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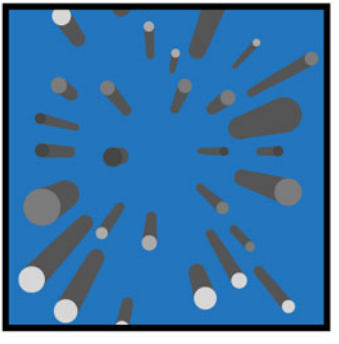

UNEASY VIRTUE

JULIA DRIVER

Uneasy Virtue

The predominant view of moral virtue can be traced back to Aristotle. He believed that moral virtue must involve intellectual excellence. To have moral virtue, one must have practical wisdom – the ability to deliberate well and to see what is morally relevant in a given context.

Julia Driver challenges this classical theory of virtue, arguing that it fails to take into account virtues that do seem to involve ignorance or epistemic defect. Some "virtues of ignorance" are counterexamples to accounts of virtue that hold that moral virtue must involve practical wisdom. Modesty, for example, is generally considered to be a virtue even though the modest person may be making an inaccurate assessment of his or her accomplishments.

Driver argues that we should abandon the highly intellectualist view of virtue and instead adopt a consequentialist perspective that holds that virtue is simply a character trait that systematically produces good consequences. In this approach, what counts as human excellence will be determined by conditions external to agency, such as consequences. *Uneasy Virtue* presents a stimulating and accessible defense of the idea that the importance of the virtues and the ideas of virtue ethicists are best understood within a consequentialist framework.

Julia Driver is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Dartmouth College.

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JULIA DRIVER

Dartmouth College

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS (VIRTUAL PUBLISHING)
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 IRP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

http://www.cambridge.org

First published in printed format 2001

A catalogue record for the original printed book is available
from the British Library and from the Library of Congress
Original ISBN 0 521 78172 8 hardback

ISBN 0 511 01981 5 virtual (netLibrary Edition)

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Acknowledgments

In the time it has taken me to write this book, I have been helped by many people and several institutions. I am grateful for the encouragement and support that I have received and apologize to anyone I have inadvertently omitted.

This book contains material presented in papers given at Dartmouth College, Carnegie-Mellon University, Georgetown University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, The University of Manitoba, The New Zealand Philosophy Association Meetings at Massey University, The Australian National University, The University of Canterbury in Christ Church New Zealand, The University of Auckland, the Eastern Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Philadelphia 1997), the Pacific Division Meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Los Angeles 1998), The 20th World Congress of Philosophy (Boston 1998), and the Meetings of the New Jersey Regional Philosophy Association (November 1997). I thank the audiences and discussants for their very helpful comments.

Some of the material in this book appears elsewhere in different form, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank publishers for permission to reuse this material. Material from Chapter 2 appears in "The Virtues of Ignorance," *The Journal of Philosophy* (1989) as well as "Modesty and Ignorance," *Ethics* (1999; © The University of Chicago, used by permission). Material from Chapters 3 and 4 appears in "The Virtues and Human Nature" in *How Should One Live?* edited by Roger Crisp (Oxford University Press, 1996); and some of my remarks on Slote's virtue ethics appeared in a critical review of *From Morality to Virtue*, in *Nous* (1994), and in "Monkeying with Motives," in *Utilitas* (1995, Edinburgh University Press). Additionally, material in Chapter 4 on

virtue epistemology appears in "Moral and Epistemic Virtue," published in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, edited by Guy Axtell (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

The following individuals have read all or significant portions of the manuscript, and I thank them very much for their comments: Jonathan Adler, Amy Allen, Ann Bumpus, Roger Crisp, Robert Fogelin, Bernie Gert, Brad Hooker, Sam Levey, Andrew Moore, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Roy Sorensen, Christine Thomas, and two anonymous readers. Others have read and commented on papers based on the chapters, and I thank them as well: Sarah Buss, Fred Feldman, Samuel Freeman, Amy Gutmann, George Kateb, Elijah Millgram, Dick Moran, George Rainbolt, Amelie Rorty, Connie Rosati, Alan Ryan, Jerry Schneewind, Robert Shaver, Michael Slote, Michael Stocker, Christine Swanton, John Tomasi, and Susan Wolf. Since this book began as a dissertation I would particularly like to thank my dissertation director, Susan Wolf, and reader Jerry Schneewind, who contributed a great deal to the development of the project and who encouraged me to pursue my interest in virtue theory and ethics more generally.

My work on the book has been supported by a Laurance S. Rockefeller Fellowship from Princeton University's Center for Human Values. I am deeply grateful to the Center for allowing me time to begin work on the book. The Center provided an enormously stimulating environment, and I remember with fondness the many fruitful discussions with Amy Gutmann, George Kateb, Alan Ryan, Peter Euben, Frances Kamm, Samuel Freeman, Helen Nissenbaum, and John Tomasi. They usually tried to dissuade me from my consequentialist ways, and as a result forced me to sharpen and strengthen my final position.

Work was also supported by an NEH grant to participate in Amelie Rorty's seminar "Virtues and Their Vicissitudes." That seminar was a wonderful experience. It afforded me an opportunity to discuss ideas with a great group of people. In addition to Amelie, I particularly thank Angela Curran and Mark Migotti for their helpful input. In addition to this support, my work on this book received support through the PSC-CUNY research award program at the City University of New York, which provided summer salary to work on the project.

I would also like to thank the NEH for a travel grant to attend a conference at the University of Pittsburgh in 1994 on "Duty, Interest and Practical Reason: Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics," organized by Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting. The conference itself was high

in quality and very stimulating, and it gave me the opportunity to discuss my ideas with a broad range of philosophers working in this area.

I have had the good fortune to be employed by three great institutions in the course of working on this book. My first tenure-track job, at Virginia Tech, provided a stimulating and nurturing environment. Members of the department went out of their way to read and comment on my material and were ideal colleagues. I would particularly like to thank Dick Burian, Jim Klagge, and John Christman (now at Penn State) for their comments on my work. I also benefited from discussions with the late Bill Williams. At Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, I benefited from the comments of Jonathan Adler, who read the entire manuscript twice and wrote extensive comments on each draft. Finally, at Dartmouth College, my colleagues organized a reading group for the manuscript, which proved to be quite valuable in firming up the final draft. I am particularly grateful to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, who read the manuscript three times and offered extensive comments. I am extremely grateful to Dartmouth College for providing a wonderful environment for research.

This book is dedicated to my husband, Roy, and our two sons, Maxwell and Zachary.

J. D.
Hanover, New Hampshire
June 2000

Introduction

Over the past few decades, criticism of Utilitarianism, and consequentialism more generally, has become increasingly fashionable. Currently popular is the view that the moral quality of our lives is best captured by alternative theories such as virtue ethics or Kantian ethics. These views are considered superior in that they avoid classic problems of Utilitarianism: they are not as demanding of moral agents, and they do not necessarily advocate an impersonal standard for determining right action. Further, each of these theories locates what is morally important or significant as being *within* the agent or agency, whereas consequentialist theories are typically viewed as locating these factors externally, in the form of consequences. Thus, while a Kantian maintains that the moral worth of a person's action is determined by conscious adherence to the Categorical Imperative, the Utilitarian holds that the rightness of the action is determined by its consequences. This feature of Utilitarianism is seen as a weakness since it is taken to 'alienate' the agent from morality and, further, render the agent hostage to the forces of moral luck. This book, however, will seek to defend consequentialism from the encroachment of virtue ethics in both its Aristotelian and Kantian forms by, first, pointing out serious internal deficiencies with Aristotelian virtue ethics; second, illustrating some of the limitations and the very narrow scope of virtue within the Kantian system; and, third, showing that consequentialism can well accommodate virtue evaluation. These three themes will be the central themes of the book. The final conclusion is that Consequentialism is not deserving of some recent attacks and that, once the theory is developed, its many advantages will outweigh those of its competitors.

In arguing for these claims I will challenge a long-held conception of

virtue, one that locates moral excellence in cognitive excellence. This view, held by Aristotle, has been enormously influential on the development of modern virtue ethics. Aristotle held that a central feature of virtue is "correct perception"; that is, the virtuous agent is one who correctly perceives what is morally relevant. This feature of Aristotle's account of virtue has been elaborated by John McDowell and Martha Nussbaum, in addition to *particularists* in virtue ethics. The idea is that it is foolish to argue in favor of rules of right conduct, as the Utilitarians and the Kantians do. No rule or decision procedure can capture or detail the features of a 'right act.' Particularists maintain that what makes an agent's conduct appropriate is an enormously complex issue, and one that cannot be codified. Instead, in giving a theory of what we ought to do and how we ought to be, one should focus on judgment and discernment – correct perception. I argue that the emphasis on correct perception is mistaken and that a significant class of virtues, the virtues of ignorance, which includes the trait of modesty, cannot be accommodated by this view. Thus it risks leaving out an important element of our moral experience.

Consequentialism, it turns out, offers an extraordinarily complex and flexible evaluative system. Broadly speaking, it is the view that the moral quality of a person's action (character trait, etc.) is determined by its consequences. That is, for an action to be 'right,' for example, it is both necessary and sufficient that it produce or be thought to produce the appropriate sorts of consequences. Of course, this is all very vague, but the different formulations of the theory will specify the details differently. The formulations of the theory that I would like to focus on involve the contrast between the objective and subjective versions of the theory. These two versions of consequentialism are quite different, and a discussion of the differences is illuminating in providing a systematic way to compare consequentialism with other theories.

A subjective consequentialist defines the rightness of an action in terms of the subjective states of the agent. An example of a subjective consequentialist theory is expectabilism, which holds that an action is right if and only if the agent *expects* that the consequences of the action will be good. An objective consequentialist, on the other hand, defines a right action as that which produces good *actual* consequences – thus, what the agent *expects* to be produced is irrelevant in determining rightness – though it will certainly be relevant in terms of apportioning praise and blame. These two versions of the theory illustrate a more general distinction among ethical theories – the distinction between *evaluational*

internalism and *evaluational externalism*. Evaluational internalism is the view that the moral quality of a person's action or character is determined by factors internal to the person's agency, whereas evaluational externalism is the view that the moral quality of a person's action or character is determined by factors external to the person's agency. Subjective consequentialism is an example of the former; objective consequentialism an example of the latter. Arguably, Kantian ethics – or, at least, the old traditional interpretation of Kantian ethics – is an example of evaluational internalism, since Kant at least claimed that the actual effects of an action are irrelevant to its moral quality. Aristotle's theory is mixed; certain psychological states are necessary for virtue but not sufficient, since a virtue trait must show some connection to actual human flourishing. "Success" is necessary for Aristotle in a way that it is not for Kant or for the subjective Utilitarian. The drawback is that for both Aristotle and the objective consequentialist the moral features of one's life are subject to luck; prey to forces beyond the control of the agent since at least some of the consequences will be beyond the control, or indeed the recognition, of the agent. Kant chose the internalism route to protect the agent from luck, as did the subjective consequentialist.

In Chapter 1, I focus on Aristotle's theory. An entire chapter is devoted to Aristotle because he is the exemplar of virtue ethics; the vast majority of modern writers on virtue have taken their cue from Aristotle: John McDowell and Martha Nussbaum both locate virtue in the perceptual sensitivity of the moral agent to morally salient features of context, an idea that is traced directly back to Aristotle. Further, Aristotle's account represents a mixed view in the sense that he held that certain psychological states were necessary for virtue, but also that an external condition had to be met for virtue – namely, that it be productive of human flourishing in some way. In presenting a brief account of Aristotle's theory of virtue in Chapter 1, I hope to show how this view has influenced modern conceptions of virtue, and I hope also to lay the basis for critical discussion of the mixed perspective that will follow later in the book.

A central feature of Aristotle's account is the idea that virtue consists of "correct perception" on the part of the virtuous agent. There is some debate as to whether this is necessary and sufficient for virtue or merely necessary. However, in Chapter 2 I develop a criticism of this feature of classical virtue theory by discussing a class of virtues that I call the 'virtues of ignorance.' This criticism succeeds against even the weaker construal of the perceptual sensitivity requirement as merely necessary.

These virtues of ignorance require that the agent *fail* to detect a morally relevant feature. Take, for example, modesty. Genuine modesty, I argue, requires that the agent underestimate self-worth to some extent (though not to the extent of constituting self-deprecation). This means that the agent is making a mistake. The agent fails to fully recognize that, for example, he is the best pianist in the world when in fact he is. If modesty is a virtue, then, modesty provides a counterexample to Aristotle's theory. Knowledge of virtue-making factors is not a necessary condition for virtue.

In Chapter 3, I expand this line of attack against traditional virtue theories by showing that not only is knowledge not essential to virtue, but other internal states, such as having 'good intentions' or deriving pleasure or satisfaction from virtuous activity, are not necessary. For example, having objectively good intentions requires that an agent have correct beliefs regarding what is valuable – a tall order for most persons who have beliefs that are often heavily influenced by the fallible mores of human society. Consider Huckleberry Finn, who helped a friend escape the evil of slavery, though he himself did not seem to find that institution morally repulsive. Huckleberry's belief was wrong; slavery is an evil, and he should have condemned it. Still, he was a sympathetic person, and in the end the sympathy won and he did the right thing by not turning his friend in to the authorities. Further, the sympathy was a genuine feature of his character. He did not spare his friend on a whim. If he had to do it over again, time after time he would have acted the same way. If we look at his entire character, then, the sympathy is a virtue, even though Huckleberry lacks the right sort of belief to make his intentions good. He believes he is acting wrongly when in fact he is acting rightly. Thus, if good intentions were necessary to virtue, Huckleberry would not be virtuous.

The Huckleberry Finn case is an extreme, since it illustrates a person who has demonstrably false beliefs about the good. But if virtue theorists insist that Huckleberry lacks virtue because of his flawed cognitive state, then this is bad news for most of us, who, even in some small way, are likely to harbor false views of value. The psychological requirements placed on virtue in the classical tradition seem far too rigid and unrealistic. Huckleberry may have had many vices, but he did have virtue, which prompted him to do the right thing, even though he may not have recognized it as such. Huckleberry's virtue is an *uneasy* virtue, however, due to its lack of a firm cognitive foundation. Nevertheless,

since it is a trait of character that we value because we recognize its good-producing qualities (since Jim's freedom is a good), it is a virtue.

Chapters 3 and 4 constitute a sustained attack on the internalist view of evaluation. I argue that none of those internal qualities traditionally associated with virtue is necessary for it. Some internal states may be necessary for particular virtues; for example, it may well be that for a person to be genuinely generous, she must realize that she is helping the needy. However, my point is that when we ask ourselves the question "Why is x a virtue?" we do not respond by saying things like "x displays good intentions"; rather, we point to external factors, that is, those consequences actually produced by the trait in a systematic fashion. Thus, the sustained criticism of the internalist perspective leads to a development of my positive view of virtue: that a virtue is a character trait that systematically produces a preponderance of good. This is decidedly consequentialist, but it is a variety of objective consequentialism, since it locates the goodness in the actual consequences produced (or the consequences that would be produced under typical circumstances).

On this externalist account of virtue, 'excellence' or 'virtue' is analogous to the biologist's sense of 'fitness' in that both of these concepts are to be understood externally. The fitness of an animal may involve internal states, but the value of those states is determined by reference to the external environment. Sharp teeth are indicators of fitness only in certain environments. Since some environments are more common than others, we can loosely speak of sharp teeth contributing to fitness; but it is understood that this is merely a norm; that if the context were to shift, the judgment of fitness might shift as well. Fitness is not to be determined by the animals' internal states alone; reference to the environment is crucial in evaluations of fitness – indeed, it is the determining factor. Likewise, virtue or excellence in humans is not a matter of their internal states alone, divorced from the social environment. This allows for a sort of relativism in virtue judgments, though not a pernicious relativism. Simply, it allows judgments of virtue to shift with given shifts in context. The tendency to be blindly charitable, that is, to see the good in others and not the bad, was not a virtue in Nazi Germany, though it may have been one in 19th-century rural England. The justification is provided by an appeal to consequences. If accepted as genuine cases, these pose a problem for accounts of virtue, such as McDowell's and Nussbaum's, which resurrect Aristotle's theory. McDowell argues that virtue is a perceptual capacity to detect what morality demands in a given context;

he thus equates moral virtue with knowledge of what is morally relevant. Yet an agent exhibiting modesty is unaware of the features that make him modest. The blindly charitable person is one who *fails to see* all that is bad in others. To avoid the problem posed by these cases, the Aristotelian must deny that they are true virtues. Yet, to do this without some theoretical justification is to beg the question in favor of his own account. The standard arguments, to be found in Aristotle, in favor of the "correct perception" view of virtue are all based on reliability: that is, correct perception, practical wisdom, and so forth are necessary to ensure reliability of good behavior on the part of the moral agent. Without such perception, even a well-intentioned agent will bumble about and cause all sorts of unnecessary harm. But if we are talking about the disposition to behave in a certain way, reliability is already built in. The blindly charitable person, in the appropriate context, does behave well reliably. What something like correct perception or practical wisdom will in fact do is allow for flexibility in dealing with nonstandard contexts. Jane Bennet, a blindly charitable character in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, is someone who always sees the best in others and overlooks the bad; she will be in some moral difficulty if transplanted to Nazi Germany. However, the plausible way of dealing with these sorts of cases is to point out that virtue evaluation is context sensitive. It is not to deny the label 'virtue' to traits that fail in some context or other to be good-producing.

The alternative theory I develop, in part to accommodate the virtues of ignorance, is proposed and developed in Chapters 4 and 5. It is offered as a supplement to standard objective consequentialism. A virtue is a character trait that leads to good consequences systematically. The mental states leading up to the actions instantiated by the trait are not themselves intrinsically valuable, though they will certainly be extrinsically valuable. Their value, however, will be understood in terms of external features – that is, the consequences produced, or the ones that would be produced, under normal circumstances.

In claiming that the trait leads to good systematically, one is not committed to the trait's leading to good in every single instance. For example, a person may be just, yet, on a single occasion, the just action may lead to bad consequences. The claim is merely that for justice to be a virtue it must systematically lead to good, or lead to good on balance and nonaccidentally. An analogy with seat belts may help. Wearing a seat belt is generally considered good, though there may be some occasions when wearing a seat belt actually leads to a worse outcome, in rare

crashes where the victim would be better off thrown from the car rather than strapped in place. However, these rare occurrences do not make us change our evaluation of seat belts as good, any more than the rare occasion of justice leading to a bad outcome makes us change our evaluation of justice as a virtue.

There are two different ways (at least) of developing objective consequentialism. Previously, the form focused on was a form that Michael Slote has dubbed "actualism." Actualism holds that the moral quality of actions and/or character is determined by actual consequences. This has been taken to be the form of objective consequentialism that writers such as Railton have argued for, and has been viewed as rather counterintuitive because it is subject to moral luck problems to a greater extent than purely internalist theories are. Actualism seems to hold the agent responsible for any actual outcomes of an action, and these outcomes alone determine the moral quality of the action. Thus, for example, if Donna throws a banana peel into the garbage, and the peel falls out unbeknownst to her, causing an innocent passer-by to slip and break his leg on the peel, Donna is responsible and her act of throwing out the peel is immoral and wrong.

However, there is another way of developing objective consequentialism. The theoretical distinction that underlies the distinction between subjective and objective consequentialism is the distinction between evaluational internalism and externalism. What makes objective consequentialism useful for my account of moral virtue is that the moral quality of actions and/or character is determined by factors external to agency. However, these factors *need not* be out-there-in-the-actual-world factors. Rather, what matters morally in objective consequentialism is not what goes on in the agent's head. But this leaves room for counterfactual support of moral claims in the sense that an agent's action could be deemed right/wrong, depending on the consequences of that act in normal circumstances, or what would have been its consequences in normal circumstances. This would help shield the account from moral luck to some extent while preserving the strength of the objectivist's connection to the world or to external reality. One could view this as simply a more attenuated type of actualism. A robust modal realism would recognize counterfactual claims as making reference to events in possible worlds. Applied to character evaluation, this alternative would hold that a moral virtue is a character trait that *would* systematically produce good. This alternative is "counterfactualism." My claim is that though this alternative to actualism has the benefit of minimizing moral

luck problems, and offers a little recognized alternative to subjective consequentialism, it is nevertheless untenable because it privileges possible worlds close to our own without independent argument, and this, in turn, would lead to other counterintuitive results. That is, it may well be the case that Samantha's generosity is the result of some fluke, so that in nearby possible worlds she is not generous. Nevertheless, that doesn't affect her actual generosity. Further, one could view moral luck as being not so much a *problem* as a phenomenon alerting us to the significance of our connection to what happens in the actual world – and this would be a strength of actualism.

Major portions of the later chapters deal with an articulation and a defense of objective consequentialism. Defending it against the pure internalist requires pointing out the advantages of preserving a connection to the world; one isn't committed to the view that useless or even counterproductive traits are virtues. The best that can be hoped for by advocates of a necessary internal condition to virtue is a "mixed" virtue ethics that still recognizes the importance of external features.

However, the mixed view purchases its superficial plausibility at the expense of a host of theoretical problems that are shared with the pure internalist and externalist perspectives. For example, like objective consequentialism it will suffer from the problem of moral luck. If, for example, conduciveness to actual human flourishing is necessary for virtue, then the agent's virtue is still subject to external conditions. If human flourishing is not actually produced, the person lacks virtue even if he or she possesses "good" internal states of the requisite sort. Further, like internalist views such as one developed by Michael Slote, a mixed view will suffer from the difficulty of specifying how good motives and intentions can be identified independent of external factors that would make them good (see Driver 1995).

For these reasons I favor a reconsideration of the other "pure" perspective, that of evaluational externalism in the form of objective consequentialism. The account as it has so far been spelled out needs to be defended against objections of the sort that are now familiar. For example, what is the scope of relevant consequences to be considered? That is, how far into the future are we to go in counting the consequences? Which consequences are relevant and which are not? These problems are serious, but it is worth pointing out that any theory that holds some favorable outcome as necessary, even if not sufficient, for virtue will have the very same set of problems. Even a mixed view such as Aristotle's would need to deal with scope problems regarding the extent to

which we consider the human flourishing brought about by virtue. However, *tu quoque* arguments are not the most satisfying. In the last chapter of the book, I defend the account against this set of criticisms by arguing that judgments of virtue are context sensitive.

As has been mentioned before, an additional concern is that of moral luck. The initial attraction of the internalist perspective is that it can mitigate the impact of luck on evaluation. If the moral quality of an agent's character and actions is completely determined by voluntary states of the agent's mind, then bad luck in the form of an accident, or some other unfortunate external circumstance, will have no impact on moral quality. But the externalist account has the advantage of tying the agent to the actual consequences of his actions. If we are held responsible for consequences, and not merely for our internal states, then we will be far more cautious and concerned about the impact of our actions on others, and this will promote the good. What is unique about the view developed in this book is that it views virtue as having no necessary connection to good psychological states. States such as knowing the import of one's actions, deriving pleasure from the good, and so on are not necessary to virtue across the board. One or more states may be necessary for *particular* virtues, though that would remain to be determined by analysis of the specific virtues. A trait can be a virtue even though it fails to instantiate such psychological states. In this way, traits such as modesty and blind charity can be regarded as virtues in the right contexts. The broader significance of this step is to drive a wedge between the view that human excellence is a matter of simply attaining wisdom and the view that one's social interactions contribute to human excellence. On my account both are significant, though not all significant. The best life is one that incorporates both forms of excellence. Thus, though the view I advocate is consequentialist, it is one that advocates a balance of goods for a person's life.

The focus of this book is moral virtue. The account of virtue I present should not be understood as an exhaustive ethical theory; the issue of act evaluation, for example, is a separate issue and one not directly dealt with here. I happen to believe that the actualist, or objective consequentialist, view is the correct one for action as well as for character evaluation, but nothing I argue for here commits the view to this. My intent is simply to show that this approach to evaluation can well accommodate virtue evaluation in a way that is far more intuitively plausible than this approach has previously been given credit for being.

