe that I am a member of a competent team. Collective efficacy is important to self-efficacy because so much of our understanding of the various aspects of our selves are tied to specific social groups. Means efficacy, on the other hand, refers to an individual's belief regarding the availability of adequate external resources to respond to the situation in which she finds herself. External resources should be understood broadly to include the appropriate tools, like a fire extinguisher or duct tape, qualified individuals, like coworkers or teammates, and institutional structures, like appropriate procedures or processes. Psychologists have found that high collective and/or means efficacy can increase self-efficacy.

Collective and means efficacy highlight the importance of external resources to self-efficacy and, therefore, to courage. Without the appropriate social, political, and economic support systems, the cultivation and maintenance of courage will be very hard indeed. The relationship between these various efficacy beliefs also makes clear the ways in which what Lisa Tessman calls "bad systemic moral luck"—the idea that systemic social, political, and economic institutional forces can deprive individuals from certain social groups of the external goods required for flourishing (2005)—can undermine an individual's self-efficacy, thereby making the acquisition of courage extremely difficult. Clearly, systemic poverty can preclude one from having access to the external resources necessary

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for means efficacy. So can exclusion from or discrimination by institutional structures like education and judicial systems. Furthermore, being a member of a group that lacks means efficacy and/or of a socially marginalized group may undermine one's collective efficacy, as one may come to doubt the capabilities of one's group and, therefore, oneself. All of this highlights some specific ways in which stark inequality, rigid social stratification, and entrenched prejudice, for example, can be significant barriers to the cultivation of virtue. Advocates for the cultivation of virtue, then, must also advocate for the dismantling of such barriers.

Relatedly, the CAPS account of virtue draws attention to just how demanding a proper Aristotelian moral education is likely to be. The cultivation of the required habits of thought, feeling, and action such that one has available and accessible the constellation of CAUs that constitute the virtues is a formidable task, and helps us understand why full virtue is very rare indeed. It also becomes clear why Aristotle grants such important roles for friendship, government, and education in cultivating and sustaining an individual's virtue. In fleshing out the social and political side of this picture further, one hopes that virtue ethicists may combat the criticisms of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics as overly individualistic or inadequately relational.

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