1

The Aristotelian Conception of Virtue

In the recent resurgence of interest in virtue, Aristotle's theory has pride of place. He provided one of the first comprehensive theories of virtue, one that placed a great deal of emphasis on the exercise of our rational faculties and the integration of the rational with the emotional. It is an attractive theory because Aristotle focused on the issue of what it was to be a good person in developing his theory. Many recent ethicists find this a welcome relief from theories that focus on the evaluation of action. The Aristotelian view has become extremely influential. For example, Alasdair MacIntyre views the Aristotelian tradition as the one that will save ethics from aimless fragmentation (MacIntyre 1979). Rosalind Hursthouse has recently presented a neo-Aristotelian account of virtue ethics (Hursthouse 1999). John McDowell appropriates the Aristotelian idea that virtue involves correct perception of morally relevant facts (McDowell 1979). The virtuous agent recognizes what is good, "sees things as they are," and acts accordingly.[1] It is the "seeing things as they are" element of Aristotle's theory that has permeated virtue theory (see also Murdoch 1970, Blum 1991). And it has scarcely been challenged.[2] One aim of this book is to challenge this condition of virtue. One of my claims, argued for in Chapter 2, is that correct perception, while important, is not necessary for virtue. In this chapter I will discuss the intellectualism of Aristotle's theory of virtue, since it seems the natural starting point for any book professing to take on central tenets of traditional virtue theory. However, I do not intend, in a small chapter, to develop an original and complete exegesis of Aristotle's views on virtue.[3] Rather, this chapter is simply preliminary to the development of my own views, and will aid in putting those views in context within the virtue theory tradition. My aim in this chapter is simply to draw out the

predominant lines of thought in Aristotle, which I view as influential but also incorrect. This method will inevitably overlook the richness of detail in the theory.

The Aristotelian conception of moral virtue can only be understood as part of the greater project of giving an account of the good life. Living according to virtue was one element of living the good life, and the most important element. Because of this orientation, classical writers put a great deal of emphasis on the role of reason and knowledge in living according to virtue. A good man is a man who is well functioning, and the unique human function is reason – the ability to think rationally and acquire wisdom and knowledge. This is what distinguishes man from beast. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all developed highly intellectualist theories of virtue, consistent with their view of the proper activity for human beings (or, for the sake of historical accuracy, their view of the proper functioning of free men).

1. THE KNOWLEDGE CONDITION

Prior to Aristotle, Socrates held by far the strongest knowledge condition for virtue, since he actually identified virtue with knowledge. This means that, given the appropriate knowledge, one cannot fail to have virtue, and given that one is truly virtuous, one cannot fail to have the appropriate knowledge. They simply are the same thing. For Aristotle, however, the knowledge condition was not so strong. Knowledge is not identified with virtue; rather, the right sort of knowledge or wisdom is a necessary and sufficient condition for virtue.

> . . . it is impossible to be good in the full sense of the word without practical wisdom or to be a man of practical wisdom without moral excellence or virtue. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1144b27–30)

Virtue and practical wisdom go hand in hand, though they are not identical. This also commits Aristotle to a unity of the virtues thesis, which states that the possessor of one virtue possesses them all. While a strict unity of virtues thesis strikes many as implausible – since it seems that persons can be flawed and virtuous at the same time – some modern Aristotelians have incorporated more flexible versions of the claims into their accounts of virtue.[4]

Further, on Aristotle's view, no virtue can be constituted by, or based upon, ignorance. Since virtues are dispositions for choice, in order for the agent to act from virtue he must know that what he is doing is the

morally correct action. For one's actions to be characteristic of virtue, one must act with full knowledge of the circumstances. One cannot act in, or out of, ignorance.[5] Praise can attach only to voluntary or intentional actions, and this will require the agent to perform an action knowingly, *under the relevant description*. A particular action can be described in a variety of ways. When I turn on the light in my living room, the action can be described as "flipping a switch," "lifting my arm," "rearranging atoms," or "turning on the living room light." I must understand the action that I am performing as "turning on the living room light" in order for it to count as an intentional or voluntary turning on of the living room light. I can intentionally lift my arm without intentionally turning on the light, even if the result of my lifting my arm is that the living room light gets turned on. So a virtuous action – or one that represents a true exercise of virtue – is one performed knowingly under the description that is relevant to its being labeled virtuous. For a person to be acting generously, then, she must perceive that others are in need and knowingly help them.[6] The notion of a virtuous *action* is derivative, or dependent upon, the notion of the virtuous agent: ". . . acts are called just and self-controlled when they are the kind of acts which a just or self-controlled man would perform" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b4–8).

But the virtuous *person* must act in the following way:

> . . . an act is not performed justly or unjustly or with self control if the act itself is of a certain kind, but only if, in addition the agent has certain characteristics as he performs it: first of all, he must know what he is doing; secondly, he must choose to act the way he does, and he must choose it for its own sake; and in the third place, the act must spring from a firm and unchangeable character. (Ibid., 1105a28–34)

The "firm and unchangeable character" trait is the virtue. But a virtue cannot be a disposition that leads to anything other than action conforming to this characterization. So, an agent who does something noble unknowingly, or nonvoluntarily, or whimsically does not demonstrate any virtue through such action.[7] And virtuous action is crucial in Aristotle's overarching theory: to be happy or flourishing, the agent must not only have the virtuous disposition, the agent must also act, or *use*, the virtue (see Kraut 1989, p. 235).

Aristotle makes a distinction between several sorts of wisdom, only one of which concerns our discussion of virtue. The type of wisdom necessary for virtue he calls "practical wisdom," or *phronesis*. Practical

wisdom is the intellectual capacity of the moral agent that is generally perceived to regulate virtue. It is a capacity that is developed over time to deal with practical matters. So, in contrast to theoretical wisdom, practical wisdom has to do with action, activity. This is what makes it crucial to virtue, which also concerns action. The exact relationship between virtue and practical wisdom is not clear. In one place Aristotle notes that ". . . virtue ensures that the aim is right, and *phronesis* the means to the aim" (*Nicomachean Ethics,* 1145a). This indicates that virtue fixes the end or goal of the good person, and *phronesis* is required for exercising virtue because it enables the end to be best realized.

Phronesis can roughly be characterized as practical good sense. Without it the agent cannot have virtue. It requires of the agent that he deliberate well, in the sense that the end of the deliberation is good, and the reasoning involved must be good as well (see *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1141b9–13). The agent must be able to consider the relevant facts, weigh them, consider alternatives, and reach the right decision. Further, since practical wisdom is by definition concerned only with particular cases and situations – not abstract ones – it seems that the man of right reason must follow the preceding procedure in each case where a moral decision is called for.[8] The knowledge condition for Aristotle requires that the person know what he is doing under the morally relevant description so that the action is truly voluntary (i.e., not performed in ignorance; see *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III) and so that it is the correct thing to do. Further, since choice is the result of deliberation, and practical wisdom involves deliberating well, the virtuous action is guided by practical wisdom. A man of courage will be able to assess a situation as calling for courageous action and deliberate about the best action to accomplish the appropriate end. He will know that what he is doing is dangerous but also that it is the thing to do. This sense of 'knowledge' was deemed practical by Aristotle because it concerned action rather than pure contemplation. So not only are actions done knowingly, they must be performed deliberately, as a matter of deliberate choice. As Richard Sorabji points out, the deliberation does not necessarily involve some calculation each and every time the agent acts. Even so, the act is regulated by the agent's conception of the good life (Sorabji 1980, p. 210). This can itself be unpacked in a variety of ways, but the intuitive idea, I take it, is that the act must support or at least be consistent with the agent's conception of the good. To differentiate courageous bodily movements from ones that are not at all intentional, however, one must make the stronger claim that the virtuous action is also seen by the agent

as being supportive of the good at the time the action is being performed. Otherwise, the account commits the agent to no more than rationalization after the fact. This is a topic I will return to later in the book. So, it would seem that Aristotle's view of moral virtue is a strongly intellectualist view in that it *requires* knowledge and deliberation.

The agent must also act, and feel, according to the mean. In other words, the virtue trait is neither excessive nor defective; it gives rise to neither excessive nor defective actions and feelings. How do we determine the mean? Aristotle maintains that it is impossible to provide a set formula (*Nicomachean Ethics,* 1106a14–b28). Rather, the virtuous agent must rely on ethically sensitive perception to determine where virtue lies. The virtuous agent picks up on, and responds to, the ethically significant factors present in various contexts and tailors her actions accordingly.[9] John McDowell, in "Virtue and Reason," resurrects this Aristotelian view of virtue when he argues that virtue consists of a perceptual sensitivity to the morally relevant features of one's situation, a kind of perceptual knowledge. This is taken to be an alternative to the view that virtue consists in the agent's having internalized rules, or principles, of ethical behavior. Rules are too crude, too general. Nussbaum echoes this:

> It is very clear . . . in Aristotle . . . that one point of the emphasis on perception is to show the ethical crudeness of moralities based exclusively on general rules, and to demand for ethics a much finer responsiveness to the concrete – including features that have not been seen before and could not therefore have been housed in any antecedently built system of rules. (Nussbaum 1990, p. 37)

Nussbaum also believes that this perception, or ". . . the ability to discern, acutely and responsively, the salient features of one's particular situation," is necessary for the good life (ibid.).

Some commentators, however, have believed that it is pure mechanical habit rather than intellect that for Aristotle is the key to virtue (by putting a great deal of emphasis on Aristotle's claim that virtues are "unchangeable" characteristics).[10] Thus, the virtues are viewed as inculcated habits to act in various ways, without, necessarily, the use of practical wisdom on each occasion.[11] This characterization has unfortunately led some to regard Aristotle's theory of virtue as mechanical and virtue development as a matter of good programming.[12] It is true that early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle claims that moral virtue is formed by habit (*Nicomachean Ethics*), 1103a17–b25). Thus, it might be the case that in order to be virtuous the agent need merely have the

habit of hitting the mean on a certain range of choices. The person "knows how" to act rather than "knows that" in each case the action conforms to the dictates of practical wisdom and virtue. Even if this were the correct view of Aristotle's theory, there is a knowledge condition to be discerned. It is simply a weaker one. The agent still *knowingly* acts to pick the appropriate course of action, though it is the case that she doesn't deliberate, or puzzle out, or think about what the best choice is.

In any case, this interpretation of Aristotle is incorrect. It should be remembered that when he makes the claim that virtue is formed by habit, he intends a contrast with the view that virtue is a matter of nature. Aristotle wanted to contrast his own view with the view that one can simply be born with virtue. At most, nature disposes us to accept virtue. Yet, though habit helps us to form the virtues, a virtue is not a habit if 'habit' is to be understood as a mechanical procedure that may have little connection to practical wisdom (e.g., the habit of smoking cigarettes – here one does it without thinking). This is because developing a certain trait for Aristotle requires doing actions that are characteristic of that trait. It is by doing just deeds that a man is able to instill in himself a sense of justice. The habit of doing just deeds will help to make us just, but it is not itself what makes us just. Aristotle is describing a process when he discusses habit – the process of instilling a virtuous disposition. The product, or result, is the virtue itself, the exercise of which still requires practical wisdom. The habit of doing virtuous deeds is important because it is in this way that a person becomes familiar with what the right action is like, and once he has the virtue he can use practical wisdom to act rightly. Those who claim that for Aristotle virtue is habitually acting rightly are thus mistaken. They are confusing what Aristotle describes as the process of acquiring a virtue with the virtue itself. The debate about whether or not virtue is a matter of nature only, or a matter of correct upbringing and instruction, preceded Aristotle. It formed one of the central issues of Socrates' confrontation with the Sophists. The Sophists clearly had to maintain that virtue could be taught – after all, teaching virtue was supposed to be their business. Socrates wanted such a position clarified in the *Protagoras*. Aristotle comes out in favor of the view that virtue can be acquired, that it is not simply a matter of nature. How can virtue be acquired? It is acquired by habituation.[13] Thus, in these passages, Aristotle is simply articulating his version of the view that virtue can be taught.

Habit is necessary for internalizing the virtuous 'end.' This means that the urge to be virtuous does result from habit. However, practical wisdom, and knowledge of what to do in a particular context, are still required. Otherwise, the agent will have the end but no reliable way of realizing it. Thus, there is a knowledge condition.

There may also be a lesser role that habit plays in exercising virtue. The habit of acting rightly may familiarize an agent with what virtuous actions are like, just as developing good habits in playing chess familiarizes a player with good chess moves. Habit enables the agent to rule out stupid or obviously incorrect choices immediately and focus his attention on the plausible choices. This will save time and make the deliberation involved in virtue more efficient. It serves to streamline the process of making a choice according to practical wisdom, and it is compatible with the three conditions of virtue that Aristotle explicitly sets out.

Internalizing good ends is, of course, crucial to virtue because genuinely virtuous activity must have these ends internal to them or must make essential reference to those ends (i.e., the activity is "done for its own sake"). In other words, someone with the virtue of kindness is not motivated by greed in giving to the poor, with the aim of getting more money for himself. Rather, for the activity to be characteristic of kindness, the motive must be concern for others, the activity an expression of that concern, and the end that the concern be expressed to the benefit of others. The exercise of practical reasoning involves my having good desires and deliberating about how to serve them best by my actions.

Aristotle also makes a distinction between natural and real (or "full") virtues. Natural virtues are contrasted with real virtues as traits that

1. we are born with: ". . . the various kinds of character inhere in all of us . . . by nature. We tend to be just, capable of self-control, and to show all our other character traits from the time of our birth."

2. do not involve practical wisdom: ". . . it is impossible . . . to be a man of practical wisdom without [full] moral excellence or virtue" and

3. because they lack regulation by practical wisdom, will actually be harmful and/or fail to reliably benefit the agent possessing them: ". . . children and beasts are endowed with natural qualities or characteristics, but it is evident that without intelligence, these are harmful . . . as in the case of a mighty body which, when it moves without vision, comes down with a mighty fall because it cannot see. . . ." (Aristotle, 1958, 1144b1–35)

The natural virtues can be transformed into real ones once the child acquires practical wisdom and becomes a true moral agent. It is unclear whether or not Aristotle believed that adults could have natural virtue. Some argue that an adult who has attained the age of reason and yet still acts on pure inclination is more like the weak-willed. (Hursthouse 1999, pp. 104–5). However, Aristotle's intellectualism is still evident in the demand that true virtue require practical wisdom, or deliberation and choice. Natural virtues are thus not full moral virtues because they are not chosen or regulated by practical wisdom.

The opinion that moral virtues – and virtuous actions – are voluntary and the result of choice is certainly not unique to Aristotle.[14] I should point out that there is some controversy over Aristotle's views regarding responsibility for character. On the one hand, as I have tried to point out, he does regard voluntariness in acquiring the virtue as an important part of having the virtue. This provides an easy and plausible way of distinguishing natural good traits from cultivated ones in a way that reflects well on the agent. On the other hand, Aristotle also takes pains to point out that moral education and habituation are crucial for the development of true virtue: thus, parents must take pains to raise their children properly. This makes virtue look like a matter of how well a child happens to be brought up – something beyond the agent's control. The two perspectives can be made consistent, of course. One could argue that Aristotle meant that moral education makes children receptive to virtue, but that the final choice lies with them, and thus ultimately the virtues must be 'voluntary.' This view seems to be plausible when we read what Aristotle writes at one point about how natural virtue can evolve into full virtue: ". . . once he [the agent] acquires intelligence, it makes a great difference in his action. At that point the natural characteristic will become that virtue in the full sense which it previously resembled" (1958, 1144b13–14). So, to extrapolate a bit, the child developing good moral habits does not himself have true virtue until he acquires practical wisdom and then voluntarily makes a choice about the virtue. There is a sense in which his choice of the virtue when he is fully capable of reason constitutes a *voluntary* adoption of the virtue. An analogy with soft determinism might be apt here: while it is true that if he had not been raised properly he would not have the virtue, this does not cut against its voluntary adoption later on. All that is required is that he want the virtue, and choose to have and further develop what he already sees in himself.[15]

In any case, the view that *true* moral virtue is in some sense voluntary

is shared by almost everybody who has written on the subject. In order to accommodate this view, writers have had to make a distinction between praising someone's good qualities and *morally* praising them (what a Kantian would term 'esteeming' them). Thus, we admire a person's talent and intelligence, and we may praise her for these features, but this praise is not moral praise. These features are part of her temperament or personality, as opposed to her character. Moral praise is reserved for an agent's voluntary actions and features of *character*. We may like someone for having a pleasant or interesting temperament, but we do not admire her for this, since her temperament may be something she was born with, that she doesn't have to work at. Moral praise is somehow special and distinct from other types of praise because it is restricted to those things the agent is somehow responsible for. However, along with David Hume, I find this distinction spurious. People often do work hard at developing a pleasant temperament, at nurturing their good personality traits, such as intelligence, and their moral feelings, such as compassion and pity.

Hume took up the issue of voluntariness in his *Treatise*. He believed that an arbitrary distinction was made between natural abilities and virtues. Other writers like Aristotle disagreed, because natural abilities lack the quality of having been chosen or cultivated. As Hume puts it, the belief was that "they [natural abilities] are entirely involuntary, and have therefore no merit attending them, as having no dependence on liberty and freewill" (Hume 1960, p. 608). Yet, many qualities that are traditionally thought of as moral virtues can be just as involuntary as a natural ability like intelligence. One might be born prudent, or strong-willed, or generous. The Aristotelian will reply by making a distinction between natural virtue and real virtue, but this fails to mirror moral experience. If the distinction rests on some kind of intuitive distinction between temperament and character, it can't account for the fact that one and the same trait may or may not be voluntarily acquired.

There are cases where persons have lost their moral character through accidents. The most famous case is that of Phineas Gage, who, prior to suffering a terrible brain injury, was, by all accounts, intelligent, responsible, and very likable. After the injury to the frontal lobes of his brain, however, Mr. Gage lost the ability to make moral decisions.[16] He became untrustworthy. Untrustworthiness is a vice. Phineas Gage went from trustworthy to untrustworthy by way of an accident. The lapse was not a product of his will. Further, there was nothing, as far as researchers know, that Mr. Gage could have done to alter the outcome.

If one rejects the Humean line, one is forced to conclude that Mr. Gage had no moral vices, since he didn't choose his deplorable traits. Rather, it seems much more plausible that we regard Mr. Gage as genuinely vicious, though we might not blame him for *becoming* vicious. Imagine also a counterpart to Mr. Gage, someone who previous to his accident was nasty and insensitive, but after getting hit on the head becomes sweet and gentle. His traits are virtues, though not voluntarily acquired.

Thus, we may in fact value voluntary virtues more than nonvoluntary ones. But if we do, it is only because we believe that when a person tries to acquire a good trait, he is exercising another disposition; he is disposed towards moral self-improvement. The additional esteem is not for the trait acquired, but for the trait used to acquire it. Generosity, when it is the result of a plan of self-improvement, is esteemed more than natural generosity, but this should not detract significantly from esteem awarded to the 'natural.'

However, in the case of the natural virtues for Aristotle, even though the traits themselves are not voluntarily chosen, the actions resulting from them may very well be, even though they are not regulated by practical wisdom. The basic traits are unstable and the action is capricious. Recall Aristotle's analogy with the sightless giant in discussing natural virtue; the natural trait, unregulated, will bumble about and cause harm. So, to use an example, natural generosity is promiscuous in its attentions. A person with this trait will give even to those who should not receive because that person lacks practical wisdom – or good judgment or common sense.

Aristotle wanted virtues, as excellences of character, to be reliable. Requiring practical wisdom in their exercise was one way to ensure this reliability, which in turn is crucial to the agent's happiness in living the life of virtue. In Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle writes:". . . no function of man possesses as much stability as do activities in conformity with virtue: these seem to be even more durable than scientific knowledge . . ."(1100b12). Such a person will be able to handle bad luck with nobility, he's resilient, and virtue enables him to act appropriately even under terrible circumstances (1100b12–21). Of course, even though virtue insulates one from the effects of misfortune, it doesn't do so perfectly. However, virtue is still necessary for true happiness.

But if the virtue is a disposition, reliability is already built into the concept. What practical wisdom gives the agent, really, is flexibility. Someone who lacks practical wisdom might be at a loss in an unusual

situation. But, on my view, it will turn out that this does not mean that the agent lacks the relevant virtue, any more than the fact that a fishing rod will break when run over by a steamroller means that it lacks the quality of resilience.

This deliberative capacity is what distinguishes the imperfect virtue of the woman, child, and slave (in Aristotle's social scheme) from the perfect or full virtue of the rational man (see Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a5ff).

Rational capacity and knowledge are crucial to virtue on this account, and this emphasis has continued to be felt in later virtue theory. J. L. Mackie, writing on Aristotle's account, also adopts a view of virtue in which knowledge seems crucial. Mackie labels Aristotle's virtues "dispositions for choice." In fleshing out Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, Mackie develops the following characterization of virtue and vice:

> . . . a virtue is a disposition which harmonizes with understanding, with seeing things as they are, while a vice is one which distorts appreciation of the qualities of the relevant situation, which needs such distortion in order to maintain itself, and which is manifested by states of mind which cannot stand honest reflection on the ways in which they themselves have arisen. (Mackie 1977, p. 187)

It is this "seeing things as they are" element to virtue, pervasive in both Platonic and Aristotelian accounts, that has been largely accepted by virtue theorists. It is a requirement of rationality; thus, it must be a requirement of the virtues as well. Any character trait failing to conform to this requirement is, at best, an imperfect virtue. The requirement of seeing things as they are certainly captures the spirit of the knowledge condition placed on virtue. It is a condition that seems quite plausible given Aristotle's arguments regarding the proper functioning of human beings; we *can* see in ways animals cannot. Our excellences must include this unique feature; they must involve rational nature.

Rosalind Hursthouse, in developing her neo-Aristotelian view, also places a knowledge condition on virtue: "The agent must know what she is doing – that she is helping, facing danger, telling the truth, etc." (Hursthouse 1999, p. 124). She argues that this condition is warranted by the observation that without it, mere accidental instances of helping, for example, would count as virtuous, or the uncomprehending actions of a child would also count as virtuous. While these actions should be ruled out, I will argue in Chapter 2 that doing so using such a requirement rules out too much. It may be that a better standard is that we deem the action to be one characteristic of virtue, which in turn is a

disposition to act in ways conducive to the good. To tie it to a disposition is to rule out flukes. It would also go a long way toward ruling out the blind obedience of a child, which is unreliable.

So, in sum, on the traditional classical view, virtue requires practical wisdom, deliberation, and choice. To have an excellence of character, one must deliberate well and make correct choices along the mean. This will require seeing things as they are. In the next chapter, I will discuss the unpalatable consequences of this view more explicitly. One that should be mentioned now, however, is that it implies that if there is moral disagreement with the *phronimos*, that is, the man of practical wisdom, the opponent of the *phronimos* is morally flawed. This is because the opponent would lack the correct perception *necessary* for virtue. J. B. Schneewind considers this to be one of the "misfortunes of virtue," since it will result in lack of respect for one's opponents. Classical virtue theory ". . . gives no distinctive guidance about how to analyze a dispute so as to find the common ground from which agreement can be peacefully reached" (Schneewind 1990, p. 200). The misfortune is that Aristotle's theory seems ill suited to a world in which conflicts proliferate and a world of more egalitarian sentiments.

At the basis of Aristotle's theory is a commitment to perfectionism – a commitment reflected in many writers on value. This is the view that the core defining feature of persons is rationality, and thus that human excellence must involve the best or the most perfect display of rationality. Other features of human life become subordinated to this ideal. My goal in later chapters is to try to articulate a conception of virtue that is more balanced in the sense of reflecting the variety of ways in which humans are capable of excelling.

II. PLEASURE AND THE GOOD LIFE

There is another element of virtuous activity that is vastly important in Aristotle's theory; that, indeed, has become the focus of debate among some modern moral psychologists (see Taylor and Wolfram 1971, Pybus 1991, Sherman 1989 and 1997, Hursthouse 1999). On Aristotle's view, as opposed to Kant's, for example, pleasure (or satisfaction) in acting well is required for virtue. Now pleasure itself, as a feeling or emotion, is not a virtue. Aristotle flatly denies that virtues can *be* emotions, since these do not involve choice, and all real virtues he believes *must*. But pleasure is a necessary by-product of exercising virtue. Intuitively, we can see the appeal of such a requirement, because it is plausible to maintain that a

truly excellent character will *enjoy* (or derive satisfaction from) acting well. Affective or emotional response can reveal a good deal about value (see Stocker and Hegeman 1996). Lack of enjoyment is a sign of defect. Discovering what causes pleasure in a person reveals something about that person's character: ". . . the man who does not enjoy performing noble actions is not a good man at all" (Aristotle 1958, 11099a18).

More specifically, Aristotle holds that part of being virtuous is being "properly affected" (see Kosman 1980). This is because, for an agent to be virtuous, she must have *internalized* good ends. One does this by practice. To become just, one performs just actions until one is *disposed* to perform them. To be so disposed the agent must have adopted just ends, which the actions are aimed at achieving. Thus, she will have the desire now to see justice served and take pleasure in performing just deeds. The pleasure, then, is not a simple feeling, because she is *taking pleasure in* something, that is, aiming at the just ends or bringing them about.[17] Virtue, then, is not simply a disposition to act; it is a disposition to act with certain feelings present.[18] Further, when the agent chooses, the choice will be a deliberative desire; deliberation gives focus to the desire, and this in turn results in proper choice. The doctrine of the mean kicks in: the emotions and actions of the agent must conform to a mean between excess and deficiency.

This requirement serves at least two purposes for Aristotle's overall theory (aside from its having basic intuitive appeal): (1) it incorporates the motivation of pleasure into an account of moral development (though pleasure does not motivate the *already* virtuous agent)[19] and (2) it helps to explain how virtue benefits the virtuous agent – a thesis of great importance to classical writers, and one Plato had difficulty with.

First of all, in his generic discussion of pleasure and pain, Aristotle writes that a crucial feature of moral education is teaching children to feel pleasure and pain "at the proper things" (1958, 1104b10–14). I take it that Aristotle is concerned that people be raised properly so that they are moved by pleasure, to some extent, to do the right and proper thing. He recognizes that pleasure plays a motivational role in human activity and incorporates this into his virtue theory.[20] Aristotle means to say that we should recognize the power of pleasure – but at the same time be suspicious and send it away when it is not proper pleasure.

How can this be made consistent with the position that the virtuous agent acts well "for its own sake", that is, for the sake of the virtue? This seems to divorce pleasure from the exercise of virtue. However, one could regard the pleasure as a by-product of the virtue. When a

person truly has virtue, pleasure accompanies it but does not motivate virtuous action. The importance of pleasure as motivation is simply that Aristotle's virtue theory recognizes this fact in suggesting how to develop morally. Train children to enjoy acting well and they are more likely to act well, and, in acting well, develop the virtue dispositions.

Tying the exercise of virtue to pleasure also serves the second function of giving an explanation of how virtue actually benefits the virtuous agent. For Aristotle it is all a matter of proper training and discipline.

The great divide between Aristotle and modern ethics is the proviso in Aristotle that the flourishing of virtue is the agent's.[21] A consequentialist may be perfectly willing to hold the virtuous life a miserable one. However – to be fair to Aristotle, his thesis comes with a lot of extra baggage that makes it plausible. Virtue is the product of a moral education that involves the cultivation of *pleasurable* responses to virtuous activity.[22] Thus, a child who denies herself all worldly pleasures would have virtue, on Aristotle's view, only if that self-denial was accompanied by pleasure. Thus, misery is generally avoided in the *morally* well-functioning individual (not that Aristotle thinks that one should *totally* deny worldly pleasures).

But there will be situations not only in which pleasure is not *necessary* for virtue, which will be discussed in a later chapter, but also in which it would actually detract from the virtue. Forcing someone to bankrupt his family in order to make restitution to another may be *just*, and morally proper, but no judge should actually derive pleasure from it (except in particularly grave cases; see Stocker 1989). Aristotle recognized that it was a strain to associate pleasure with the exercise of all virtue – especially since some virtuous actions, such as those associated with courage, seem to involve pain instead. But the pleasure will always come into play at the level of appreciating the end that one is aspiring to reach through virtuous activity:

> . . . the end which courage aims at is pleasant, obscured though it is by the attendant circumstances. . . . Accordingly, only insofar as it attains its end is it true to say of every virtue that it is pleasant when practiced. (Aristotle 1958, 117b1–14)

Thus, Aristotle would hold, in the case of the judge, that experiencing pain at the suffering of another may be appropriate, but the judge should nevertheless get pleasure from fairly sentencing a man to prison. Aristotle's strategy of integrating virtue with personal flourishing is tempting, even to my modern sensibility, since it takes some of the sting out of

being good. What makes this view sound odd to us is that – influenced by Kant here – we draw a critical distinction in ethics between moral requirements and personal inclination or self-interest. For Aristotle, in the well-ordered moral personality, these should coincide. We are more used to thinking that people can be moral without necessarily having this other quality of psychological harmony.

It should also be noted that Aristotle seems to have a success condition for virtue leading to pleasure. Of course, there is a good deal of ambiguity in "attaining" an end; and I suppose that if the virtue itself is the end, then maybe success is guaranteed in trying. But I am not sure that Aristotle would agree with that. In that case, courage is pleasant only when the courageous person is successful; even though he may have tried hard to achieve his end but failed, there will be no pleasure. But I can imagine someone attaining some satisfaction, at least, from even a failed attempt. Alex tries his best to save Conrad from the fire and fails. That will generate unhappiness, but there will be some satisfaction in knowing Alex tried; and certainly he feels better about himself than he would feel if he hadn't even tried.

Aristotle's account of virtue is enormously rich. Crucial is the integration of emotion and reason. While he gave emotional response a central place in his ethics, it is clear that, like many classical writers, he viewed reason and rationality as necessary to virtue as well. For Aristotle, virtue required the exercise of intellectual capacities and required the agent to know what he or she is doing – to see things as they are. Thus the connection between virtue and correct perception. This orientation has, for a variety of very compelling reasons, dominated virtue theory.[23] Reason, and the quest for knowledge, have, after all, been defining themes throughout the history of philosophy – and reason believed to be the defining capacity of human beings. Among other things, my aim in the subsequent chapters of this book is to challenge this orientation by critically examining it and by offering an alternative. For on my view, what an agent does *not* see will be important to virtue as well.

2

The Virtues of Ignorance

There is a class of moral virtues that either doesn't require that the agent know that what she is doing is right or, worse, that actually requires that the agent be ignorant. These virtues I am calling the 'virtues of ignorance.' This class includes modesty, blind charity, impulsive courage, and a species of forgiveness, as well as of trust. In this chapter I will be discussing these virtues and alluding to the problems they pose for standard views of virtue, particularly the Aristotelian theory discussed in the previous chapter. I will take modesty as my paradigm case of this type of virtue.

1. MODESTY

"My dear Watson, . . . I cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues. To the logician all things should be seen exactly as they are, and to underestimate one's self is as much a departure from truth as to exaggerate one's own powers." (Sherlock Holmes, from "The Greek Interpreter" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

'Modesty' has at least two senses. There is the sexual sense of modesty, usually considered a womanly virtue, which primarily consists in a chaste and unassertive countenance. There is also the more usual sense that is associated with self-deprecation or an underestimation of one's self-worth. It is this latter sense that concerns me in this chapter. And the previous quotation encapsulates a good deal of what I want to say about this sense of 'modesty.' I largely agree with what Holmes has to say about modesty. A modest person *underestimates* self-worth. It is this claim that I will be arguing for in the first part of this chapter. Modesty is

dependent upon the epistemic defect of not knowing one's own worth. However, unlike Holmes, I do believe that modesty is a virtue. Modesty, as a virtue, therefore undermines the view that no virtue is crucially connected to ignorance.

I anticipate that this statement of mine on the nature of modesty will cause some readers to protest. It is too narrow, they will claim, because we want to count as modest those people who merely understate their self-worth, even though they are fully aware of it. Such people exhibit false modesty, perhaps, but not sincere modesty. In any case, to claim that my account of modesty is too narrow will not harm the larger point that I wish to make – that modesty is a virtue that undermines the thesis that no virtue is constituted by, or based upon, ignorance. For it is granted by all that there are some cases of modesty where the person does underestimate self-worth, that is, where the person lacks an accurate understanding of himself. At least some cases of modesty involve the epistemic defect I referred to previously. Before going into this issue in more detail, I would like to discuss several alternative analyses of modesty.

A desired feature of any account of modesty is that it explain the oddity of

(1) I am modest.

(1) seems to be oddly self-defeating. If I were to utter (1), charitable persons would think that I was joking. Others would think that I was being nonsensical. Each of the three accounts of modesty that I will be considering will be able to analyze (1), but two will be ruled out due to other problems.

There are three accounts of modesty that seem to be initially plausible. The first one that I shall discuss is the behavioral account. On this analysis, modesty is equated with some sort of behavior, such as the careful avoidance of boastfulness. This account could explain the oddity of (1), since in uttering (1) the utterer would be bragging. Therefore, his behavior would serve as evidence against the truth of the utterance – as in the case, for example, of someone saying "I don't talk." So the behavioral account is able to handle this particular desideratum.

If, however, the behavioral account were correct, propositions such as

(2) Robinson Crusoe does not brag, but Robinson Crusoe is not modest.

would be contradictions, since to not brag *is* to be modest. But (2) makes sense, and this would be the case with any sort of behavior one is inclined to equate with modesty. Suppose Robinson Crusoe has just been marooned on his desert island. He builds himself a house, grows his own food, makes his own clothes, and in the end develops a very high, though accurate, opinion of himself. Yet he does not display any 'immodest' behavior such as bragging. Nevertheless, Robinson Crusoe is not modest because he still retains a very high opinion of himself; he thinks he's just wonderful. One possible objection to this example is that we could say that Robinson Crusoe has a *disposition to brag*, but since no one is on the island with him, he merely lacks the opportunity. But it is not difficult to imagine a man who, though immodest, is not disposed to brag or exhibit immodest behavior. He may, for instance, think such behavior in bad taste while still retaining an accurate view of his self-worth.

The second account of modesty I shall call the 'understatement' account. This account is actually a variety of the first. On this account a modest person knowingly understates his self-worth, perhaps because he wishes to avoid being a braggart. This analysis can also explain the oddity of (1). By uttering (1) while knowing himself to be modest, the agent would not be understating and, thus, not modest. For this reason, the expression of (1) is odd. This account, however, is vulnerable to a serious objection: the analysis is an account of false modesty rather than genuine modesty. If a person understates her self-worth and others had reason to believe that she knows herself to be better than she says she is, they would tend to call this *false* modesty on her part.

I favor a third analysis, which I have chosen to call the 'underestimation' account of modesty. On this account the modest person underestimates his self-worth to some limited degree. If he speaks, then he understates the truth, but he does so unknowingly. This entails that the modest person is ignorant, to a certain degree, with regard to his self-worth.[1] He underrates himself and therefore takes only a portion of the credit due him. It is important to note here that the modest person must still think his character and deeds to be of some worth. For instance, the person who thinks he has done something wicked when in fact he has done something good is not modest. The degree of underestimation must be limited in order to differentiate modesty from a vice such as self-deprecation. For example, the woman who sinks into a depression and views herself as a completely inadequate mother is not modest. She is exhibiting the vice of self-deprecation because her estimate dramati-

cally misses the mark. However, if Albert Einstein viewed himself as a great physicist, just not the greatest physicist of the 20th century – that's modesty. He would be mistaken but not dramatically off the mark. Also note that this account is not a low estimation account. Underestimation and low estimation are not the same. A modest person could still have a rather high opinion of herself, just not as high as she is entitled to have. This account seems plausible to me because sincerity seems to be a necessary condition for genuine modesty, and the person who underestimates his self-worth is sincere in understating it.

This account can also explain the oddity of (1). Modesty requires a lack of knowledge regarding self-worth. In general, when one asserts p, one is suggesting that one knows or at least believes p. In uttering (1) I imply a realization of my lack of knowledge with regard to modesty, making it no lack of knowledge. It is self-defeating to utter (1). Like Moore's "I went, but I don't believe I did," (1) can be *true*, but I cannot believe it to be true or utter the sentence sensibly (Moore 1968, p. 543). I can be modest, but I cannot *know* it.[2]

What the analysis comes down to is this: for a person to be modest, she must be ignorant with regard to her self-worth. She must think herself less deserving, or less worthy, than she actually is (though it will turn out that how she makes the error is relevant). Since modesty is generally considered to be a virtue, it would seem that this virtue rests upon an epistemic defect.

It could be objected that this analysis of modesty is too narrow, that there are cases of modesty where the person is aware of his self-worth but simply doesn't want to talk about it. This person might make an effort to avoid discussing himself because he finds it embarrassing. Is such a person modest? No. Modesty is something that is internal; it is basically an attitude of ignorance that one has toward oneself. The sort of person mentioned previously is simply abstaining from a type of behavior, that is, he is not talking about himself, and abstaining from this type of behavior can be correlated with modesty but does not itself constitute modesty. If we regard behavior as a sufficient condition for modesty, then we will include cases where a person is insincere in exhibiting 'modest' behavior; if we regard behavior as a necessary condition for modesty, then we will be leaving out cases where a person is modest, or at least has modest dispositions, but doesn't exhibit behavior that can be characterized as modest (though perhaps he does not act immodestly). The reason most people believe modesty to be largely behavioral is that behavior is good evidence for telling whether a person

is modest or not. My point simply is that (modest) behavior should not be *equated* with modesty.

Even so, a response to this analysis will be that a person can be modest without talking about himself at all; that is, the person in question isn't merely exhibiting certain behavior that constitutes modesty. Rather, the behavior springs from an inclination to avoid discussing himself, even though he has an accurate assessment of his accomplishments and character. Isn't this modesty? In my view, it is another form of false modesty, though it is not as ostentatious. Consider an analogy with lying. The sort of 'modesty' described previously would be analogous to lying by omission. It is false modesty by omission rather than commission.[3]

Another alternative might be the disposition or tendency to avoid thinking about oneself *at all*. Thus, one has ignorance but not underestimation (since there is no estimation). While such a trait would still count as a virtue of ignorance, it would not fit the specific account of modesty developed here. This alternative highlights a distinction that could be made between active ignorance and simple lack of knowledge. While I want to argue that modesty as underestimation involves active ignorance, the weaker view is adequate to make the major point that virtue can involve ignorance.

This alternative, however, doesn't seem to capture what we think of as modesty. For that we would want to know what the putatively modest person would be disposed to believe if pressed and if provided with evidence. That is, if it is merely an accident that the person lacks self-knowledge of the relevant sort, we are reluctant to call that person modest. If, however, he would underestimate even when given the opportunity, our view is different. Thus, if we believe that the value of modesty involves being disposed to *not* rank oneself, then the person who simply fails to rank is not thereby modest. Imagine someone who doesn't rank but also has mediocre talents. So the case must involve someone who is quite good but who fails to rank. Here it seems important to know why the person is failing to rank. Does it just not occur to him? In this case, he doesn't seem modest because the failure to rank, when corrected, could lead to overestimation or an accurate ranking. Does he fail to rank because he thinks such comparisons are unimportant or uninformative? Even so, there is an evaluation that he'd be able to give if pressed, and we'd want to know *that* before determining whether or not he counts as modest.

Nevertheless, the underestimation analysis could also be criticized for

being too broad; that is, there might be cases that fulfill my conditions for modesty but that we would not want to call examples of modesty. Consider, for example, a person who is involved in a very important project but does not realize that his role is crucial, that he is doing a very good job, and so on. But if someone *told* him just how important he is, he would develop an inflated view of himself because he is prone to conceit. Nevertheless, he doesn't realize how important he is. Most of us would not call this a case of modesty because the person in question is disposed to conceit, and the fact that he doesn't realize how good he is does not erase that fact. What I want to say about modesty is that it is not enough to be ignorant of self-worth; one also has to be disposed to be modest. A modest person would simply not believe that he was that good. Thus, the way in which a person makes the error does seem relevant – not just any underestimation counts. The modest person is not someone who accidentally underestimates himself. Thus, the modest person is someone who is disposed to underestimate self-worth to some limited extent, in spite of the available evidence. Suppose Roger takes a history test that is self-graded, and he mistakenly gives himself a score of 12 out of 20 when in fact his correct score is 19 out of 20. On this basis he judges himself to be a poor historian. Roger is not modest. The modest person doesn't pick up on signs of her own merit; she is simply insensitive to her own merit. This provides a good contrast with vanity, since the vain person is one who is highly sensitive to signs of personal merit.

What about cases where the purportedly modest person is correct and everyone else is wrong? Suppose that Jane's values are substantially correct – she believes that one ought to keep one's promises, and that one ought not to lie, and, by and large, she manages to stick to these precepts. Yet, everyone else thinks that, though these things are important, they are not very important, and that people like Jane are absolute saints and true pillars of virtue. Jane denies that she is a saint; she believes that she is simply doing what is minimally required of a moral agent. Is Jane being modest? I don't think that such a scenario qualifies as an example of modesty. Consider another analogous case. Steve is one of a few responsible people living in a world of drugs and corruption. Unlike the vast majority of people around him, Steve is not a drug addict and manages to stay sober most of the time. Steve correctly believes that one should be self-sufficient and responsible. Those around him think that these qualities are not so important. They are wrong; Steve is right. Unlike others around him, Steve can also tie his shoes without assistance

(this is part of his self-reliance). The others think that he is a god because of this skill. Steve thinks that this is no big deal, and he is correct. Steve is not modest, even though everyone around him thinks that he is wonderful while he denies that this is the case.

Yet another suggestion is that the modest person is one who realizes that he is lucky. Such a person does not take credit for his achievements; rather, he realizes that, if not for luck, he would not have been nearly as successful as he is. His view of his own worth is accurate; his view of his accomplishments is accurate; he simply does not feel that he deserves any special credit for them. Perhaps he realizes that were it not for the efforts of others, he would not have been successful, and he points this out whenever he wins a prize or whenever someone praises him. The suggestion is that this constitutes modesty. Note that it can't be the case that he's entitled to more credit than he believes he deserves. That would be a mistake. The modesty consists in pointing out the truth of how much his success depends upon his good luck and the efforts of others.

However, since a person can realize that luck operates in his life without being modest, it would seem that this recognition of luck is not sufficient for modesty. Imagine a person whose life is miserable and who attributes this to bad luck. He knows that he could have been president if only certain unfortunate things hadn't happened in his political career. Such a person is not modest. The proponent of this view could restrict his analysis to cases where the person's life is going very well, but then it seems odd to preclude the unhappy from the virtue of modesty. Or the analysis could be restricted to cases where the person recognizes that he's the beneficiary of good luck (and thus preclude recognition of bad luck). This also doesn't seem sufficient. Consider the criminal who recognizes that, brilliant criminal mastermind though he may be, it is sheer good luck that he hasn't ended up in jail. This isn't modesty. But perhaps the claim is that this recognition of luck is necessary (though not sufficient). This fails given the cases I've discussed earlier. The underestimation cases may or may not involve a recognition of one's good luck. Further, most cases will actually be mixed. Einstein might have realized that in some ways he was lucky, and that his work benefited from the work of others, but he might also have realized that in other respects he was unlucky and labored under burdens that others did not have (an unhappy family life, for example). The luck issue is present in some cases, but it is beside the point.[4]

Recently, G. F. Schueler has suggested that the modest person is

someone who doesn't care about his or her genuine accomplishments insofar as they are his or her accomplishments (Schueler 1997). That is, a person can be modest about her book and still care about how well it is received, reviewed, and so on; she just doesn't care about it insofar as it reflects on *her*. Schueler feels that this account captures what is crucial to our ascriptions of modesty in that the modest person lacks an attitude of concern about the worth of accomplishments – yet it doesn't commit one to the view that she doesn't know the worth of her accomplishments. Thus, it is a desire-based rather than a belief-based account of modesty.

A desire-based account represents an interesting move in characterizing modesty, but I don't think that it will work. Schueler fails to make an important distinction between not caring *intrinsically* and not caring *derivatively*. For example, Martha may not care (intrinsically) about what her colleagues think of her regarding her accomplishments and yet care (derivatively) insofar as it affects her merit raise.

Consider how the distinction is relevant to Schueler's analysis: imagine a Ghandi-like figure, someone who is deeply concerned with promoting freedom and peace and who is mild and unassuming regarding his own accomplishments. This person cares intensely about how others perceive him and his work because he realizes that the success of his mission depends upon their perception of it as worthwhile and, to some extent, their perception of *him* as a morally worthy individual. He needs to set a good example. He needs others to think well of him. Surely such a person could still qualify as modest.

Schueler could respond by appealing to the distinction made earlier. He could say that modesty involves not caring intrinsically about how people evaluate one in light of one's genuine accomplishments. However, this will not solve another problem. The account, even so modified, is too broad. It would include cases of manifest immodesty.

Consider the following case: Robert is a very talented artist, regarded to be the best new painter in America. Robert is also convinced of his own supreme worth and the worth of his works, which are genuine accomplishments. It is also the case that he doesn't care at all about what people think of him in terms of these accomplishments; he isn't concerned with impressing others with his work or with the fact that he is the one who created it. This is because he has contempt for their puny capacities for aesthetic appreciation. I doubt such a person could accurately be called modest, yet such a person fulfills Schueler's criteria.

Though I believe that Schueler's positive thesis fails, I also believe that he's raised an interesting challenge to account for the value of modesty as a virtue, and this is an issue I turn to next.

II. WHY WE VALUE MODESTY

In Section I of this chapter, I discussed my views on modesty as a disposition to underestimate self-worth. This is how I want to characterize all sincere cases of modesty, but as I pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, I do not need this strong claim in order to be able to make my primary point. All I need is the extremely plausible claim that some cases of modesty involve underestimation of self-worth. Now I want to investigate what sort of virtue modesty is.

Modesty could be considered to be what Michael Slote has chosen to call a "dependent" virtue. A dependent virtue is a virtue only insofar as it is accompanied by some other virtue – the modest person has to be modest about *something*.[5] Usually this something will involve some other desirable trait, like being hardworking or intelligent. This is important in evaluation. When we say "Jones is modest," we usually mean that Jones is modest with respect to the good in question, not all goods. Jones could be modest about his work but not modest about his children, for example. This holds true for other virtues, I should think; for example, a parent could be cowardly about protecting himself but display immense courage when his children are in danger. This merely illustrates that a person's virtues and vices often take objects, and those objects are many times other goods.

Modesty is a dependent ethical virtue, with an ethical value consisting in an underestimation of the self in some respect or with respect to some desirable trait. But how does this underestimation have ethical value? To answer this question, I want to make use of a distinction between ethical considerations in evaluation and nonethical considerations – a distinction that has been discussed and elaborated by Bernard Williams (1985).

For Williams, the boundary surrounding and delimiting ethical considerations from other considerations is blurry. Notions such as 'obligation' and 'duty' are within the domain of ethical considerations, and virtues are also taken to be included in this domain. On Williams's account, when a person performs a virtuous act, he rarely does it *because* it is virtuous. Modesty fits this description, since the modest person cannot even know that he or she is being modest. Williams himself writes, ". . . it is a notorious truth that a modest person does not act

under the title of modesty" (ibid., p. 10). Williams would therefore agree with the oddity of (1). This observation is true of other virtues as well – generosity, for instance. The generous person does not do the generous thing *because* he realizes it is generous; rather, he does the generous thing out of consideration for others. This observation should reinforce my account of modesty, but with a slight twist. With modesty, not only does the agent act without knowing he is modest, the agent doesn't even realize that he is underestimating himself. Others can say of him that he is underestimating his worth, and for this reason he is modest, but he cannot do this. The generous person does not act because of the generosity of the act, but presumably he can still describe the action accurately and perhaps even realize that the act is generous while he is doing it. Thus, this analysis of modesty, and of other virtues of ignorance, entails that an asymmetry exists between the self-ascription of the virtue and other-ascription of it. I can ascribe the virtue to another, but I cannot coherently and sincerely ascribe it to myself.[6]

A virtue is a disposition to act in a certain way, and usually not to perform an act because it is virtuous alone.[7] This observation alone should rule out false modesty as a virtue, since a person who understates self-worth is doing so because he believes it to be *modest* behavior. False modesty may be polite or expedient, but it is not a moral virtue because it is too self-conscious an act. At the very best, it may be considered an aesthetic virtue in light of the fact that modest behavior is considered polite – but the understatement is not sincere underestimation. The point here is that false modesty can be used in an evaluation of an agent's character, but it is really evaluation of a nonethical sort unless the person exhibiting it has unscrupulous motives for displaying modest behavior or perhaps wholly altruistic ones. This is because the falsely modest person exhibits the behavior he does because it conforms to expectations regarding modesty. There is something "put on" about false modesty that gives it the flavor of insincerity.[8] There may be several explanations for why it has been considered a moral virtue. The explanation that I shall consider is derived from Aristotle:

> . . . a man who loves truth and who is truthful where nothing is at stake will be even more truthful when something is at stake. He will scrupulously avoid falsehood as being base. . . . He is more inclined to understating the truth. That is clearly in better taste, since exaggeration is obnoxious. (1958, 1127b4–8)

Of course, here Aristotle is talking about understating the truth to avoid being considered a braggart. The element of Aristotle's view that I am

considering here is this: that modesty (false or sincere) is considered a virtue because it is negatively correlated with some behavior that is a vice. Exaggerating self-worth, for example, would be such a vice. In order to escape this vice, one might strive for modesty. And modesty is considered a virtue because a person who is modest, even insincerely or falsely modest, does not exhibit the vice of exaggeration.

This account, however, is mistaken because it conflates false modesty with sincere modesty. One virtue of my account is that it does treat the two as separate, since the sincere cases of modesty involve ignorance.[9] Since modesty necessarily involves ignorance, it is also necessarily involuntary in nature.[10]

Modesty can also lead to a form of self-denial. A modest person's underestimation can rest upon a mistaken comparison of herself to others. Sometimes this mistaken comparison will lead her to think herself less deserving than others. Thus, when goods are scarce, she will be more inclined to give up her share for the sake of others whom she believes to be more deserving. Indeed, this sort of self-denial seems characteristic of the modest personality.[11] However, one must be careful to distinguish modesty from self-deprecation or servility.[12] A person is self-deprecating when she goes too far in underestimating herself or when she has an accurate but low opinion of self-worth that causes her to engage in humiliating behavior. Servility, on the other hand, is largely behavioral; a person can be servile while having a very high opinion of her self-worth. An example that comes to mind is a servant who must be servile to keep his job. For an agent to be modest, as opposed to self-deprecating, he may underestimate self-worth, but to a limited degree.

In understanding virtue, a distinction must be made between the cause of a particular trait being a virtue and the object of the virtue (what the person has in mind in exercising the virtue). In the case of modesty, the modest agent is modest because he underestimates himself, and this leads to some good that is valued by those he interacts with (e.g., an easing of tensions, lack of jealousies). But the agent only intends to give an accurate assessment of himself. So, what explains why a given trait is a virtue is simply that it is conducive (more conducive than not) to the good. Appealing to the agent's reasons simply gives one an indirect way to providing this sort of explanation, insofar as acting with certain reasons tends to be more or less conducive to the good. To claim, as the Aristotelians do, that moral virtue requires that one act according to some right reason, or for the sake of virtue itself, and not some other end, is to have gotten it partly right and partly wrong. While it is true

that, though virtue leads to flourishing and that this is crucial to making a given trait a virtue, the agent need not act with that in mind at all. That is part of the explanation, for the Aristotelian, of why the trait is a virtue, but the agent need not act with the end of flourishing in mind – and, indeed, that seems potentially precluded by his claim that the virtuous agent acts for the sake of the virtue itself. However, the problem is to set limits on what sorts of reasons are acceptable without appealing to how those reasons enable one to achieve the good.

Modesty, as mentioned earlier, seems to help us avoid the vice of overranking. People in general have a tendency to rank and estimate worth relative to others, and this tendency is destructive. The modest person is one who does not spend a lot of time ranking, who does not feel the need to do so, and thus remains ignorant to the full extent of self-worth (to a limited extent). The modest person has a charm similar to that of the unaffected person. Someone who doesn't compare his appearance to those of others around him and, even better, seems unaware of it seems less likely to provoke an envious response in others. Thus, modesty involves ignorance, and the ignorance is valuable because of what it indicates about a person's ranking behavior.

A critic might try the following: you haven't shown that it is ignorance itself we value, only something else – restraint or failure to rank – that is correlated with the ignorance. There are two strategies for me to pursue here. First, even if we can establish one case in which modesty involves ignorance, I will have a counterexample to the claim that virtue can never involve ignorance (given that one believes modesty to be a virtue). However, I would like to go further than this and claim that it is the ignorance that we value. Imagine someone who believes that he's the best, though he has not gone through a ranking exercise. He may know because God told him or because he read it in the *New York Times*. It is correct, too. Thus, he knows he is the best. Any professions of inferiority on his account would constitute false modesty. If one were to find out that he knew and yet professed inferiority, one would be offended. Again, I believe that this has to do with feeling that one has been patronized or condescended to.

One might also try to argue that ignorance is something that we don't value at all, that it is intrinsically bad. First, I don't believe it is intrinsically bad if what that means is that ignorance itself is always bad. I am ignorant of the names and addresses of most of the people walking by my office window, but I don't view that as something bad. Further, I believe that there are plenty of situations in which not only is ignorance

considered not bad, it is actually valued. Take the case of being unaffected; ignorance of one's own beauty is often said to enhance it. We also value innocence in children, which is a form of ignorance. So, the general principle that ignorance is always bad seems to be violated by a number of counterexamples. My account of modesty, and of the other virtues of ignorance, simply adds to the list of counterexamples.

III. BLIND CHARITY

The preceding analysis illustrates the sort of virtue that I am interested in discussing here, and I suspect that the class of these character traits is really quite large. Another example is a virtue that I am going to call 'blind charity.' This sort of charity is charity in thought rather than charity in deed. A person who is in blind charity with others is a person who sees the good in them but does not see the bad. *Blind* charity differs from charity in that it is usually the case that when one is merely charitable toward another, one favors that person in some respect, *in spite of* perceived defects or lack of desert. Blind charity is a disposition not to see the defects and to focus on the virtues of persons. A good example of a person exemplifying this virtue is the character of Jane Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1981). Jane is the sister of Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of the novel. In the following bit of dialogue, Elizabeth and Jane are discussing Jane's possession of blind charity; Elizabeth finds it quite remarkable:

> "Oh! you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life."
>
> "I would wish not to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think."
>
> "I know you do; and it is *that* which makes the wonder. With *your* good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough; one meets it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design – to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad – belongs to you alone. . . ." (pp. 14–15)

What can be said of such a character? Elizabeth, in this passage, seems to be mildly exasperated with Jane, but it is clear from the rest of the novel that she views Jane as one of the few truly good people in the world. And it is in large part due to Jane's sweetness and her disposition

to be blindly charitable. This sort of charity is a charity that cannot be reflective; one cannot decide to be charitable in this way and grudgingly do it. It is a virtue much like modesty because it requires that one be unknowing about something. Like modesty also, blind charity can be selectively directed, though Jane Bennet happens to be blindly charitable in general. Blind charity is therefore a virtue of ignorance, as is sincere modesty. The ignorance of blind charity is ignorance about what is bad in other people, whereas modesty involves ignorance about the full extent of one's own goodness. These virtues of ignorance are involuntary in the sense that in a particular situation one does not choose, for example, to be charitable in the previously discussed sense because one cannot know what to be charitable about. It may be that to cultivate these virtues, one would need to practice self-deception. One might decide to cultivate a modest character by cultivating certain beliefs about oneself. But since these beliefs will have to be false, this process of cultivation is a process of self-deception. One might hold the position that modesty is a true moral virtue where it arises spontaneously; it is only when it is cultivated that it cannot be considered a moral virtue. This is a decidedly non-Aristotelian and non-Kantian position to take. Here we would have a case where a person who tries to act virtuously necessarily fails at it. The person naturally disposed to be modest or blindly charitable succeeds.

Critics of my view, such as Owen Flanagan and Daniel Statman, as well as Schueler, have made much of the fact that the virtues of ignorance either are not voluntarily acquired or are acquired through self-deception (Flanagan 1990; Statman 1992; Schueler 1997). They regard this as evidence that the traits are not in fact virtues. However, the fact that in many instances they may not be voluntarily acquired does not count against their status as moral virtues. Suppose that a mad scientist invents a machine that turned a person's vices into virtues – so that the pickpocket is turned honest, the cruel father is made kind, and so on. None of these traits would be acquired voluntarily, yet it still seems that if the former pickpocket is no longer disposed to steal, and is disposed instead to honest dealing with others, then he *is* honest and has that virtue.

Further, the fact that this type of virtue may only be voluntarily acquired through self-deception doesn't seem to be a problem. As with other-deception, there may be circumstances in which self-deception is good because the end warrants it. Still, some will have difficulty thinking of ignorance as potentially good. Possibly this has to do with some

intuition that ignorance is intrinsically bad, whatever instrumental goods are served by it. However, as noted earlier, this seems unlikley. There are lots of things I don't know, that I'm ignorant of, but that ignorance doesn't diminish me. I don't know the current number of coins in my pocket. I don't believe that this is in and of itself bad.

IV. TRUST

In "Trust and Rationality," Judith Baker has presented an account of trust that makes it look very like a virtue of ignorance (Baker 1987). The idea behind her analysis is this: isn't it the case that if you trust someone, you believe her, even against the evidence? Indeed, this seems almost necessary for trust, since if one does not believe x (against the evidence), then one cannot be said to trust x.

There are three kinds of trust that Baker outlines in her article, only one of which strikes her as problematic for theories of rationality. The first sense of trust she relates to a type of policy: ". . . taking people on trust . . . is one form of policy, of deciding to *act-as-if* something were true in a given class of cases, but not fully believing it" (p. 2) In this case, we take something on trust because checking it out is too difficult. For example, when the electric company reads my meter and claims that I owe them $20.56, I trust them. But this is not because I believe that the electric company has a good character. It is just the case that there is no evidence that indicates that the company is corrupt, and checking out my own meter would be too time-consuming. Baker also points out that the person who is suspicious, who checks out every detail, is usually judged to be unpleasantly obsessive.

The second kind of trust is one where an agent uses evidence to decide whether or not to trust someone, but it is indirect evidence. Baker calls this a "non-ordinary" route to the truth. For example, when I open the door to a vacuum cleaner salesman, I may decide to trust him on the basis of his 'honest face.' His honest face may be evidence of an honest character, but the evidence is indirect at best. At any rate, my trust is not based on direct evidence, like a personal acquaintance with the man or character references provided by people who do know him.

The third sort of trust is the problematic sort. Baker calls this "special" trust or "friendship" trust. Suppose that Anne, a close friend of Brenda's, has been arrested by the police for murder – and there is a great deal of evidence indicating that Anne is guilty. For Brenda to trust Anne, she

must believe in her avowed innocence, even against the evidence. She must be committed to Anne's innocence. She must think that there has to be some alternative way of explaining the evidence, some way that would free Anne of suspicion. But she recognizes the validity of the evidence. It is not the case that she questions the evidence itself.

Trust is not quite a variety of blind charity for the following reason: one can believe that one is trusting – that is, one can recognize that one's belief in x goes against the evidence. Thus, trust does not involve the same sort of ignorance involved in modesty and blind charity. Yet, if one's belief goes against the evidence, it cannot be a justified belief. Thus, even if it is a true belief, it cannot be knowledge. This virtue is marked not by active ignorance, but rather by lack of knowledge. It is not a straightforward virtue of ignorance, but it is nonetheless quite interesting as a virtue that in some cases cannot involve knowledge. In the case of the other virtues of ignorance, the agent's belief structure is such that the agent does not recognize the belief as going against the evidence.

Still, there are two ways one can view this case. Baker is in fact describing two different traits. This sort of trust can be like blind charity – that is, the person who has trust fails to believe the strength of the evidence against her friend. Or this sort of trust can involve the person's failing to take the articulated evidence, which goes against her friend, as the only evidence. In this case, the person who is trusting really believes that there is evidence that her friend could not be guilty – evidence based on years of knowing that person, perhaps, evidence that is not easily articulated. It is this latter form of trust in which the person recognizes that her belief goes against the evidence, where "goes against the evidence" is understood as "goes against the articulated evidence." But even more strongly, the friend might believe that it would be wrong to even look for the counterevidence.

v. FORGIVE AND FORGET

Another example of a virtue of ignorance is a tendency not to hold grudges, which involves forgetting harms that have been committed against one. Imagine a situation in which Jones has harmed Smith – perhaps he broke a promise, or betrayed a trust. But Jones feels remorse, and genuinely desires that Smith forgive him, so that they can resume their friendship. And Smith wants to forgive him, perhaps because he feels that this betrayal is really uncharacteristic of Jones. So he tries to

forget about the harmful incident. The forgetfulness is crucial to the sort of forgiveness that Jones aspires to. The old sayings "Forgive and forget" and "Let's just forget about it" are not without significance.[13] The person who feels that another has forgotten the harm is far more likely to feel comfortable around that person and to feel really forgiven. This is because he knows that the harm will not be resurrected to strain the relationship. As the wrong becomes less vivid to the wronged person, the relationship becomes more comfortable.

It may be that what is really desired in these cases is that a person not dwell on a wrong he or she has suffered, especially when the wrongdoer was acting out of character, because then the offense is not likely to be repeated. If the agent forgets the wrong, then it is sure to be the case that he does not dwell upon it.

Nietzsche, in *The Use and Abuse of History*, claimed that forgetfulness was necessary for happiness and human excellence:

> Forgetfulness is a property of all action. . . . One who wished to feel everything historically would be like a man forcing himself to refrain from sleep or a beast who had to live by chewing a continual cud. Thus even a happy life is possible without remembrance, as the beast shows: but life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetfulness . . . there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of "historical sense," that injures and finally destroys the living thing, be it a man or a people or a system of culture. (1957, pp. 6–7)

Nietzschean considerations aside, if we were to remember the bad things that had happened to us during our lives, we would be overwhelmed. We would undoubtedly fall prey to despair. This is true between people as well. One can't say where exactly to draw the line. How much should people forget? The answer here will be instrumental. It is good to forget harms when remembering them does no good and, indeed will harm oneself or others. For example, in Dorothy Sayers's *Gaudy Night*, Harriet Vane is in the unfortunate position of having mistaken suspicions of a woman of good character. This woman, Miss Hillyard, is later exonerated. Harriet feels bad, especially since she herself had been in a similar position at one point in her life. Here is an excerpt of her conversation with Miss Hillyard:

> [Miss Hillyard:] "We are all feeling rather overwrought. I wish we could get at the truth of it. I understand that you now accept my account of my movements last night."
>
> "Absolutely. It was inexcusable of me not to have verified my data."
>
> "Appearances can be very misleading," said Miss Hillyard.

There was a pause.
"Well," said Harriet at last, "I hope we may forget all this." (1936, p. 347)

Forgetting the suspicion would be best for their future relationship and, for Miss Hillyard, necessary for her forgiveness of Harriet.

VI. IMPULSIVE COURAGE

There are two sorts of ignorance at work with the virtues of ignorance: propositional ignorance and inferential ignorance. "Propositional ignorance" is ignorance of the facts, and "inferential ignorance" is ignorance of how the facts fit together. For example, one might have all of the facts down properly but reason fallaciously from the facts or fail to use the facts at all in any sort of reasoning process.

Impulsive courage is an interesting example of a virtue of ignorance because it seems to involve inferential ignorance alone. The impulsively courageous person possesses certain relevant facts of his situation, yet fails to put these facts together in order to reach the conscious conclusion that he himself is in danger.

A good illustration of this sort of person is one who, perhaps, fears for the persons trapped inside a burning building but does not fear for himself, since he fails to represent a danger to himself. The fear for others may impel him to act, but he does not think at all of his own predicament and of what he is doing. In other words, since he fails to perceive any danger to himself, he isn't overcoming any fear or sense of danger. He is acting impulsively.[14]

Is this a genuine case of acting in a state of the relevant sort of ignorance? Someone might claim that it is not, because even though the agent lacked *occurrent* knowledge of the danger that he was in, he still had *dispositional* knowledge of the danger. "Occurrent knowledge" is knowledge that is actually being manifested in some way by the agent. "Dispositional knowledge" is knowledge that the agent has that is not being exercised at a particular time. For example, a sleeping biologist knows all sorts of things about biology, but the knowledge is merely dispositional, since, while sleeping, the biologist is not aware of at least much of what he knows. Upon reading this sentence, the reader will have occurrent knowledge of the fact that Paris is the capital of France, while a few seconds ago the chances are that this knowledge was merely dispositional.

One has to be careful when invoking this distinction. What exactly is

it that the agent has dispositional knowledge of in this case? It is knowledge that burning buildings are dangerous to those who enter them. He has occurrent knowledge that the building in front of him is burning, and dispositional knowledge that burning buildings in general are dangerous to enter, but he has failed to put these facts together, and this is why he fails to represent the danger to himself in those circumstances. He may have dispositional knowledge, but he fails to attend to it, so it never registers and becomes occurrent. For this reason, it doesn't figure into his deliberations at all. One way to think of this is that no reference to the danger to himself figures in the practical syllogism that leads him to act. This breaches a total evidence requirement, since the danger to himself is relevant information. This is why I refer to the ignorance as inferential.

Even Aristotle, my primary target in this chapter, seems open to the view that impulsive courage counts as a virtue:

> . . . it is a mark of even greater courage to be fearless and unruffled when suddenly faced with a terrifying situation than when the danger is clear beforehand. For the reaction is more prone to be due to a characteristic, since it is less dependent on preparation. When we see what is coming we can make a choice based on calculation and guided by reason, but when a situation arises suddenly our actions are determined by our characteristics. (1958, 1117a17–22)

When faced suddenly with a situation that calls for action, the agent may just act – without pausing to register salient facts of the situation and weigh alternatives. That is, he acts without due regard to the danger. In such situations, this is the courageous way to proceed. It is really the only fruitful way to proceed even though it is fraught with more risk, perhaps, than situations where deliberation is possible and is taken advantage of.

Aristotle's case needn't be a pure case of impulsive courage, since whether or not the agent represents the danger to himself is left open. Still, this case is a problem for Aristotle because of the nature of his account of choice (which is a requirement for action stemming from virtue) – which is generally a commonsense account. On Aristotle's view, choice involves deliberation and "search." Thus, in making a choice, the agent weighs alternatives. Yet in this particular case, though the man has other options (e.g., run away), he doesn't consider them. He does not ". . . make a choice based on calculation and guided by reason. . . ."[15] He simply responds to the situation.

John Cooper argues that it is a mistake to hold that moral decision

making requires, in all instances, deliberation. Instead he argues that there is a weak connection between deliberation and moral decision:

> For it might be said that though the virtuous person does not, in general, arrive at his moral policies by any process of deliberation, he must, on demand, be able to defend his acceptance of them, however, he may in fact have become committed to them. . . . [E]ven when there has actually been no deliberation, the attempt to explain what one has done will take the form of setting out a course of deliberation by which one might have decided to do what one has done, and which contains the reasons one actually had in acting as one did. (Cooper 1975, p. 9)

On this view, one has to have reasons, but no deliberation from those reasons is necessary – though the moral agent must be able, after the fact, to reconstruct a deliberative process using his reasons. I fail to see the charm of such a requirement, however. Reconstructing deliberation that never took place hardly seems relevant. The articulate are considered virtuous, whereas the inarticulate are not. Now, it may be a good *epistemic* point to make: I can only tell that Jane Bennet has virtue if she is able to communicate to me the deliberation that would have taken place given her reasons. That makes it much easier to assess the virtue, given that Jane is honest and competent (one has to be careful, since experimental evidence suggests that people often report their reasons inaccurately, even when sincere). But surely such reconstructions are beside the point in actually having the virtue.[16] A person who acts for the sake of helping others, because their plight makes her feel bad and stirs her sympathies, is surely virtuous, even though, when asked after the fact, her only response is "I had to do it; I wouldn't have felt right otherwise."[17]

Further, the process that Cooper is describing is difficult to understand. The agent has reasons but is not deliberating. So, where are the reasons located in his consciousness? Are they just external? But these reasons don't necessarily provide a good explanation of behavior. Intuitively, citing what would have been a good reason is not the same as citing a reason that actually moved me to act. The process of constructing a deliberative process after the fact looks like a process of resurrecting or dredging up reasons, in which case the process looks a lot like rationalization. If the reasons are in fact causing the action somehow, then isn't there some kind of deliberation going on? If they are not causing the action, then how does the agent get any credit? Perhaps what Cooper is ruling out is a sort of calculative form of deliberation.

The agent has a reason for rushing into the burning building – it is the good thing to do. He is still acting for the sake of the good. However, he is not calculating alternative courses of action, since he lacks the time. If this is so, then it is more difficult for Aristotle to distinguish the reckless from the brave; don't reckless individuals often frequently also act for the sake of the good?

It may be that my fierce opposition to Aristotle on this point has to do with impulses against elitism. Such intellectual requirements in the moral sphere seem excessive. Excellence in one realm is taken as crucial for that in another. Thus, the class of the virtuous is narrowed, but narrowed because of a false insistence that in morality reason is *all*-important. It *is* important because it enables people to plan efficiently and carry out those plans efficiently. But there are some contexts in which it has little place because it has little function. To insist, somehow, that it must really be operating in those contexts, or to deny virtue where it isn't operating, is to adhere to an unhappy and overzealous commitment to its importance.

VII. VALUING THE VIRTUES OF IGNORANCE

All of the virtues of ignorance require that the agent possessing the virtue have a propensity to believe something against the evidence. In the case of modesty, the propensity is to underestimate oneself in spite of the evidence. In the case of impulsive courage, the disposition is not to take in salient features of the situation that would count as evidence. Thus, with impulsive courage it isn't so much that the agent believes against the evidence as that he doesn't believe anything about the danger at all.

It is counterintuitive to suggest that traits like modesty and blind charity are not virtues. One thing that indicates to me that these traits are virtues is the fact that, when recognized, they are valued by others as traits that morally improve the character possessing them. Elizabeth Bennet would not want blind charity for herself, since it would clash with the realism she takes such pride in – but she does appreciate it in Jane. What makes these traits moral virtues is their tendency to produce beneficial effects. Though it would be controversial (and at this point premature) to claim that the good effects are definitive of virtue, good effects are strong evidence for the presence of virtue. That virtues of ignorance produce them regularly is a further sign that they are virtues.

The following is a description of Melanie Wilkes, from the novel *Gone With the Wind*, that makes this point:

> . . . she always saw the best in everyone and remarked kindly upon it. There was no servant so stupid that she did not find some redeeming trait of loyalty and kind-heartedness, no girl so ugly and disagreeable that she could not discover grace of form or nobility of character in her, and no man so worthless or so boring that she did not view him in the light of his possibilities rather than his actualities. Because of these qualities that came sincerely and spontaneously from a generous heart, everyone flocked about her, for who can resist the charm of one who discovers in others admirable qualities undreamed of even by himself? (1973, p. 156)

Throughout the novel, Melanie is shown as a person who is able to smoothe over almost any disagreement and difficulty. However, the example of Melanie Wilkes also serves to highlight the potential negative effects of blind charity. Just as Jane Bennet, transported to Nazi Germany, would not be virtuous, one might ask the same about Melanie Wilkes living in the 19th-century American South. In some contexts, the trait is good producing; in others, it is not. If Melanie's uncritical attitudes make her more likely to accept the injustices of her society, then this trait will also have negative consequences. Judgments of virtue are context sensitive, and it may be the case that virtues of ignorance, and especially blind charity, are *particularly* context sensitive. It doesn't mean that they are any the less virtues, simply that they may be fragile virtues.

It's worth pointing out, however, that the person possessing this trait need be neither ignorant nor unsophisticated. In *Gaudy Night*, Dorothy Sayers describes Harriet Vane's college tutor, Miss Lydgate:

> To the innocent and candid eyes of that great scholar, no moral problem seemed ever to present itself. Of a scrupulous personal integrity, she embraced the irregularities of other people in a wide, unquestioning charity. As any student of literature must, she knew all the sins of the world by name, but it was doubtful whether she recognized them when she met them in real life. . . . So many young people had passed through her hands, and she had found so much good in all of them; it was impossible to think that they could be deliberately wicked, like Richard III or Iago. Unhappy, yes; misguided, yes; exposed to difficult and complicated temptations which Miss Lydgate herself had been mercifully spared, yes. (1936, p. 18)

Miss Lydgate is immensely popular and well respected. The trait of blind charity exerts a soothing influence on others (in this respect also, it is

much like modesty). Further, Miss Lydgate is not a raving imbecile or a good idiot. One criticism of the virtues of ignorance is that recognizing such traits as virtues seems to recommend a sort of idiocy. This isn't so. When these traits are virtues, they enhance a good character. They are *epistemic* defects but not social defects. A diamond may be made more brilliant by a chip or a crack. One could say of this diamond that it has the virtue of being cracked in just the right way, although under one description the crack can be viewed as a flaw. Thus, the criticism of some Aristotelians that these traits, while "good" in some imperfect sense, are not good enough to count as virtues misses the point. In what way are they not good enough? Appeals to rationality beg the question.

Kant, in his essay on "Friendship" in the *Lectures on Ethics*, describes the friend of anybody in the following way:

> . . . there are men of the world whose capacity to form friendships with anyone might well earn them the title of everybody's friends. Such citizens are very rare. They are men of a kindly disposition, who are always prepared to look on the best side of things. The combination of such goodness of heart with taste and understanding characterizes the friend of all men, and in itself constitutes a high degree of perfection. (1979, p. 209)

Kant does not explicitly describe this person in such a way as to offer an example of blind charity. To say that he is "always prepared to look on the best side of things," however, implies that he does not look on the worst – it implies lack of balance, too, and balance is something one associates with the *correct* perception. Since Kant goes on to say that this tendency, combined with "taste and understanding," constitutes a high degree of perfection, I read the passage as describing blind charity. A tendency to not see the bad and focus on the good, combined with other traits one associates with understanding – such as the good common sense of Jane Bennet in other matters – is something that is pleasing to a high degree. So it seems that when the virtues of ignorance occur in persons to whom we do not attribute total idiocy, they are virtues.

A more traditional virtue theorist may argue that these traits simply can't be virtues, since they don't seem to contribute at all to the agent's flourishing. Further, it's difficult to see how we could *recommend* that anyone adopt such traits – especially since one may not want one of these traits for oneself.

First, the connection between virtue and flourishing, on my view, is that moral virtue contributes to the flourishing of others – and perhaps of oneself – by helping to ease social interaction primarily. So personal

flourishing is not the aim of the moral virtues, though other virtues (prudential ones) will be so directed.[18]

Second, there is a distinction between commending and recommending. There are many traits in people that are commendable, indeed, that I think are of considerable worth, yet are ones that I would be reluctant to recommend to others or want for myself – for example, the courage to risk life and limb to save others in distress. I particularly doubt that I'd recommend such traits to my children. Likewise with the virtues of ignorance. I need not feel comfortable recommending such a trait to others to regard it as a commendable quality. These traits are valued because of their usefulness in easing social interaction.[19] There are certainly other goods that the virtues promote, but this is a significant one.

Given this view, there will be virtues that are incompatible. Consider Elizabeth and Jane Bennet. Earlier, I stated that Jane possesses a virtue – that of blind charity. Her sister Elizabeth possesses a trait incompatible with it. Elizabeth's perception of others is quite in tune with the evidence presented to her. Elizabeth, unlike Jane, has a realistic perception of others (though she turns out to be crucially mistaken). Both have a virtue, though the traits are incompatible, since both have good producing traits, though they produce different sorts of goods in different ways. Both are commendable, though it is possible that I'd want my own child to be more like Elizabeth than Jane because I believe, for example, that she has more virtue. It's simply the case that, even if I were to believe that, it would not follow that Jane therefore lacked virtue.[20]

Blind charity, modesty, and so on need not *always* function to reduce social aggravations, but as long as they do so systematically, they will be virtues. As virtues, they will also present a problem for the classical view of virtue, which places a great deal of importance on the role of knowledge and rationality in possessing a virtue. Why can't virtue depend as much on what the agent fails to see as on what the agent sees? With the virtues of ignorance, we have extreme cases of virtue depending on the agent's lack of sensitivity to certain facts. But even other virtues may sometimes exhibit this lack of sensitivity – and, indeed, lack of sensitivity to morally relevant facts. This would seem to be ruled out by the classical view. For example, think of the mother, Diana Roth, in *A World Apart*.[21] She is a white South African antiapartheid activist in the 1960s. This requires a great deal of courage and sacrifice on her part. She also displays a lack of sensitivity toward the emotional needs of her 13-year old daughter Molly, who, due to the activities of her mother, is ostracized.

Her daughter comes to resent the activities of the mother that take her away from home so much and even result in a stay in prison. But the mother cannot be both an activist and a good mother. And her activism, it is arguable, is the better for her lack of sensitivity to her daughter's needs, which are nevertheless facts that are morally relevant.

Note that if I have described the case accurately, it, like the contrast between Elizabeth and Jane Bennet, cuts against the unity of virtues thesis, which holds that the agent who has one virtue has them all. An account like John McDowell's, which holds that virtue is a sensitivity to morally relevant facts, is committed to such a thesis. However, the point that I would like to stress here is that what one does not perceive can be as important to virtue as what one does perceive. Both virtues and vices have negative as well as positive elements. Generosity may require a sensitivity to the concerns of others but may be aided by a lack of sensitivity to one's own needs. Selfishness may involve a lack of sensitivity to the needs of others and a greater sensitivity to one's own needs and desires. What leads people to act is a combination of knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance can be enabling and knowledge inhibiting. Consider courage again: knowledge that others are in danger is a reason for helping them, yet a vivid awareness of the dangers to myself inhibits action. The person who is somewhat insensitive to these dangers will be able to act, so ignorance is helpful in cases where there is motivational conflict.

Once one knows what to look for, cases of virtue involving ignorance abound. In the documentary film *Weapons of the Spirit*, French villagers in the village of Le Chambon are shown to have aided Jewish children by hiding them among themselves.[22] They put themselves at terrible risk, since the Nazis inflicted vicious reprisals on other villages that had engaged in the same behavior. When asked why they did it, villagers would say things like "there was nothing else to do"; they didn't seem to view their behavior as particularly *heroic* (Hallie 1985). They were simply living up to some basic obligation to aid those in dire distress. In "From Cruelty to Goodness" Philip Hallie reports:

> When I asked them why they helped these dangerous guests, they invariably answered, "What do you mean, 'Why?' Where else could they go? How could you turn them away? What is so special about being ready to help . . . there was nothing else to do." . . . They saw no alternative to their actions and to the way they acted, and therefore they saw what they did as necessary, not something to be picked out for praise. (Ibid., p. 16)

They were viewing as an *obligation* what many of us would regard as *supererogatory*. They were not accurately representing to themselves the full extent of their own moral goodness, unless one views them as being genuinely obligated to save the lives of others at the risk of their own lives and the lives of their families. Their compassion was such that these people could not, apparently, *see* the optionality of their course of action.[23] Some virtues may not be well served by the requirement that the agent see things (or morally relevant things) as they are.

The Aristotelian could loosen the requirements a bit and argue that they have virtue because, though they mistake the supererogatory for the obligatory, in a very general sense they are not making a mistake. It is still the case that they are doing something good, and that they know they are doing something good. So, the knowledge condition is satisfied; further, they are acting as they do for the right sorts of reasons.

But appeal to reasons is itself fairly tricky. Would doing the right thing, but at least in part because of one's particular religious beliefs that one may even have difficulty articulating, qualify as acting according to "right reason" on Aristotle's view? Rosalind Hursthouse, in developing her version of the Aristotelian view, does believe that the account must tolerate inarticulacy. The truly virtuous agent might not be able to give a clear set of reasons for her action or reasons that others holding different religious viewpoints would accept. Thus, the view she develops is not committed to moral elitism. Virtuous agents simply need to be acting with ". . . a love of the noble and a correct conception of eudaimonia . . ." (1999, p. 136). She correctly points out, following Broadie, that this does not commit the virtuous agent to a comprehensive, worked-out theory of the good and noble. That account would be overly intellectual.

However, the point I've been arguing for in this chapter, by presenting the virtues of ignorance, is that any account of virtue must be able to tolerate some actual mistakes, and not mere haziness, as long as those mistakes systematically promote the good more than not. It seems clear from reading Aristotle's account that his theory did not tolerate *epistemic* defect. The issue of defect in one's affective states will be taken up later.

3

Dubious Virtue Psychology

In the previous chapter we considered arguments against a particular psychological or cognitive requirement for virtue. The virtues of ignorance count against a knowledge, or correct perception, requirement for virtue. If I am correct, to have some virtues the agent need not have knowledge of morally relevant facts. There are other very specific kinds of psychological states that have been viewed as necessary to virtue throughout the historical development of virtue theory. This chapter continues the assault on an internal requirement for moral virtue. I argue that any account of virtue that defines virtue in terms of some specific sort of psychology will fail because such an account will be too narrow.

1. THE VIRTUES AS CORRECTIVES

Facts about human psychology have frequently been considered crucial in defining virtue. For example, one popular view of the virtues, which can be traced back to Aquinas and has been recently developed by Philippa Foot, is that they work to "correct" for the baser human impulses and motives (Foot 1978). The idea is that humans are naturally self-interested and motivated by considerations of selfishness, by the desire to promote their own good, and by an aversion to whatever constitutes something bad for them as individuals. This type of view is articulated by Philippa Foot in *Virtues and Vices*. Virtues correct both for temptations that humans typically experience and for deficiencies of motivation to do good.

> . . . there is, for instance, a virtue of industriousness only because idleness is a temptation; and of humility only because men tend to think too well of them-

selves. . . . With virtues such as justice and charity it is a little different because they correspond not to any particular desire or tendency that has to be kept in check but rather to a deficiency of motivation; and it is this that they must make good. If people were as much attached to the good of others as to their own good there would no more be a general virtue of benevolence than there is a general virtue of self love. (Foot 1978, p. 9)

What Foot is saying is that virtues such as generosity correct for a general tendency that humans have to self-interest. She is not claiming that generosity corrects, necessarily, for an individual's tendency to be extremely self-interested and act accordingly, since there will, of course, be some individuals who, because they are spontaneously altruistic, for example, may not be very self-interested at all. The intuition that Foot appeals to with this model of the virtues is attractive because we tend to think that humans are prudent creatures, and this prudence interferes with their behaving morally. Thus, "virtue" tendencies – the moral ones – correct for the presence of prudence in human motivation.

One problem with this view of virtue is that it does not seem general enough. There will be occasions when virtues may – and quite appropriately – be used to correct even for an insufficient amount of prudence or selfishness. For example, some individuals may have a very well developed moral sense. They realize that when they find themselves in certain situations they will feel compelled, because they are generous, let's say, to give their money away. That would be harmful to them as individuals. Cases like this will be quite common: a woman may realize that she should exercise in order to stay fit and prolong her life, yet may also know that unless she makes a commitment to meet someone at the gym at a certain time, she will become distracted by projects that involve helping others. If she has *promised* to meet Sue at the gym at 3:00, however, it will be her duty to do that. She will feel that conscientiousness demands of her that she keep her promises. Thus, the virtue serves her legitimate interests – but her interests nevertheless. She is using her concern to be moral as a means of making sure that she exercises. Foot's analysis could be modified to deal with this in the following way: virtues correct only for illegitimate tendencies. The problem here is spelling out legitimate and illegitimate – because even though in this case we see her self-interest as legitimate, when does the desire to benefit oneself become illegitimate? When it harms others? Those she fails to help may feel harmed. When it becomes an unjust harm? There are many vices, however, that fall short of being unjust.

This phenomenon also poses problems for a popular way of distinguishing types of virtue. In earlier chapters I alluded to this problem: how does one distinguish moral virtues from prudential virtues? A natural way to do this is to say that moral virtues generally are directed to the good of others, whereas prudential ones are primarily directed to the agent's good. However, it seems that moral virtues like conscientiousness and honesty can be used to promote the agent's good. One knows that, given one's strong moral sense, one will keep one's promises. Thus, one makes promises that benefit the self – such as the promise to meet someone for an exercise class.

A psychological egoist could argue that this fits part and parcel with her theory – that the moral virtues are disguised prudence. That conscientiousness serves the ends of the agent, therefore, is not so surprising. But this really misses the main point of the case: what is particularly odd about this case is that the normal assumption is the egoistic one that people do not have a moral sense; rather, they have a strong prudential sense. That is, they are self-interested, primarily, and morality has to correct for this and have people act in ways to benefit others. In the preceding case, however, the person is using morality to correct for a weak prudential sense. Thus, prudence is correcting for the flaws of the moral sense, and not the other way around.

How does one distinguish the prudential from the moral virtues? One intuitively plausible way is to say that the prudential virtues aim at the good of the agent, whereas the moral virtues aim at the good of others. "Aim at" can be spelled out in a variety of ways. One way is to appeal to the motives of the agent and say that a prudential virtue, like industriousness, is typified by the motive to improve one's lot. Thus, the motive is self-interest. The virtue of generosity, on the other hand, is typified by the motive of concern for others because the generous person aims at helping others. Thus, the motives are quite different. Yet the preceding case illustrates that a moral virtue can be used in a self-interested way. However, one could claim that *making the promise* to meet Sue at the gym is selfish, though *keeping the promise* is not. Thus, the conscientiousness is moral, but making the promise itself is not. This, however, doesn't cut against the claim that keeping the promise serves my self-interest, yet it is still moral, and the reason I made the promise in the first place was to promote my self-interest (so it's not a coincidence that self-interest and morality coincide). Thus, an appeal to motives does not provide a natural way of demarcating the virtues.

A response to this concern is the following: it's true that in a few odd

cases, the motive behind the conscientiousness is self-interest. Nevertheless, conscientiousness is still a moral virtue because, *generally speaking*, the motive is *not* self-interest; generally speaking, the motive is other-directed (e.g., a concern not to disappoint someone). However, now my question is, why pick *motives* as a way of demarcating in the first place? Initially, it seemed that we could pick other-directed motives as a necessary condition for moral virtue and the self-directed as a necessary condition for prudential virtue. But the conscientiousness previously discussed lacks the other-directed motive. Now the move is to deny that these motives are necessary conditions and instead to claim that they generally characterize the virtues. This may well be true. Indeed, I suspect it is for reasons outlined in earlier chapters. But now we need another way of defining the different types of virtues.[1] Let me suggest one way.

What causally sustains the prudential virtues is that they benefit the agents possessing them. What causally sustains the moral ones is that they benefit the group or individuals within the group. So, the idea is that when we ask "Why is intelligence a virtue?" the answer will be something like "Because intelligence is a good quality for an individual to have: the intelligent individual copes with problems better." The prudential virtues are those exemplifying a tendency to bring about benefits for the self; this means that any explanation for why the trait is a virtue per se will appeal to this fact. Moral virtues, on the other hand, are sustained differently. An explanation for why they are virtues appeals to the fact that these traits promote the good of others. "Why is honesty a virtue?" Because honesty facilitates transactions within a group by helping to create trust among agents. When people interact, at least in small groups, there tends to be a presumption of honesty. Without that, there would be constant suspicion between agents, and this would greatly reduce the efficiency of interactions in society. Conscientiousness can be treated the same way. It is a moral virtue *because* it has similar social benefits. That it may be used to further the agent's well-being is beside the point.

II. ARISTOTLE AND KANT: CULTIVATED INCLINATION OR DUTY?

Foot's account of virtue makes certain assumptions about facts of human psychology for which virtue traits are supposed to correct. In the history of the debate on how to define true virtue qualities, other features of

human psychology have been picked out as crucial to virtue. The recent debate has centered on differences between Aristotelian and Kantian conceptions of virtue. For Aristotle, a feeling of pleasure was necessary in the exercise of virtue; for Kant, a sense of duty was necessary. Who is right? It will be my contention that neither is right.[2] Any theory of virtue that defines virtue in terms of some particular kind of psychological state is doomed. I am not denying that *some* psychology is necessary. The agent must have a mental life in order to have a psychology and thus have character traits. I merely argue that no specific psychological state that has been historically identified with virtue is *necessary* for virtue. But a unified theory of virtue is still possible. At this point we can start with the following claim: a moral virtue is a character trait that produces good consequences for others. Psychological states are important only insofar as they facilitate the production of those consequences. For Aristotle, virtue consisted in cultivated inclination. Thus, pleasure was the proper accompaniment to virtuous activity, since satisfying an inclination will usually lead to pleasure: "Actions which conform to virtue are naturally pleasant, and, as a result, such actions are not only pleasant for those who love the noble, but also pleasant in themselves . . ." (1958, 1099a).[3] Kant, on the other hand, believed that any inclination without the support of principle is bound to falter:

> . . . virtue cannot be defined and valued as a mere *aptitude* or . . . a long-standing *habit* of morally good actions, acquired by practice. For unless this aptitude results from considered, firm . . . principles, then, like any other mechanism of technically-practical reason, it is neither armed for all situations nor adequately insured against the changes that new temptations could bring about. (Kant, 1996, p. 158)

Virtue cannot be grounded in inclination *unless* the inclination is backed by something nonchanging – a sense of moral duty or 'fortitude.' When he discusses the teaching of ethics, Kant writes, for example: "For man's moral capacity would not be virtue were it not produced by the *strength* of his resolution in conflict with powerful opposing inclinations" (Kant 1969, p. 266). There are notorious difficulties involved in spelling out Kant's position in this regard. Kant does believe that inclination can be involved. Moral worth is certainly entirely compatible with good inclination. The point is simply that a sense of duty must be present as the primary motivation.[4] The agent in possession of a good will does not act on mere inclination. Even though having a good will is not identical to being virtuous, having a good will is a necessary condition for being

virtuous; virtue simply demands that the agent have a settled disposition to act out of respect for the moral law. This means that a crucial element in being virtuous is self-mastery, moral courage, or fortitude.[5] This is the core of the difference between the two perspectives on virtue. Thus, Onora O'Neill has characterized Kant's virtue theory as one based on courage or fortitude; Aristotle's is one based on temperance (O'Neill 1996). Whether or not the view sketched previously is an accurate representation of Kant, it has influenced other writers on virtue (see Baier 1970), as has Aristotle's theory. The reason some writers focus on something like fortitude as necessary to virtue lies in the belief that when someone decides to act well in spite of her inclinations, she will act well no matter what. Her actions are judged better than the actions of the person whose motives may be clouded by pleasure. Even though a person *may* get pleasure from acting well, the motive is still a motive of duty – and thus virtue does not *require* pleasure.[6]

The Doctrine of Virtue also points to similarities between Aristotle and Kant. Both sought to present accounts of virtue as *reliable*, that is, as traits of character that are equipped for unusual situations. Aristotle viewed practical wisdom as the regulator of virtue; Kant viewed the sense of duty as the regulator. However, within this framework there are differences. Aristotle believed that the best person has his inclinations in line with what he knows is correct because such a person will get pleasure from doing good things. Kant, however, left open the possibility that the virtuous agent receive no pleasure from virtuous activity. Yet, as Rosalind Hursthouse points out, perhaps this isn't the crucial difference between the two so much as the fact that for Kant, the cold and unsympathetic agent can nevertheless still be virtuous or admirable. Kant's theory of virtue is certainly much richer than this. I am simply trying to focus here on a point of disagreement between his theory and Aristotle's. Kant, in *The Doctrine of Virtue* and elsewhere, develops a theory of virtue in which duties of virtue are imperfect duties to adopt various ends. As an aid to this enterprise, Kant encourages agents to develop various emotions in support of duty, such as cheerfulness:

> The rules for practicing virtue . . . aim at a frame of mind that is both valiant and cheerful . . . what is not done with pleasure but merely as compulsory service has no inner worth for one who attends to his duty in this way and such service is not loved by him; instead, he shirks as much as possible occasions for practicing virtue. (Kant 1969, p. 273)

Nevertheless, even though there is certainly a place for the emotions in Kant's ethics, their role seems to be instrumental.

Modern writers, such as Georg von Wright, pick up on the Kantian theme by developing a view of virtue in which self-control is necessary for being a virtuous person, because virtues consist in the ability to control appetites and emotions (von Wright 1963). Martha Nussbaum and Gregory Trianosky, on the other hand, lean more toward an Aristotelian view in which emotional responses – properly cultivated, of course – form a crucial element in the virtuous agent's life (Trianosky 1988, Nussbuam 1990).

One problem for virtue theory has been to decide between conceiving of a virtue as a trait the exercise of which is accompanied by pleasure and conceiving of it as a trait the exercise of which may not be. A good deal can be said to support both Aristotle and Kant. If one conceives of virtue as an excellence of character, then it seems plausible that the virtuous agent would enjoy doing the activity associated with the virtue. Julia Annas points out in *The Morality of Happiness* that later writers regarded the Aristotelian perspective on virtue to be a matter of common sense – a Kantian perspective would look quite alien. She quotes Plutarch: "People do not consider self-control a complete virtue, but rather less than virtue. For it has not yet become a mean state as a result of harmony of the worse part in relation to the better, nor has the excess of feeling been removed, nor is the desiring part of the soul obedient to and in agreement with the intelligent part; rather . . . it lives alongside [the intelligent part] like a hostile enemy element in a civil war."[7] If I have to put a lot of effort into acting sympathetically to people, that does seem to be an indication that I have little sympathy. On the other hand, we have an inclination to value achievements more highly when they are difficult (see Foot 1978, p. 10):

> . . . assume that the mind of that friend to mankind was clouded by a sorrow of his own which extinguished all sympathy with the lot of others and . . . now suppose him to tear himself, unsolicited by inclination, out of this dead insensibility and to perform this action only from duty and without any inclination – then for the first time his action has genuine moral worth. (Kant 1969, p. 17)

Because it is not clear that the person is so *disposed* to act with a good will (though he is acting with a good will on that particular occasion), it is left open as to whether the person has *virtue*, though such a view is consistent with the passage. This view has influenced a great deal of thinking on virtue outside of philosophy. Helen Burns, in Charlotte

Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, seems to adopt a Kantian view of virtue, and thus denigrates her own good qualities as *simply* being a matter of inclination: ". . . I make no effort; I follow as inclination guides me. There is no merit in such goodness" (Bronte 1982, p. 59). Charlotte Bronte is, of course, inviting us to view the Kantian perspective with disfavor here. The benevolence of the unhappy agent is a clear case of virtue, since it is not accompanied by pleasure (thus there is no pleasure to complicate a determination of the motive). The uneasy virtue of the unhappy agent is diagnostic of both temptation (insofar as it is uneasy) and self-control (insofar as the temptation is overcome). On the other hand, the easy virtue of the Aristotelian character is diagnostic of good basic desires. There is some ambivalence in ascribing moral virtue.[8] The impulse has been to resolve the tension by jumping to one side or the other. But the ambivalence exists only because the cases are underdescribed. Our judgment depends on how we develop the story and what consequences we cite in the story. If a person has good desires, then self-control does not matter much because the agent is not disposed to do evil. If the person has bad desires or inclinations, self-control matters a great deal. In the more realistic mixed cases, everything turns on the details of the description.

The mistake that is made by both Aristotle and Kant is that each focuses on one clear case of virtue. Psychological features of this case are then taken to be paradigmatic of virtue. The consequentialist can diagnose this confusion. Each writer has been impressed with either the importance of good desires or the importance of self-control and has employed it to the neglect of the other. They are mistaken in holding *one* type of virtue as paradigmatic and as representing the correct analysis of virtue. What is actually relevant is external states of affairs or the consequences produced by the character traits.

Rosalind Hursthouse would disagree with this approach, since I try to reconcile the views by pointing to a different underlying theory that could accommodate both sets of intuitions. Hursthouse's own view involves a sophisticated attempt at rapprochement. She argues that Aristotle and Kant should be read as similarly viewing emotion *itself* as an inadequate guide. So, the persons who on Kant's view are happy philanthropists motivated solely by inclination or feeling would also not be regarded as virtuous on Aristotle's view. Further, the merely unhappy agent is not excluded from Aristotle's account, since his lack of joy in helping others is no more problematic than Aristotle's own cases of persons who, for example, in displaying courage need to deal with pain.

No one is inclined, for example, to be tortured. Yet Aristotle felt that courage could be displayed under these circumstances, and that it is a full virtue, so the inclinations in harmony with moral belief have to be understood in some attenuated sense that would also be able to accommodate the Kantian case. The one possible problem Hursthouse still sees is the Kantian agent who is cold and uncaring.[9] Such an agent does point up a genuine contrast with Aristotle having to do with the significance of emotion in the possession of full virtue.

Some other writers have tried to do justice to good desires and self-control by maintaining that there are two types of virtue that are essentially different.[10] Henry Sidgwick tried to resolve the tension by claiming that our idea of virtue contains two features that are distinct, ". . . the one being the most perfect ideal of moral excellence that we are able to conceive for human beings, while the other is manifested in the effort of imperfect men to attain this ideal."[11] Aristotle's conception, then, reflects the ideal; Kant's conception accommodates the reality of the human condition. Whatever the justice of this comparison, the contrast contained in the traditional interpretation of Aristotle and Kant has affected how later writers view virtue – that is, as offering two distinct accounts of how we are to conceive full moral virtue and the most excellent human being. What these two conceptions of virtue have in common is that they both advocate a view of virtue as *necessary for successful social interaction*. Indeed, almost all theories of virtue share this feature. Virtue, if not absolutely necessary to human flourishing, is generally believed to enhance society. Kant would agree that it can enhance society (though he would not think this the foundation of its value or worth). The acknowledgment that virtue serves this function suggests a strategy for developing a unified theory of virtue along consequentialist lines.

III. GOOD INTENTIONS

Still, regardless of one's views on whether or not pleasure, or self-control as distinct from pleasure, is crucial to virtue, it does seem plausible to maintain that, at the very *least*, the virtuous agent possesses some conception of what is good, and that he acts in accordance with this conception (i.e., he acts with 'good intentions'). Plausible though this seems, it is false.

First of all, what is a conception of what is good? This issue is itself complex, but for the purposes of this chapter, I would like to try to

come up with a working hypothesis about conceptions of what is good. An agent has a conception of what is good when she has adopted or accepted a particular morality – that is, when she has adopted a set of rules governing moral action and perhaps also moral attitudes. In so adopting this morality, the agent accepts the prescriptions imposed by that morality. She thinks that if she acts in accordance with it, she will be doing good or right things. She may not be able to articulate what exactly these rules are. A person who speaks perfect English (and has an interest in speaking perfect English) may not be able to articulate what the rules of English grammar are, but this person is not precluded from speaking English well.

Second, given that we do know what a conception of the good is, is it really the case that we must act in accordance with what we believe to be good in order to be virtuous? Michael Stocker seems to take it as a given that acting with a good intention is necessary for virtue (Stocker 1979). Stocker tries to show that this requirement does not mark a crucial difference between modern conceptions of virtue and the ancient Greek conception: ". . . if I am correct about morally good intentions, the Greek moral virtues will count as moral virtues even if we hold that all morally virtuous acts are done with morally good intentions. . . . I shall argue that actions manifesting the Greek moral virtues must be done with morally good intentions and conversely" (ibid., p. 221). As he notes, many would accept this point without much argument. Various passages in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* can be interpreted as requiring good intentions for virtue, since they suggest that virtuous actions must be performed for the sake of the good or noble.

Yet, some agents who strike one as sympathetic seem to defy such analysis. If good intentions are understood subjectively, that is, agents lacking such intentions nevertheless seem quite capable of good action and capable of possessing the corresponding good states of character. Such is the case of Huckleberry Finn.

Jonathan Bennett introduced this case because it represents a conflict between sympathy and bad morality (Bennett 1974). I see it as a problem for any account of virtue that requires the agent to have good intentions. For Huckleberry, out of sympathy, acts in a way he fully believes to be immoral.

Huckleberry Finn, the protagonist of Mark Twain's famous novel of life on the Mississippi, has adopted a bad morality – a false conception of the good. Huckleberry, growing up in pre-Civil War Missouri, does not believe that the institution of slavery is immoral. One of his best

friends, however, is a slave named Jim, and when Jim runs away from his owner, Huckleberry fails to turn him in, though he has many opportunities to do so. Yet, Huckleberry also believes that this failure on his part is a moral failure – that he is, in effect, a party to theft. He believes that what he is doing is dishonest and ungrateful. As quoted by Bennett, he expresses himself in the following way:

> It hadn't ever come home to me, before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did, and it stayed with me, and scorched me more and more. I tried to make out to myself that *I* warn't to blame, because *I* didn't run Jim off from his rightful owner; but it warn't no use, conscience up an say every time: "But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could a paddled ashore and told somebody." (Ibid., p. 125)

These are Huck's beliefs about what it is that he is doing, yet *we* know that, in fact, Huckleberry acted well in not turning Jim in. Huckleberry wants to help his friend and see his friend happy. Yet, Jim's happiness depends on what Huck perceives to be an evil. And this is what Huckleberry balks at.

Huckleberry, though lacking a correct conception of the good, was still *acting in accordance with* the correct conception of the good. This was what made him, in fact, a good person (though, later in the novel, it is clear that Huckleberry is basically immature and in many ways nasty; still, we can consider the present case on its own and, if the actual Huckleberry fails to conform to this characterization, we can imagine another character who does). In order to be virtuous, in other words, one need not know that what one is doing is good or right. One need not have good intentions where this is understood to mean that one believes the actions one has chosen are, all things considered, good or right. If one were to define 'good intention' as 'intention to do something that is in fact good,' Huckleberry is acting with good intentions and the case is not a problem for the requirement. But this move fails to capture the subjective element important to ordinary ascriptions of good intentions. For example, a mother may be too lenient with her child, mistakenly thinking that leniency is good for the child. She can still be described as acting with good intentions even though what she is intending is objectively bad. To have the good quality, or virtue, one simply has to have a disposition such that one does what is good or right. If one has this disposition, then accidents are ruled out. Huckleberry's actions toward Jim are not accidental because he would defy his conscience and do the same thing over again.

It is Huckleberry's *sympathy* with Jim that constitutes the virtue and conflicts with what he believes to be right. Huckleberry may be interpreting the sympathy he feels for Jim as some sort of unwarranted favoritism. It would be the sort of favoritism condemned by morality as being incompatible with justice. Jim is his friend, but it is not morally permissible to aid one's friends in crime, in stealing property from a little old lady.

Consider the analogy with language. Huckleberry is analogous to someone who speaks a Southern dialect of English and mistakenly disavows it as "real" English. This is perhaps because he views the only real English as standard English. So, while he may view himself as speaking badly, others view his speech as a charmingly rustic variation. This in no way affects his ability to speak English well, though he may make a poor instructor. Likewise, mistaken evaluations of one's behavior may not affect it, as in the Huckleberry Finn case. What is crucial is whether or not the person is *disposed* to act well (objectively).

Many writers on virtue, particularly those concerned with defending the Aristotelian position, will argue that Huck Finn is *not* a virtuous person. This is because there is a psychological failure present: his feelings and his moral understanding are not in harmony. Such a flawed person cannot be a moral exemplar.

This kind of response points to a deeper debate in virtue ethics, or virtue theory, that has only recently begun to surface. This has to do with whether or not virtue ethics represents a sort of moral elitism. The greater the requirements placed on virtue, the more open it is to this charge. My theory is thus about as nonelitist as one could hope for. Aristotle's theory requires a great deal of intellectual development and moral sophistication for an agent to possess any virtue. Only the *phronomoi*, the wise, are virtuous, and these people are few and far between. Clearly, Huckleberry lacks virtue on this view. To respond to this, we need to look closely at why Aristotle thought *phronesis* so important to virtue. The major reason given was that someone who possessed *phronesis* was more reliable – that is, his goodness could be relied upon. It was not so dependent on certain "environmental" conditions being met. The well-brought-up individual will, in any context, perform the appropriate action. This concern with reliability is likewise a consideration behind Kant's requirement of a good will for a virtue. If a person is disposed to act on his sense of duty, against base inclinations, he can be relied upon to act well in a way that those who simply have good inclinations cannot, since those with a good will act well no matter what they are inclined to do.

But reliability seems to be a red herring here. *Overall*, it is probably better to have wisdom than not. However, there are other ways to be reliable. After all, Old Faithful is perfectly reliable without either a sense of duty or *phronesis*. If the agent, like any object, has a disposition to behave in a certain way (or, in the case of sentient beings, have certain feelings), then she is reliable with respect to that behavior or those feelings. The true usefulness of wisdom is *flexibility* and *responsiveness* to the unusual. This is why, I believe, writers on Aristotle such as Martha Nussbaum have articulated a view of Aristotle in which responsiveness to the concrete features of a given situation is an absolutely crucial element of virtue (Nussbaum 1990). I agree that sensitivity to the morally relevant features of a situation is important. For the agent to be virtuous, some such sensitivity is necessary. My problem has to do with making this sensitivity highly intellectual. Huckleberry Finn is sensitive to Jim's plight – it moves him in the way that it should. Thus, he possesses a virtue. The trait is reliable – he would do the same for Jim over and over again in a variety of contexts. What is left open is the flexibility of the trait. Would Huck do the same for others? We don't know from the text. But if he would, it would still be the case that his moral understanding is lacking. This does not seem sufficient to disqualify him. Those who argue that virtue is and should be understood as an ideal for most, and limited to the *phronomoi*, paradoxically move virtue out of the normative plane. Virtue must be accessible – to those who are not wise but kind; to those who had the misfortune to grow up in repressive environments that warped their understanding, yet who are capable of showing the appropriate compassionate responses to human suffering; to those who, like most of us, possess some intellectual or moral flaw.

So far, my aim has been to refute the claim that good intentions are necessary for virtue. I have claimed that when an agent acts with good intentions, he is acting according to what he thinks is the right or good thing to do (all things considered). One objection to this strategy is that I have construed "acting with good intentions" too narrowly by requiring that the agent be concerned with *moral* good. Perhaps nonmoral goods are relevant. In the case of Huckleberry Finn, the objection goes, Huckleberry actually does have good intentions in helping Jim out because he sees that freedom is a good for Jim; it is what Jim wants very badly (N.B.: on Huck's view, freedom is not a *moral* good for Jim).[12] So Huckleberry is concerned with helping Jim obtain *this* good; therefore,

he is acting with some good intention. Given this, the Huckleberry Finn case cannot be used to show that good intentions are not necessary for virtuous action.

However, my use of 'good intention' captures what is normally thought of as a good intention. That is, when we use this expression, we normally do mean 'morally good intention.' It would be odd to say of someone "He did something he thought was wrong, but he acted with good intentions" (N.B.: this is not the same as the more usual utterance "He did something wrong, but he acted with good intentions"). After all, Huck did think that he was unjustifiably harming Miss Watson, Jim's owner. Indeed, the traditional conception of 'morally good intention' has been characterized by Michael Stocker in the following way:

> A's intention to do act b is morally good just in case A believes b to be overall good to do and A intends to do b for the sake of goodness. (Stocker 1970, p. 124)

Clearly, Huckleberry's intentions fail to be good ones on this plausible analysis.[13]

But perhaps there is a very weak sense in which good intention is necessary for virtue. That is, the intention to perform some good for someone is necessary, even if the agent himself doesn't think of the good as a moral good. Because the thesis is so weak, it is difficult to think of intuitively appealing counterexamples to it. This is because, even if it turns out to be false, there will have to be an extremely close correlation between these good intentions and success – given human nature. Is it the case, however, that the agent cannot have *bad* intentions?

Imagine a society that has evolved differently from human society. These creatures, Mutors, have evolved in an extremely harsh environment and have developed unusual strategies for survival. It happens to be the case that for them, beating one's child severely when it is exactly 5.57 years old actually increases the life expectancy of the child by 50 percent. The child is upset by the beating, but this feeling goes away in time. It is also the case that the only way a Mutor could ever bring himself to so treat a child is to develop an intense pleasure in doing so. So some Mutors have a special trait – they intensely desire to beat children who are exactly 5.57 years old. That it is good for the child is irrelevant to them. This trait is valued by others, who must bring their children to the beaters when they are the right age, since they themselves

possess too much delicacy of feeling to be able to do it themselves. It is very important to note that the desire of these Mutors is extremely specific. They only desire to beat children at exactly the point that does the children good (though doing something good *for the children* is not their intention). Otherwise, the trait would obviously do more harm than good and could not be considered a virtue. What they are doing can be described as good, but they are not doing it because it is good. On my view this trait would be a virtue. It is an 'excellence of character' because it is valuable in that it actually does produce good and a significant social benefit, and the trait is specific enough so as *not* to produce overwhelming bad consequences. This is why this trait could not be fairly called 'viciousness.' Viciousness is not so specific. It is our intuitions about unspecific traits (such as viciousness) that infect our intuitions about the Mutors' trait.

This is why, on the weak reading of the term, good intentions do seem necessary for human beings to possess virtue. That is because bad intentions or bad desires in human beings just are not that specific. Consider our suspicions of a merry executioner. He enjoys his job tremendously. He looks forward to work every morning, and spends many a happy hour devising new and improved forms of execution. Yet, even those who believe in capital punishment will be repelled by the possibility that this person's pleasures are not restricted to the punishment of vicious criminals. Uneasiness is caused by this realization. Thus it is with bad intentions. However, to say that human beings are so constructed as to be unable to be virtuous while acting with bad intentions is to state something contingent, something about human nature; it is not to state something definitive about virtue unless one can argue for a chauvinistic thesis that moral virtue can obtain only for human beings, and not for any intelligent social creature. A theory of virtue should be broader than this. It must be conceptually possible to speak of the moral virtues of Mr. Spock. But it seems generally true that, for human beings anyway, good intentions are crucial, or important, for virtue insofar as they are important to the agent's regular success.

There are many situations in our ordinary lives that mirror considerations similar to those of the Mutor case. When parents take their child to the doctor to be vaccinated, they know that the shots will terrify the child and even cause the child pain. But they nevertheless are acting in the child's interest by getting her vaccinated as efficiently and competently as possible. The doctor's state of mind is irrelevant to them as long as it does not impact on the well-being of the child. The doctor who

vaccinates the child may not have good intentions, in that the welfare of the child is not what is motivating him. He may only be motivated by his income, or the esteem of his colleagues, or the fact that the service is necessary for his certification. Yet, if he does a good job, he is the one parents will seek out.

One might be willing, then, to give up good intentions as necessary for moral virtue, and instead hold that either good intentions or good motives are necessary. For example, Philippa Foot does not seem to believe good intentions are necessary to virtue when she writes, ". . . it seems right to attribute a kind of moral failing to some deeply discouraging and debilitating people who say, without lying, that they mean to be helpful; and on the other side to see virtue *par excellence* in one who is prompt and resourceful in doing good . . . what this suggests is that a man's virtue may be judged by his innermost desires as well as by his intentions . . ." (Foot 1978, pp. 4–5). It's not that good intentions are not important. Foot simply seems to be saying that either good intentions or good basic desires are necessary to virtue.

Other writers, such as Hume and Pincoffs, have pushed the psychological requirement back further, to the level of motives.[14] However, as is the case with good intentions, good motives – where good motives are understood to be ones having good objects – will not be necessary either. I will return to a discussion of the role motives have in an account of the virtues in the next chapter, when I distinguish my account from motive utilitarianism. For now, however, my claim is that one can develop arguments that show that good motives are not necessary, arguments that parallel the arguments showing that good intentions are not necessary.

The claim that virtue does not require good intentions, or even good motives, isn't that shocking. Some particular virtues may have such requirements, but others will not. Though it is difficult to see how one could be benevolent without being well intentioned, justice does not make similar demands. A person can be just, or fair in his dealings with others, without having kind thoughts toward them or without being motivated to aid them. Rather, the motive could be self-interest, the intention one of avoiding unpleasant interactions with others.

Likewise, my doctor may have the virtue of sensitivity in administering treatment to children; she can do so with the minimum of fuss and with great consideration, though what motivates her may simply be a desire to be paid well and to attract the maximum number of patients.

Michael Stocker has suggested to me that we may, then, want to

make a distinction between technical virtues and moral virtues. It is true that some persons may have good-producing traits that are prized and valued by members of the community, yet these traits are not moral virtues since they lack the requisite motivational and intentional structure. A trait does not count as a moral virtue without the agent's possessing good intentions and/or good motives, though the trait may well be a virtue of some lesser sort. Thus, both sorts of traits are virtues but one type is better than the other, and only the best type is true moral virtue. There are two responses here. First of all, I am willing to concede that having good intentions or motives may make a trait better since it makes the good effect more likely – but this isn't necessarily the case. I may prefer the doctor who efficiently administers aid to the well-intentioned doctor who, because he hesitates to cause suffering, prolongs the experience. This will depend on facts of human psychology. Secondly, however, even if it turns out that the good intentions ensure better consequences with respect to all human characteristics, this would not be sufficient to show that the traits that will still produce good without the good intentions and motives are not moral virtues. People who regard only the best traits as moral virtues are maximizers, and subject to all the problems that a maximizing requirement places on a theory. Thus, if one wants to avoid a commitment to maximization – which many virtue theorists want – then any distinction along these lines would be purely semantic. That is, it doesn't seem to do any work; it's a distinction without a function.

What morals do I want to draw from the discussion so far? First, it is not clear at all that any unified account of virtue can be given when that account requires some particular type of mental state to be common to all virtues.

Secondly, and possibly more radically, when a person possesses a virtue, this does not mean that in acting in accordance with that virtue, he is doing something he thinks to be morally good. This means that he is not necessarily following a conception of the good, even though his actions conform to 'good morality.' As Bennett would put it, his sympathies are in the right place, but he doesn't know this.

In the vast majority of instances of virtue, acting according to a conception of what is good is required for the benefit to be realized. But, as certain aberrant cases show us, this is not required of virtue across the board. It is not required in cases where the person experiences an emotional alienation from his conception of what is good and where this alienation is called for. Huckleberry is just one case, but I suspect

that these cases are all around us. Perhaps people who, in spite of the fact that they believe killing to be morally wrong, kill loved ones who are terminally ill and in agony experience this sort of alienation.

If one takes seriously my doubts about characterizing moral virtue as necessarily involving good motivation, then this also has implications for virtue *ethics*. One common feature of virtue ethics is the insistence that virtue is primary (Crisp with Slote 1997). The basic ideas is that if one makes use of other moral notions such as 'right,' those notions are themselves understood in terms of virtue, not vice versa. Thus, virtue has theoretical or explanatory primacy. As such, persons developing a virtue ethics need to give some account of the virtues in order to fully develop their theory; in the same way, a consequentialist would need to give an account of the good to fully develop her theory.

Most literature in the virtue ethics tradition recently has been negative, that is, it has focused on presenting virtue-based problems for the traditional theories. However, Michael Slote and Rosalind Hursthouse are among a new set of writers who are trying to work out systematically what such a theory would look like. Slote argues that a possible "agent-based" account would hold that good motives (which characterize virtue) are both necessary and sufficient for right action (Slote 1997). This approach is what I have characterized as 'internalist,' since it locates value within the agent. One general problem with this account has to do with characterizing motives as good without appealing to their characteristic consequences (which are external factors). Such an account is reducible to a form of motive consequentialism (Adams 1976). Another problem has to do with the fact that some actions seem to be virtuous or vicious even though prompted by or explained in terms of the same motive. For example, the soldier who risks his life to save his friends in a battle – and keeps his head down out of fear of being shot – is still courageous, and keeping his head down is prudent and certainly not base, even though motivated by fear. On the other hand, the person who runs without offering help could be thought of as cowardly even though his action is also motivated by fear – the same fear that prompted the courageous soldier to keep his head down. So, fear motivates one agent to keep his head down, and that's okay; but fear motivates another to flee, and that may well not be (depending on the context). Given the difference in evaluation yet the sameness of motive, something else has to be responsible for our moral assessment of the actions (see Driver 1995).

Rosalind Hursthouse also attempts to derive a notion of right action within virtue ethics by offering the following defintion:

P.I. An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances. (Hursthouse 1999, p. 28)

This definition in turn, needs to be fleshed out with an account of the virtuous agent, which in turn requires us to develop some understanding of virtue. The preceding account would be completely compatible with a form of virtue consequentialism, depending on how 'virtuous agent' is understood. However, for Hursthouse, virtue is characterized as a state of the agent that necessarily involves an appeal to certain internal states of the agent, though it also involves an appeal to human flourishing or *eudaimonia* – and here Hursthouse is reviving an Aristotelian mixed view. Certain internal states are necessary but not sufficient. Hursthouse's account differs from that of Slote, who seems to be offering a purely internalist view according to which the internal state is also sufficient. My disagreeements with Hursthouse's approach are similar to my disagreements with Aristotle's – the knowledge condition seems too strong. Hursthouse tries to deal with this sort of objection by toning down what is required; that is, the virtuous agent must have some conception of the good, though perhaps she may not be able to articulate it. However, as noted earlier, the account would still not tolerate actual epistemic error, which, my earlier arguments have tried to show, should be tolerated by a plausible account of moral virtue.

Even accepting that internalist conceptions of virtue (or mixed accounts with an internalist component) fail, it does not follow that virtue theory is necessarily fragmented. Since virtue psychology has failed, the most promising way to develop this theory is as an externalist theory, that is, as a theory that does not make an appeal to special internal states as definitive of virtue. The psychological states of the agent matter, but only in terms of the states of affairs they either generate or stand in relation to. The question of who is correctly describing virtue, Aristotle or Kant, is moot. Having one's inclinations in harmony with the good certainly helps virtue, as does having a strong sense of duty and acting from good intentions. But none of these is definitive of virtue. What is definitive is this: a virtue is a character trait (a disposition or cluster of dispositions) that, generally speaking, produces good consequences for others.[61] Further, the consequences must be of a certain sort. I would allow a good deal of flexibility in articulating the value theory portion of the account, an issue I return to later in this book.

The view is externalist because an internalist account would hold that virtue depends completely upon the agent's psychology being of a certain sort; that is, it depends upon the mental states of the agent that give rise to the good action. An externalist view, however, makes the attribution of virtue depend in part on factors external to the agent's psychology with respect to agency; in my case, the factors will be the systematic consequences of that psychology. Further, on my view, there need not be a "match" between psychology and the world. As long as one's psychological states systematically lead to the good, that is sufficient for virtue. This view minimizes the impact of luck – and luck is a particular problem for external accounts. An external account is susceptible to luck, since it makes the moral quality of a person's character depend upon external factors, many of which are beyond her control. By keeping the focus of evaluation internal, one can minimize luck, though not eradicate it. It can't be completely eradicated, since constitutive luck, for example, affects the agent's mental states. But my external account will not suffer from luck to the extent that many would, since I claim that the virtues are character traits that *systematically* lead to the good, but they don't infallibly lead to the good. There is room for accident in this account, which makes the account more plausible. In the later chapters, this distinction between internalist and externalist accounts will be spelled out more fully; it turns out to be helpful in understanding some of the underlying differences between alternative theories of evaluation.

The virtues of ignorance, such as modesty and blind charity, are virtues because the effects of the traits are beneficial; *not* because the possessors of those traits necessarily had good intentions or good inclinations or good motives, and certainly not because they possessed fortitude. On a consequentialist theory, these psychological states will be very important features of virtue because good intentions, good inclinations, and so on are conducive to good action. They are reliable directors of good action. So, in looking at specific disposition clusters that make up a virtue, being disposed to have 'good' states of mind is helpful. It's just not necessary.

Also, particular virtues such as generosity can be analyzed in terms of specific psychological states that characterize them. For generosity the typical motive may be something like a desire to benefit others and the typical intention one of aiding them. While this is true of the virtue of generosity, it is not true of virtue across the board. The account of virtue I will be presenting in the next two chapters leaves room for the analysis

of particular virtues in terms of the characteristic psychological states that underlie them.

I stress the importance of these states of mind here to avoid misinterpretation. My intention is not to argue that ignorance is better than knowledge or that good intentions are useless. Rather, I intend only to argue that while knowledge is often desirable, lack of knowledge may also be desirable. Likewise with good intentions. Huckleberry has subjectively bad intentions and fails to know what the right thing to do is, yet his sympathetic heart warrants our commendation. The purpose of the next two chapters is to provide some explanation or theory of virtue that will accommodate both the virtues of ignorance and Huckleberry Finn–type cases.

I first examine what a consequentialist theory of the virtues would look like. There are two forms such a theory could take. Since my aim is to articulate an externalist option, I will not be considering subjective consequentialism. Objective consequentialism – the view that a trait's goodness is determined by the actual rather than, for example, the expected consequences – is the externalist version of consequentialism. The next chapter will more thoroughly explore the theoretical basis for the distinction between objective and subjective consequentialism, showing them to be dramatically different types of theories of morality, but the main project will be a more thorough articulation of the objective version.

4

A Consequentialist Theory of Virtue

Consequentialist theories of virtue have been proposed before.[1] David Hume's theory, for example, while not completely consequentialist in nature, draws a compelling connection between utility and virtue. Virtue produces pleasure, and one mechanism of that production is our appreciation of the virtues as socially useful. Benevolence, for example, gains its merit in part from "its tendency to promote the interests of our species and bestow happiness on human society" (Hume 1983, p. 20) The analysis is extended to justice – though in the case of justice ". . . reflections on the beneficial consequences of this virtue are the *sole* foundation of its merit . . ." (ibid.). The value or merit of benevolence, on the other hand, is only partly due to its usefulness:

> As a certain proof, that the whole merit of benevolence is not derived from its usefulness, we may observe, that, in a kind way of blame, we say, a person is *too good;* when he exceeds his part in society, and carries his attention for others beyond the proper bounds. (Ibid, p. 66)

Thus, when the benevolence becomes excessive it is no longer useful, yet it is still regarded as a virtue by Hume. The merit of benevolence must be derived in part from some naturally pleasing quality it has.[2]

But Hume, in this passage, did not consider another explanation for the "kind way of blame."[3] The trait 'benevolence' can, generally speaking, produce good or useful consequences, and thus be a virtue, while occasionally breaking down. In other places, Hume does note that when we observe the bad consequences our evaluation changes, because then we regard the trait with displeasure. On my theory, the value of all of these traits resides in their tendency to produce good consequences. On my view also, it is possible for people to make mistakes about virtues

and vices. To be more precise, on my view, it is possible for people to view virtue traits with displeasure – because they are mistaken about the consequences of the traits. Hume has a problem with this, since he defines virtues as states of mind that find approval. How can one be mistaken about what one actually does approve of?

> . . . virtue is distinguished by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment, or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation. (Hume 1960, p. 475)

Hume's writing makes it clear that what determines a mental quality as a virtue is whether or not it is generally approved of; whether or not ". . . upon the general view or survey, [it] gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness . . .".[4] This would clearly leave room for *individuals* to make mistakes about virtue. But what about the general population? At certain points, Hume writes as though we cannot be mistaken in our judgments of virtue because the moral sentiment that is the basis for these judgments is universal, a part of human nature:

> The mind of man is so formed by nature, that, upon the appearance of certain characters, dispositions, and actions, it immediately feels the sentiment of approbation or blame; nor are there any emotions more essential to its frame and constitution. (Hume 1977, p. 68)[5]

And, in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*:

> The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it. (Hume 1983, pp. 74–5)

Also, in discussing how we know what traits are to count as virtues, he writes:

> The quick sensibility which . . . is so universal among mankind, gives a philosopher sufficient assurance that he can never be mistaken in forming the catalogue or incur any danger of misplacing the object of his contemplation: he needs only enter his own heart for a moment and consider whether or not he should desire to have this or that quality ascribed to him. . . . (Ibid., p. 16)

Yet, elsewhere he condemns the "monkish virtues" that apparently some must find pleasing. Hume makes it clear that mistakes are ruled out when the person judging the trait is able to correct for biases and prejudices. Thus, the monkish virtues such as "celibacy, fasting, [and]

penance" are considered virtues only by those who lack "unprejudiced reason" and whose sentiments are out of touch with common sense (ibid., p. 73). Yet the mistakes people make about virtue may not be due simply to some bias or lack of sense; some could, for example, be due to the inability of persons to judge long-range utility accurately. In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume does note that when we recognize that traits have bad effects, we cease to regard them as virtues. What exactly that means, however, is left open; it could be that they cease to be virtues when we cease to find them pleasing. And Hume also notes in the *Enquiry* that when we modify our view of the consequences of a trait, frequently our judgment of whether or not that trait is a virtue will shift. Thus, our judgment of whether or not generosity is a virtue depends upon our perception of the consequences. But, again, Hume isn't clear as to whether or not this means that we were mistaken all along, or whether it simply means that what qualifies as a virtue changes with changed perceptions of the quality of the trait.

If one allows that virtue is what a reasonable, well-informed, unbiased, and unprejudiced person would find pleasing, then there is plenty of room for mistakes in the general population if one could argue that the general population possessed one or more of the previously discussed epistemic defects. This really would make Hume's account an ideal observer account and subject to all of the attendant flaws of such an account. It's unlikely that this was Hume's intent (see Sayre-McCord 1994).

Hume's account is an important step in the development of a consequentialist theory of virtue, but it doesn't go far enough. Indeed, as stated, Hume's account, like Aristotle's, could well be an example of a mixed view that holds that while actual consequences matter to a trait's status as a virtue, these are not sufficient – since, he also indicates, what seems crucially important in virtue evaluation is determining the agent's motive, and the external actions are simply evidence for assessing the moral quality of the agent's motive. However, though I believe Hume's text is indeterminate in this matter, one could give an interpretation in which his account of virtue – though appealing to motive as the crucial element in moral evaluation – boils down to a form of consequentialism in that what is considered to be a good motive is unpacked in consequentialist terms.

Jeremy Bentham developed the consequentialist theory further, but Bentham was too enthralled by Hedonism to correctly identify the usefulness of virtues. Bentham wrote:

It is with dispositions as with everything else: it will be good or bad according to its effects: according to the effects it has on augmenting or diminishing the happiness of the community. . . . (Bentham 1948, p. 131)

Also, Bentham does not view the goodness of a virtue to be determined by the goodness of its motive. Indeed, he points out that motives are not, in themselves, ever bad. Their badness can be determined only by their effects in particular instances. Malice, which in part consists in being motivated to cause pain to others, is not itself bad, though it may be *instrumentally* bad when it leads to bad consequences. Indeed, the malicious person's enjoyment of a perceived pain he is causing to others is good – as long as the pain does not, and will not, exist. Bentham writes in a footnote:

Let a man's motive be ill-will; call it even malice, envy, cruelty; it is still a kind of pleasure that is his motive; the pleasure he takes at the thought of the pain which he sees, or expects to see, his adversary undergo. Now even this wretched pleasure, taken itself, is good: . . . while it lasts, and before any bad consequences arrive, it is as good as any other that is not more intense. (Ibid., p. 102)

Bentham, unlike Hume, did not impose on virtue the condition that the trait be generally thought to have some quality. If someone is disposed to inflict pain on others, but happens to be situated so that he must fail, the trait is not a vice; or rather, it is not something that is bad. Such a view would likewise be committed to holding a trait a virtue if it actually produces good, though the underlying motive is malice. Imagine a malicious klutz, for example – someone who wanted, and intended, to cause only harm to others but because of her clumsiness ended up, on balance, doing more good for them than bad. On Bentham's account such a trait would be a virtue, since *in that case* or for that agent it is a good-producing trait.

Thomas Hurka has recently developed an interesting account of virtue that is consistent with consequentialism but that avoids this counter-intuitive result of Bentham's (Hurka 1992). Hurka maintains that virtue is a state that is to be defined in terms of promoting the good (thus, it is consequentialist). However, what counts as good can be defined recursively, so that, for example, *loving* the good is itself intrinsically good. And virtue just is loving what is good. On such a view, it is clear that maliciousness is a vice because it is not loving the good: rather, it is a form of loving the bad – in this case, another's pain, whether or not the pain is actually realized. The importance of this account is that it treats

virtue as intrinsically good and vice as intrinsically bad – something that was considered impossible to do on a consequentialist account. However, Hurka himself points out problems with this analysis of virtue. These problems have to do with self/other asymmetries in ethics, such as those explored by Michael Slote (see Slote 1985). The sort of asymmetry that Hurka is most concerned with has to do with loving virtue: "Loving other people's virtue is clearly virtuous and good, but is it also good to love one's own virtue – for example, to take pleasure in the fact that one takes pleasure in others' pleasure?" (Hurka 1992, p. 166). This makes the account look as though it advocates self-indulgence and self-absorption.

One other problem with the account is that, if it is intended as a definitive account of virtue, it is too narrow. Modesty – one of the virtues of ignorance discussed earlier in this book – would not be considered a virtue, since the agent who exemplifies it may not be "loving the good" in exemplifying modesty (see Hurka 1990). There is no particular attitude that exemplifies modesty; indeed, the modest agent may even love the bad and still have the virtue of *modesty*, though he possesses some other vice. And this problem with the account isn't restricted to the virtues of ignorance. Our normal view of virtue is that these are dispositions to action – not simply attitudes of loving the good or hating the evil. So, the generous person is disposed to act so as to help those in need. She may also love the good, but that is not sufficient to make the trait a virtue, and in my opinion not even necessary.

However, one of the primary appealing features of Hurka's account is that it does explain why maliciousness is evil even when no pain is produced. On *my* account, maliciousness is a vice because it normally or systematically leads to bad effects. There may be a few odd situations in which it fails to do so, through accident or ill luck on the part of the agent, but by and large, maliciousness in a person does show itself. Virtues are character traits (these include dispositions to be motivated in various ways conjoined with yet other dispositions) that produce good effects. Under odd circumstances, a virtue may also give rise to harms. But as long as the trait generally produces good, it is a virtue. The evil klutz lacks virtue because her failure to bring harm to others is isolated. Generally, those with malicious intent toward others succeed in bringing about harms rather than benefits.[6]

Now a moral virtue is a disposition, but it is not just any "good" disposition of a person. The fact that Anne has strong bones indicates a good disposition of Anne, that is, her bones are likely to stand up to an unusual level of stress. A moral virtue is a *character trait*. It is a complex *psychological* disposition (or disposition cluster) to feel, behave, and/or act well. Specifically, the account that I want to propose is an *objective consequentialist* account of the virtues, which would define moral virtues as character traits that systematically produce more actual good than not.[7]

The distinction between subjective and objective consequentialism was well articulated by Peter Railton:

> *Subjective consequentialism* is the view that whenever one faces a choice of actions, one should attempt to determine which act of those available would most promote the good, and should then try to act accordingly. . . . *Objective consequentialism* is the view that the criterion of the right of an act or course of action is whether it in fact would most promote the good of those acts available to the agent. (Railton 1984, p. 152)

Railton was concerned with addressing the problem of the apparently self-defeating quality of Utilitarianism: the theory recommends that we pursue the greatest overall amount of happiness, yet in pursuing it we seem to destroy goods that are intrinsic to happiness. By pursuing the end, we diminish it. Critics argue that this absurdity proves that there is something fundamentally wrong with Utilitarianism, and with consequentialism more generally. Railton defuses this criticism by arguing that it works only if we assume that the theory recommends that people act so as to intentionally and consciously pursue the greatest good – that is, if the theory is understood *subjectively*. If we understand the theory objectively, then the right action is the action that actually produces good, and the theory is not in danger of being self-defeating.

By placing no intrinsic value on states of mind, or on factors that are internal to agency, objective consequentialism is a form of what I call 'evaluational externalism.' Evaluational externalism is the view that the moral quality of a person's action or character is determined by factors external to agency, such as actual (rather than expected) consequences. This is to be contrasted with 'evaluational internalism,' the view that the moral quality of a person's action or character is determined by factors internal to agency, such as a person's motives or intentions. Arguably, Kant is an evaluational internalist. Kant did famously maintain that moral

praise and blame appropriately attach to an agent's *willing*, and not to any of the actual consequences of the action itself. That is, the action would have moral worth if and only if the agent consciously willed in accordance with the Categorical Imperative. If through accident or ill luck a failure occurred, this would have no bearing on the worth of the act or the agent – and this would hold true systematically, one presumes. Thus, moral agents are insulated from the capricious world that they cannot control. Virtue is its own reward: "Only in its [virtue's] possession is a man 'free,' 'healthy,' 'rich,' 'kind,' and so forth, and can suffer no loss by chance or fate, since he is in possession of himself and the virtuous man cannot lose his virtue" (Kant 1969, p. 206). External factors such as the consequences produced by a given activity or trait do not impinge upon the moral quality of the virtue. Thus, there is great textual evidence for regarding Kant as an evaluational internalist. The view he advocates has the theoretical advantage of minimizing the impact of moral luck on moral evaluation. Having bad luck does not make one less morally worthy.[8] Further, it is consistent with the view that the good will's moral quality, or its goodness, is *intrinsic* (i.e., does not depend in any way on external factors such as consequences).

The distinction needs some clarification. I use the internalist/externalist terminology here because it seems the most apt, although it is also liable to confusion with motivational internalism/externalism. Andrew Moore has suggested to me that I might better call the distinction antecedentism/consequentialism – 'antecedentism' referring to the view that moral quality is determined by factors that are immediately prior to the action in question, that is, factors like intentions and motives, and that these in turn determine the moral quality of the agent's character. 'Consequentialism,' on the other hand, would refer to the view that it is factors that come after, or are causally consequent to, the action or character trait in question that determine its moral quality, and these are external factors such as consequences. Note that these external factors are not necessarily external to the agent; rather, they are external to the agency, since they come afterward. So, for example, pleasure would count even though pleasure is certainly an internal state of the agent. However, I still prefer the internalist/externalist terminology, given that the previous considerations are noted, since I believe these terms do capture the intuitive idea behind the distinction and 'internalism' just seems much less cumbersome than 'antecedentism.' Further, that terminology would have the rather odd consequence of classifying subjective consequentialism as nonconsequentialist. However, to avoid confusion,

I am using the terms to refer to a form of *evaluational* internalism/externalism, and not *motivational* internalism/externalism, which is a distinction concerned with the motivational import of moral reasons.

As indicated earlier, subjective forms of consequentialism are also internalist in the same way the Kantian system is, since on one version of subjective consequentialism, for example, right action is defined in terms of *expected* consequences, and on this version of the subjective view a virtue would be a disposition to act so as to maximize expected good or to *try* to maximize the good. Across this parameter, then, subjective consequentialism and Kantian ethics are the same sort of ethical theory, whereas subjective and objective consequentialism are radically different, as they locate the source of value very differently.

A view such as the one advocated by Aristotle is arguably a *mixed* view. Internal factors, such as aiming at virtue for its own sake, or acting with some correct conception of the good or noble, and so on are necessary to virtue but not sufficient. Some external requirement also exists in that for a trait to really be a virtue, it must somehow contribute to human flourishing.

Most people find some kind of mixed view the most intuitively plausible because such a view accommodates the intuition that "good intentions" are somehow necessary to being a good person, but that "good intentions" are not enough; the person must actually bring about some good (or be in possession of a genuinely good-producing trait). Thus, a mixed view has the advantage of being able to explain why a well-intentioned person who habitually misses the good does not in fact have virtue. While her internal psychological states may be appropriate, she is failing to produce the good systematically. Note that, depending on the level of systematicity one takes to be important, one could argue differently. It is also possible to argue that the good must be produced systematically by the trait, not by the *individual* possessing the trait. So there will be variation in the mixed theories as well. Aristotle himself seemed to favor the view that the trait must produce good in the individual case.

The view I am advocating, however, is at the other extreme from Kant and the subjective consequentialists. Objective consequentialism, unlike subjective consequentialism, locates the good-producing factors externally. The advantage of this account is that it preserves the connection between the agent and the world. What *happens* matters to morality, and the externalist preserves this intuition. The disadvantage is that it

renders moral quality subject to luck factors in a way the Kantian can easily avoid. This is a problem I'll return to later in this chapter.

Objective consequentialism can be developed either as a form of *direct* consequentialism or as a form of *indirect* consequentialism. Roughly, direct forms hold that the thing to be evaluated is evaluated in terms of its own consequences; indirect forms hold that the thing to be evaluated is evaluated in terms of the consequences of some related item. For example, rule consequentialism is a form of indirect consequentialism because it holds that the moral quality of an action is determined by the consequences of the rule guiding the action – and not by the consequences of the action itself (Hooker 1990). An analogous form of indirect consequentialism would be virtue consequentialism, which holds, roughly, that the moral quality of an action is determined by the consequences of the character trait that produces the action, so that, if the action results from virtue it is right, and if it results from vice it is wrong. What counts as a virtue or a vice *could* be delineated along lines suggested by me – that is, in terms of the consequences actually produced systematically by the trait, on an objective interpretation. In that case, one would have a form of virtue consequentialism. However, Rosalind Hursthouse, in developing her account of virtue ethics, uses a similar understanding of right action yet understands virtue nonconsequentially. For Hursthouse, the right action is the one that the virtuous agent would perform (thus, it differs from the previous definition in that it does not require that the agent actually have virtue or that the right action be produced by actual virtue).[9] A tremendous amount of weight is then placed on fleshing out her account of what a virtue is. We need to know this in order to have either a decision procedure or a standard of evaluation. Hursthouse pursues a neo-Aristotelian project in this regard. Her view of virtue is that a virtue is a character trait that involves agents performing virtuous actions for the right sorts of reasons (to distinguish true virtue from its appearance); further, the agent must act well in a certain manner: ". . . readily, eagerly, unhesitatingly, scrupulously, as appropriate" (Hursthouse 1999, p. 11). Further, the agent reliably acts well and has the appropriate sorts of emotions. And, not surprisingly, the virtues involve "getting things right," and this getting things right involves the possession of practical wisdom (ibid., p. 12). I won't detail the criticisms I have of this view here, since Chapters 1 and 2 were spent extensively criticizing the Aristotelian – and, by extension, neo-Aristotelian – outlook. Many of the same criticisms apply to Hurst-

house's understanding of moral virtue. However, her definition of a right action is a good illustration of a definition that presents the evaluation of the action is indirect, via the virtues. A similar strategy could be pursued by a consequentialist, though the consequentialist would disagree about the characterization of moral virtue.

The account I would like to suggest, however, is the *direct* version of objective consequentialism, though one that does have room for virtue evaluation. Character traits are simply another thing that, like action, can be evaluated along consequentialist lines. I favor this approach because I believe it better captures some of our intuitions about hard moral cases.

Consider the classic case of the sheriff who is forced to choose between saving one innocent man or allowing twenty innocent people to die in an ensuing riot (McCloskey 1965). The virtue consequentialist could hold (similarly to the rule consequentialist) that while sacrificing the one to save the many, as an action, produces the best consequences, since such an act is incompatible with virtue it is nevertheless wrong. The direct objective consequentialist could hold, however, that the sacrifice is the right thing to do, while acknowledging that we may have doubts about the character of an individual who *could* do it. Thus, there is intense ambivalence about the case. This ambivalence is captured by the direct approach. The indirect approach would have some difficulty, since it would be committed to holding that what the sheriff did was wrong, or not right, because it was not prompted by virtue or consistent with virtue.[10]

While the case of the sheriff is difficult (partly because there are so many different consequences that would have to be factored in if we are thinking of such a case in the real world), the direct approach mirrors very naturally some of the ways in which we make split moral evaluations. We often do recognize that good people act wrongly, and perhaps act wrongly on some occasions precisely because they are good. Consider Marvin, who is a mild-mannered, pleasant, and extremely kind individual who goes out of his way to help others. He couldn't harm a fly, as the expression goes. If an evil dictator takes over Marvin's country, torturing and killing capriciously, and Marvin gets a chance to stop him, even if it means killing him, that's probably what Marvin ought to do. But Marvin *can't* do the right thing, and it is his "good" dispositions that interfere. Similarly, a person with vices might be able to do the right thing, in some contexts, precisely because he has some vices. For example, Marvin's ruthless twin might well be able to dispatch the evil

dictator. He would be doing the right thing, yet the ruthlessness is still a vice. For these reasons I favor the direct approach, though I feel that virtue evaluation has received short shrift. What I try to do here is give virtues their due within the consequentialist framework.

The distinction between act and character evaluation is crucial. Given a conflict between virtuous acts, we can see tension develop between virtue and act evaluation. These are cases in which a person decides that x is the morally correct course of action, and yet has great trouble doing x because it conflicts with what he is disposed to do. For example, Bill is walking down the street and he sees a pigeon that has been hit by a truck. It is dying and in terrible pain. Bill decides that the right thing to do is to kill it quickly and put it out of its misery, but he has tremendous difficulty doing this because it involves *killing*, something he is not inclined to do because of his compassionate nature. This is one of those very unusual situations, however, in which killing is the compassionate response, though it resembles the typically cruel response. Someone might say of Bill that it is precisely because he is compassionate that he had great difficulty in bringing himself to kill the pigeon.

If one is disposed to do x, then under normal operating conditions one will do x. Bill is not in a context in which normal operating conditions hold, so the disposition has trouble kicking in. This is where some form of moral judgment is crucial, even just the basic judgment that the pigeon is in pain and the way to relieve the pain is to kill it. But virtues are dispositions and/or character traits. They are formed under normal conditions and operate most effectively under those conditions. Thus, we judge someone courageous under conditions in which courage is called for, and as long as that person shows himself courageous in ways that we think could be expected of the normal person. Imagine someone who resisted Nazi torturers for weeks, who had body parts removed, skin peeled away, but who finally succumbed when driven to the edge of madness by the threat of being eaten by rats. The person is clearly courageous, even though he gave in to the Nazis, because the level of cruelty he faced was so overwhelming. Of course, the person who could have resisted the rats would have been even more courageous, but this does not mean that the person who resisted but ultimately succumbed was not courageous at all.

This insight offers a way of challenging those who claim that virtue must exemplify the very best in human character. That as excellence, nothing short of perfection is allowable. These are the true maximizers. There is nothing in the account that I offer that says virtue represents

maximal goodness. There is nothing in this account that argues for the conclusion that we ought to even *try* to be perfectly or maximally good and virtuous. I suspect that we ought to try, because trying makes it more likely to be the case.[11] But this isn't a necessary feature of my account.

So, the standard problems for maximizing forms of consequentialism are avoided by this account of virtue, since there is no commitment to maximization. That is, for a trait or disposition to be a virtue, it need not maximize the good. Still, the issue of maximization is not irrelevant to the account, since I would like to add that the better virtues will be the ones that produce more good. Generosity is probably better than wit in that it produces more good. If there is a virtue that produces more good than any other, then that would be the best.

On the account I offer, virtues function in social contexts to contribute to human (or social) flourishing and happiness, often by alleviating interaction problems among people. The *type* of effect or consequence brought about by virtues is the type of effect conducive to the alleviation of these problems. Thus, virtue promotes social good. For example, trustworthiness and honesty make social interaction feasible, since without these traits it would be very difficult for people to coordinate their activities. They make interaction much more efficient. They cut security costs. Loyalty, for example, is a way of ensuring support by others. A loyal friend sticks by you; a mercenary one does not. Thus, a person need not be wary of a loyal friend. Also, if a person is trustworthy, then she needs little monitoring by others. *Vices*, on the other hand, produce bad states of affairs.

The reason the consequences are type effects, rather than particular effects, is that the effects of the trait need never be actually produced *in a particular instance* for the trait to count as a virtue. One function of the virtues is to ease social interaction – and here the general sense of function is used. The function of seat belts is to prevent death in car accidents, but seat belts don't always do this. Indeed, they occasionally kill, as when a car bursts into flames immediately after being hit. The type of effect is what is referred to when the claim is made that the virtue of the seat belt is that it saves lives – even though in some cases lives are not saved.

This is important because a person could have a virtue yet never exercise it. In a society of plenty, some people may have the disposition to help those in need, yet never exercise it because it just so happens that no opportunities to do so present themselves. Dispositions have a

modal character. A person who is generous is a person who has the disposition to help those in need, as well as the disposition to see those in need. This means that such a person helps the needy *if* she comes across them. But, by accident, she may never *actually* come across them. Consider an analogy with an artifact that we feel to be good. A sprinkler system in a building may well be good and useful even if – because that building may never catch fire – it never gets turned on. It's a good thing to have because *if* there were a fire, it would save the contents of the building. And sprinkler systems in general are good and useful, though on occasion they can lead to disasters, for example, where the system is used in a building storing chemicals that explode on contact with water.

In a very repressive society, it may be the case that many people possess virtuous dispositions yet lack the opportunity to display the requisite behavior. For example, loyalty would have little scope in a society that discouraged friendship. Although actual good consequences may not be produced by these dispositions in a given instance, these people still have the virtues because the dispositions would produce the requisite behavior in the appropriate context. Of course, the disposition must truly be present, and the only evidence we have for its presence is the action or behavior of the agent.

Imagine a society, however, in which generosity found no purchase, not through accident but because the society was such that there could be no scope for it to benefit anyone. This would be a society hard to imagine, but certainly possible, in which everyone by nature was happy and successful, no one was in need either materially or emotionally, and so on. Such a disposition, then, would not be a virtue because its lacking a positive effect would be no accident. Once again, an analogy with an artifact is helpful. A yo-yo works on the surface of the Earth but not in outer space.

Philippa Foot could be making a similar suggestion about virtues when she characterizes them as denoting powers – much as the word 'poison' denotes a power. On occasion, the traits do not operate as usual – just as, on occasion, poison does not operate as a poison. On these occasions the virtue trait, like courage, is not operating as a virtue. When courage is used for bad ends, then, it is not operating as a virtue (Foot 1978). It seems to me that she is saying that when courage is used for a bad end, it is not, in that instance, virtue. This would be different from my view. Courage, granted, is an odd virtue – difficult to classify as moral or prudential (see Rorty 1988). But it is an excellence. Yet, when it is combined with other destructive traits, one could make the point that there

is a destructive disposition cluster present in the agent, which itself does not qualify as a virtue, though it involves courage. The agent is courageous, and courage is wonderfully admirable – but, given his other qualities, we would make the judgment that that particular agent was vicious. However, in identifying virtues with things like poison, which can be inert while still being poison, Foot seems to be recognizing the modal character of virtue ascription. It is important to my account to note that ascriptions of virtue do have a modal character. Not everyone who has virtue displays it. Accidental conditions need to be ruled out.

Still, one must be careful here to avoid absurd conclusions. Someone could argue that if we accept enough "ifs," then anyone would have almost any virtue. It is necessary to delineate when a person can be said to have a virtue, because she possesses a good-producing disposition, and when she can be said to lack a virtue. That is, we want to avoid ascriptions of virtue like the following, employed by Lady Catherine de Bourgh (in this case, a nonmoral virtue):

> There are few people in England, I suppose, who have more true enjoyment of music than myself, or a better natural taste. If I had ever learned, I should have been a great proficient. And so would Anne, if her health had allowed her to apply. I am confident that she would have performed delightfully. (Austen 1981, p. 130)

Here the claims are ridiculous because the hypotheticals are too remote. Further, their epistemic basis is highly questionable.

"What ifs" and "if onlys" are relevant in our evaluations of a person's character. This is because we want to moderate the impact of luck or accident on these judgements. For example:

(1) If Andrea's ankle had not been broken, she would have tried to save the drowning child.

If (1) is true, then Andrea deserves *some* credit for being a courageous person. It was only by accident that she was unable to display the courageous behavior; the disposition to display it is still present. And that is a disposition that systematically leads to good, even though in her particular instance it does not. If one fails to succeed by accident, one deserves some credit. Near accomplishments count. The possible world in which Andrea tries to save the drowning child is very close. Yet consider a Lady Catherine de Bourgh type of claim:

(2) If I had bothered to learn music, I would have been very proficient.

If (2) is true, Lady Catherine deserves some credit, perhaps, for undeveloped talent. But the talent is not yet present. The "if" in (2) is a big "if"; the possible world in which Lady Catherine is a proficient musician is far away indeed.[12] In evaluating the relevant counterfactuals, we need to hold as much similar to the actual case as possible.

Further, in the case of (1) and (2), our judgment of virtue is influenced by evidence that we have that the disposition is truly present. In Andrea's case we may know, because of actions she had performed in the past, that she is disposed to act courageously. In Lady Catherine's case, it seems clear that the disposition is totally lacking.

These remarks give the objective consequentialist a way of dealing with the most worrisome shortcoming of the theory – its counterintuitive results regarding moral luck. There are two different ways (at least) of understanding what sorts of consequences are relevant. Previously, the form focused on was a form that Michael Slote has dubbed "actualism." Actualism holds that the moral quality of actions and character is determined by actual consequences, or consequences in actual circumstances. This has been taken to be the form of objective consequentialism that writers such as Railton have argued for, and that I have been arguing for here, and has been viewed as rather counterintuitive because the view is subject to moral luck problems to a very great extent. On this formulation the agent is (only) responsible for any actual outcomes of an action, and these outcomes alone determine the moral quality of the action.[13] Thus, for example, suppose that Donna throws a banana peel into the garbage, and the peel falls out unbeknownst to her. Suppose also that an innocent passer-by slips and breaks his leg on the peel. Donna is responsible and her act of throwing out the peel is immoral and wrong. To many this seems counterintuitive. This problem can be dealt with by making a distinction between judging an action right or wrong and judging an agent praiseworthy or blameworthy – a distinction that the focus on virtue makes even more appealing. Donna may have done something wrong, but the action does not reveal any character flaw and so she is not blameworthy (blame itself being apportioned on consequentialist grounds, it wouldn't make any sense to blame her).

However, there is another way of developing objective consequentialism. The important thing to keep in mind is the theoretical distinction that underlies the distinction between subjective and objective consequentialism, and that is the distinction between evaluational internalism and evaluational externalism. Thus, what marks objective conse-

quentialism and makes it useful for my account of moral virtue is that the moral quality of actions and character is determined by factors external to agency; however, these factors need not be actual, out-there-in-the-actual-world factors. To put it crudely, what fundamentally matters, morally, in objective consequentialism is *not* what goes on in the agent's head. But this leaves room for counterfactual support of moral claims in the sense that an agent's action could be deemed right or wrong, depending on the consequences of that act in normal circumstances or what would have been its consequences in normal circumstances. This alternative to actualism is "counterfactualism." Even actualists count some counterfactuals but only with actual circumstances held constant, whereas counterfactualists look to consequences other than the actual ones. This would help shield the account from moral luck, to some extent, while preserving the strength of the objectivists' connection to the world or to external reality. And this view might simply be a more attenuated type of actualism. A robust modal realism would recognize counterfactual claims as making reference to events in possible worlds.

Developing objective consequentialism along these lines presents an intriguing possibility, though there is a fairly significant problem having to do with spelling out what would count as normal circumstances. One reasonable suggestion is to maintain that the action or trait must produce actual good, if not in our world, then in a world very close to ours. The proposed account of moral virtue, then, would be something like this: a moral virtue is a character trait that *would* systematically produce actual good under normal circumstances (i.e., in possible worlds very close to our own). It need not produce *any* good in the actual world.

To better assess this alternative, I would like to look at what I believe to be an analogous debate in virtue epistemology. Reasons for rejecting counterfactualism will apply to definitions of moral as well as intellectual virtue. There is currently a similar debate in virtue epistemology on how to give an account of knowledge and/or justified belief that appeals to the notion of a virtue (see, for example, Kvanvig 1992, Montmarquet 1993, Zagzebski 1996).

II. ACTUALISM AND COUNTERFACTUALISM IN VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

A similar strategy has been pursued in virtue epistemology in trying to articulate a reliabilist account of intellectual virtue in order to avoid

corresponding problems. A reliabilist account of intellectual virtue holds that the intellectual virtue is the trait that *reliably* produces true belief.[14] However, Jonathan Kvanvig, for example, believes that such an account could produce the result that something like *wishful thinking* is an intellecutal virtue:

> It might be, for example, that wishful thinking for a particular person gets that person to the truth; and it might also be that that person has a disposition to believe what is only, for him, wishful thinking. (Kvanvig 1992, p. 116)

For Kvanvig, this means the account is clearly wrong. To avoid this problem, he adds a requirement that the disposition in question be epistemically significant. This means in part that the true beliefs must be produced in accord with right reason. This in turn means that ". . . an epistemically significant characteristic produces beliefs in accord with right reason just in case that characteristic is a necessarily justification-conferring characteristic, and the belief in question is based on the justification generated by the characteristic in question" (ibid., p. 118).

But another way to go, which Kvanvig recognizes, is to abandon an 'atomistic' approach and insist that the true belief be produced systematically (and need not be produced in every single case). This would handle the wishful thinking case, which is similar to the moral case of someone whose nastiness just happens to make others happy. That's because the fact that the good is produced in a single case is not relevant. Is it produced systematically, across the population? No. What if it *did* work systematically to produce true belief? Well, then we might well be inclined to change our view of the trait's virtue status. It starts looking a lot better. And the account of moral virtue I've spelled out is not atomistic.

However, there is a deeper problem for the reliabilist account that may push us to counterfactualism.

> Let us suppose . . . that Joe is maximally virtuous . . . ; not only does he have all the abilities and dispositions humanly possible, he is stable regarding them and he bends and relaxes the impact of each depending on the circumstances. But now suppose that he is the unlucky inhabitant of an evil demon world. The demon is evil enough and powerful enough to make sure that most of Joe's beliefs come out false, and that is just what the demon does. (Ibid., p. 131)

The moral analog would be the case of generous Joe, who, because of the evil demon, no matter how hard he tries, just accomplishes bad – and further, this is the case for all generous individuals in Joe's world. So it is clearly systematically the case that the generosity is producing bad

rather than good due to the influence of the evil demon. The problem is that on the straightforward actualist definition, Joe would lack moral virtue. This seems strongly counterintuitive. Surely there is still moral virtue, even though all outcomes are guaranteed to be bad. Another advantage of the pure internalist approach is the ability to deal with this problem by making virtue completely internal to the agent. And Kvanvig, for intellectual virtue, tries a similar strategy. It isn't truth conduciveness that's so important on his account; rather, it is *trying* to attain the truth. An account that is objective seemingly fails, but subjective versions may succeed since they don't rely on actual outcomes. The resulting definition treats intellectual virtue the following way: among other things, intellectual virtue is conducive to epistemically warranted belief, where the idea of epistemic warrant is subjective. On this account, Joe has intellectual virtues since these traits lead to justified beliefs, even if they are not actually true. Since justification is internal or subjective, it is not affected by the evil demon, which qualifies as an external condition. Bad luck is avoided – in this case, the bad luck of winding up in an evil demon world. However, truth is still the goal to be achieved. In this way, Kvanvig's suggestion is analogous to that of the subjective consequentialist in moral theory, who defines virtue in terms of a disposition to try to produce the good, whether or not it is actually produced.

My main qualm about this approach is that it dispenses with any connection between the agent and the world. The agent's behavior need have no actual implications for what occurs in the world, unless it is understood that trying to achieve the good or the true is generally successful, but this is a move Kvanvig would want to avoid, since it would be incorrect in the evil demon world. Linda Zagzebski has recently offered a neo-Aristotelian account of intellectual virtue that would try to preserve the connection to the world by maintaining that the virtue traits must be reliably successful; so, not only is the virtuous agent properly motivated (i.e., motivated to acquire knowledge), she also possesses traits that reliably produce true belief (Zagzebski 1996). So, she *could* hold that when the success condition is not met, as presumably it is not in this case, Joe does not truly possess virtue. This corresponds to what I have called the mixed account in moral virtue theory. Again, this type of account tries to have the advantages associated with both internal and external conditions, yet it also ends up with many of the problems of the extreme approaches. In the area of intellectual virtue,

the pressure will be on to explain why the motive to acquire knowledge is crucial. Methodicalness is an intellectual virtue characterized by trying to think in a clear and well-organized way. Yet, it doesn't seem necessary to view it as involving a motivation to acquire knowledge. I do believe that it does help one to in fact acquire knowledge, but the motivation characteristic of this trait may not involve a desire for knowledge at all. It seems better characterized in term of a desire for order and clarity. [15]

However, one could also deal with the evil demon problem by maintaining a straightforward actualist view and hold that Joe does not have intellectual virtue in the evil demon world. Or, to follow up on the moral variations, one could argue for a corresponding form of counterfactualism.

The primary problem with the counterfactual approach is that it favors near possible worlds or privileges them. This strikes many as arbitrary – though the question then arises, why isn't it also arbitrary to consider effects only in *our* world? [16] So the counterfactualist approach is very attractive, since it avoids the moral luck problems that seem to afflict objective forms of consequentialism. Further, it offers another way to understand the modal character of these traits. We consider not only the fact the Sally has the virtue of generosity – even if, through accident, she and most others are never able to exercise it – because the value can be cashed out in terms of the effects of the trait in possible worlds close to ours where she and most others do have the opportunity to exercise the trait.

My worry regarding counterfactualism has more to do with other counterintuitive features of the account. Suppose, for example, that Sally would have had bad traits if she had not been raised by her mother, who, it turns out, did raise her only through amazing luck – the mother was almost run over by a truck but avoided death through an amazing fluke. Well, in worlds very close to this one, Sally is a bad person. Her high spirits become disruptive. Does it make sense to say that her high spirits are a vice in this world because in worlds close to ours, though not in ours, they are disruptive? One can also reformulate the case to make it less particular to Sally. Suppose that high spirits produce good in the actual world through some cosmic fluke, yet fail to in nearby possible worlds. Sally's high spirits are still virtuous.

To make the account plausible, one would have to say that a trait x is a virtue or a vice if it systematically produces good (or bad) under *actual* circumstances.[17] Sally's high spirits are not a vice. Or one could

create a hybrid definition as well, defining virtue as a character trait that *either* systematically produces good under actual circumstances *or* produces good systematically in worlds close to the actual world. This saves the Sally case by adding a disjunct to be above variation, to the effect that the trait produce good in the actual world, though, *failing that*, it could also qualify as virtue if it produced good in nearby possible worlds. The feel of the account is a bit ad hoc. I think a better suggestion might be to hold that worlds constitute a limit on consideration of consequences; thus, what matters are the consequences systematically produced within that world. In our case, it is the *actual* world, and, more specifically, within populations or societies within the actual world, though I would readily concede that it is quite possible that what is a virtue for me in this world may not be a virtue for some of my counterparts, or might not be a virtue for someone living in a completely different time and place. The argument for this maneuver is simply to point out that if virtue evaluation is to serve a meaningful function in providing evidence of a person's reliability in producing good, this kind of restriction makes a lot of sense. What happens in nearby worlds has little practical significance to this world, and moral evaluation does serve a practical function. Someone might try to argue that the counterfactual evaluation does have practical significance, and, of course, there is clearly a sense in which it does. "Bill's aggressiveness would be valuable in prehistoric times" might provide some practical information – for example, aggressiveness is useful in "state of nature" situations. But on the account I offer, this is simply to point out that it is a putative virtue *in those sorts of contexts*.

Thus, the account I offer is the following: a virtue is a character trait that produces more good (in the actual world) than not *systematically*. Generosity gone awry on a large scale in this world is not a virtue even if it produces good in a world close to ours. Further, as argued earlier, even within the actual world, judgments of virtue are context sensitive. This doesn't commit one to a form of pernicious relativism, since the critierion for virtue is universally the same.

The account I favor is therefore a weak form of actualism with respect to the virtues. But it is important to note that "systematically" does a lot of work in dealing with the moral luck problem. It rules out flukes in the actual world conferring value. Thus, we are still justified in ascribing virtue to agents who, through mere bad luck were not able to produce good. If they possessed a character trait that systematically produces good in that context (though not in their particular cases), they still have the

relevant moral virtues. I believe that the general view of luck as a "fact of life" is the best solution to the problem of moral luck. A consequentialist can well argue that we still should be sensitive to luck because that sensitivity will itself be something good-producing. It will stimulate additional control over action, which in turn will stimulate the production of better actual outcomes.[18] Thus, counterfactual claims are quite relevant to virtue evaluation. If good would be produced by the agent but for some fluke, or bad luck in the actual world, the agent still has moral virtue as long as the relevant trait produces good systematically in the actual world.

5

Virtue and the Will

The metaphysics of virtue needs to be distinguished from the epistemology. The account of what a virtue is has been outlined. However, there is still the epistemological problem of how to determine what consequences of the trait count. Suppose that we were all grossly mistaken about the benefits produced by generosity. Suppose that generosity only produced good consequences in the short term, but the long-term consequences were devastating. If generosity toward the needy in the long run produced parasites, or persons whose characters had in some way been undermined, and if generosity did this *systematically*, then it would not be a moral virtue. Long-term consequences count. For this reason, I think it entirely likely that we are mistaken in calling some traits virtues precisely because we fail to see the harmful effects these traits produce. Those traits with good *foreseeable* consequences are the ones we *regard* as virtues – though the judgment could be mistaken. The more we know about the world, the fewer mistakes we will make. These observations provide a great deal of intuitive support for a consequentialist theory of virtue. The fact is that when we do see that we have misjudged the consequences of a trait, we change our judgment of the trait's status as a virtue.

Chastity may be an example of this. Chastity for women is not generally considered to be a moral virtue anymore, though it certainly used to be considered one. Why the change? One popular explanation for why chastity in women is a moral virtue is provided by evolutionary psychology. If women were not chaste, men would have no confidence in paternity and would not support children. The social consequences of this would be disastrous. Yet, if this picture were discovered to be mistaken, there would be no more grounds for regarding chastity as a

virtue. As this picture of the social consequences of chastity becomes discredited, so does the opinion that chastity is a virtue. Perhaps people begin to view the disutility associated with restricting women to be more socially harmful than the disutility associated with a male's lack of confidence in paternity. Further, there is yet another explanation for why the judgment of chastity has changed. It could be the case that, in the past, this picture of the role chastity played was correct. Adopting chastity as an ideal of behavior was one strategy for avoiding social disaster. But now this strategy is obsolete. With the advent of birth control, people no longer have to worry that premarital sex will inevitably result in a bastard child. Women have more control over when they get pregnant. Also, there are ways of testing children to determine paternity if there is any serious doubt. Men can be more certain of paternity now, without the constraint of chastity being imposed upon women. If this picture is correct, we have another explanation of why chastity is no longer considered a moral virtue. Both explanations are in terms of people's perceptions of the consequences of the trait. This is further evidence for a consequentialist virtue theory. However, this raises the issue, a perennial problem for consequentialism, of the scope of relevant consequences to be considered. That is, how far into the future are we to go in counting the consequences? Which are relevant and which are not? It is worth pointing out that any theory that holds some favorable outcome as necessary, even if not sufficient, for virtue will have the same set of problems.[1] Thus, a mixed view such as Aristotle's would also need to deal with the same problems having to do with the scope of relevant consequences – in this case, the human flourishing brought about by virtue. However, *tu quoque* arguments do not genuinely meet the challenge. Another strategy suggests itself. I also claimed earlier in the book that virtue judgments are context sensitive. Given this, it is certainly possible to draw the line along the boundaries that set the context. The relevant actual good will be that produced in the given context. So, a trait might be a virtue relative to one context and not to another. What determines the relevant context will in turn be factors that make focusing on one context rather than another useful. That aggression might have been valued in prehistoric times doesn't speak to *me* very much. What's good in the here and now and in the discernible future? Indeed, consequentialism is a "forward-looking" theory by its very nature. In deciding what traits to adopt (just as in deciding what actions to perform), we have to recognize uncertainty, and that all that can be required in practice is that people make the best judgments they

can. But in assessing or evaluating their traits of character, we go by what is actually produced, because there are cases where the virtue is not supported by the agent trying to do what is morally good. Instead, the agent may simply be trying to assess others accurately, or live up to his job description, or accomplish some other purpose. Thus, we make the familiar split between a standard of moral evaluation and a decision procedure. In making judgments of virtue, we are clearly assessing or evaluating; thus, the objective approach seems particularly useful.

If the consequences of a trait are what define the trait as a virtue, then the problems for virtue theory outlined in Chapter 3 disappear. One need not choose between an Aristotelian conception and a Kantian conception of virtue. Both conceptions are describing virtues; they have simply focused on misleading paradigms, which are used as the basis of their theories. Huck Finn also possesses virtue because his sympathy is a good-producing trait, even though he lacks fully good intentions. Indeed, from the subjective point of view, one might find plenty of flaws with Huckleberry's decision-making process.

1. PSYCHOLOGY VERSUS MOTIVE

Still, it is one thing to provide an explanation for why a trait is a virtue and quite another to motivate someone to adopt the trait. *Should* we even *want* to have these traits? Not necessarily. There is a vast gap between the psychology of virtues and the morality of virtues. It mirrors the gap Hare proposes between the two levels of moral thinking – the intuitive and the critical (Hare 1981).

On the critical level, when we think about these traits, we can see why they are virtues or vices. I can see that loyalty is a virtue *because* loyalty binds people together in efficient social units. I can see that charity and generosity are virtues because they lead to a redistribution of goods in society from the richer to the poorer. These traits have evolved within human cultures to promote human welfare. That is how they function. But getting clear on the function of virtues does not enable us to get clear on whether or not accepting and inculcating these traits is good. This is because I have defined moral virtues as traits conducive to human flourishing in the social context, and all along I have made the assumption that human flourishing is good. Without this assumption, my theory, while still consequentialist, is not normative. Even an emotivist might agree with my account at this point. To get the full theory, we need an account of human flourishing as good. It is only after we

have this account that we are in a position to fully criticize a person's view of virtue.

Let me use an analogy to illustrate this point. I can understand why I use the expressions "yuk" and "yum" when I come into contact with various foods. "Yuk" is an expression of disgust, and this response is elicited when I come into contact with rotten food. This response is an adaptive one, because organisms that avoid rotten food generally live long enough to pass on their genes. Likewise, "yum" is an expression of approval and is elicited in response to wholesome food – ripe fruit, for example. Once again, this response is adaptive because ripe fruit as opposed to rotten fruit is good for the organism.

But knowing the history of the response does not provide sufficient grounds for arguing against a response. Suppose a research scientist has developed a candy that tastes just like ripe, sweet apples but does not have an apple's nutritional value. My response to this candy will be "yum" even though I know the candy is nutritionally inert, and this is quite appropriate. The only way I could argue that this response is mistaken is if I held another assumption, namely, that only natural products are good. With this assumption, the artificial substitute would be labeled "bad" and the "yum" response illegitimate. But, in this case, this extra assumption seems false. It is perfectly reasonable to respond approvingly to the artificial flavor.

'Virtue' works the same way. It tracks human flourishing within a group. Thus I can predict that people will approve of a trait and call it a virtue when they regard it as conducive to human flourishing (just as I can predict that people will say "yum" when presented with food that has properties we have evolved to prefer). So, the more we know, the better we deploy the word. But to use 'virtue' normatively, we need the extra assumption that human flourishing is good. This is a perfectly reasonable assumption, given a variety of theories of the good.

Consider another example. Suppose that evolutionary psychologists are correct in maintaining that I have the emotions I do for adaptive purposes. Suppose I love my cat because I was designed to produce and nurture children, but without children I take another object as the focus of my affection. This ersatz child both triggers and satisfies my maternal drive, since it resembles an infant. I can accept this explanation without feeling that I should repudiate my cat and fulfill my function of producing and nurturing children. I love my *cat*, for whatever reason. Even if some of my traits, like a disposition to show affection for small, helpless things, exist because of my function to bear children, it does not follow

that I should bear children to provide the affection with a "proper" focus. Indeed, I could argue that it is better for me if I do *not* have children, since children would prevent me from pursuing other interests. The explanation provides no motivating reason for me.[2] For instance, suppose that today you found out that you had been created, like the Terminator, for the purpose of destroying certain innocent people; that is your "design" function. Will this provide you with a motivating reason for killing them? I think not. All it will do is explain, perhaps, why you have certain traits that you do have – why you are aggressive and resourceful, for example.

At the intuitive level, our view of virtue mirrors this confusion. The correct account of virtue may be consequentialist, but some of our intuitions about how we should be may be stubbornly nonconsequentialist. The critical and the intuitive may fail to mesh. The case of chastity, discussed earlier, is one where they do mesh, and I believe that our critical reflections can cause a change in intuitions over time.

But consider yet another example, that of romantic "honor." Past cultures placed a great deal of emphasis on this virtue. Why? The cold voice of science would say that – for example – young men fighting duels over the love of a young woman mirror animal behavior that weeds out the weak, thus permitting the female to choose the stronger mate, which ensures that her children will be stronger, and so on. Even if this is true, the young men fighting the duel don't fight for that reason. They fight to preserve their honor. Also, even if this explanation of its function is true, dueling poses a social threat; as weapons become more deadly, it becomes more socially disruptive. So, if romantic honor demands duels, romantic honor is not a virtue trait. Critically, we can see this. But at the level of intuition, many will feel the necessity of going to extraordinary lengths to preserve honor. A consequentialist theory of virtue is the correct theory, but we cannot believe it, at least with respect to some virtues and vices. There may exist an uneasy tension between our critical judgments of virtue and our intuitive reactions to these traits of character.

Recognizing a trait's effects will give a person reasons for adopting or rejecting the trait as a virtue. But oddly, we may feel that there are other quite distinct and quite appropriate motivating reasons. One can see why a trait is valuable objectively (because it produces good consequences), yet have a different reason for valuing it (or devaluing it) subjectively. Our attitudes may be slow to catch up with our perceptions.

The claim so far is that a virtue is a disposition that systematically produces good. The claim is not merely one of meaning; it is metaphysical. There are these things out there – and *that's* what they are. However, I do not mean to make the claim that regardless of what the word means, or what's out there in the world, we should think of virtue this way. My thesis is neutral on this issue, though I suspect that at least for some virtues the answer will be that we shouldn't think of them this way.

Other writers have defined virtues in terms of their functions, which is also a teleological definition. Edmund Pincoffs has developed a functional view of virtue, which defines virtues as traits that give reasons for preference. He writes:

> Good character, from the agent's point of view is not so much character that is seen to be biologically necessary or desirable as it is character that one wants in the choices one must make between persons and also between possible selves. What one wants when one must choose persons may be, in the last analysis, persons whose qualities are necessary for flourishing; but that would remain to be shown. (Pincoffs 1986, p. 68)

Since no one state provides *the* reason for preference, the view is non-reductive. Thus, Pincoffs sees the connection between virtue and human flourishing to be contingent, and not conceptual. Pincoffs is skeptical of reductive accounts of the virtues. His own view does not rely on such a connection.

> On my own (functional) view, we look for those qualities that serve as reasons for preference in the ordinary and not-so-ordinary exigencies of life. . . . On a functional view, it is the tensions, tendencies, pleasures, and pains of common life, including the engagement in practices, that lead us to value or disvalue this or that quality as responding well or ill to what we go through together. (Ibid., p. 97)

Pincoffs goes on to classify the virtues into different categories that correspond to functions. He first separates the instrumental virtues (persistence, courage, alertness, etc.) from the noninstrumental ones. The noninstrumental virtues are themselves separated into the aesthetic virtues, the meliorating virtues, and the moral virtues. The moral virtues – of concern to moral philosophers – are those that ". . . have the common

characteristic that they are forms of regard or lack of regard for the interests of others. . . . What makes them virtues or vices is, essentially, the agent's acting or his failing to act out of a certain motive" (Ibid., p. 89). The other types of virtue need not be grounded in such a motive. Thus, Pincoffs would not classify traits like modesty or blind charity as *moral* virtues, though perhaps they would be aesthetic ones. Further, given the motive he does pick for moral virtues (i.e., regard for the interests of others), he would probably disagree with my claim that even good intentions are not necessary for moral virtue. But why pick this as a requirement of *moral* virtue? Pincoffs's strategy here echoes Hume, for he thought it quite clear that motive is the root of virtue: ". . . all virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives" (Hume, 1960, p. 478). This is because Hume thought it clear that 'bad luck' should be ruled out of our moral judgements. He wrote of someone who seems to perform a vicious act: "If we find, upon enquiry, that the virtuous motive was still powerful over his breast, tho' check'd in its operation by some circumstances unknown to us, we retract our blame and have the same esteem for him, as if he had actually perform'd the action, . . ." (ibid., pp. 477–8). So, as long as someone intended well – or was motivated to act well – he has the virtue, and thus deserves credit, even though through some ill chance he was either unable to act or the action went awry. My account reverses the significance of these factors. I am quite willing to hold that good motives are crucial in that they guide good action, given the way we are wired. However, the motives are indicators that the agent is engaging in good-producing action, and that is the source of their value. The Humean approach views the source of value to be the motives themselves. One virtue of this approach is that it allows one to make distinctions between types of virtues based on a consideration of differing motives and differing sources of value.

Delineating types of virtue has been a problem throughout the history of virtue theory. Hume had a particular problem distinguishing some aesthetic virtues from the moral virtues, since he defined moral virtues as states of mind that were found pleasing or of which people approved. 'Innocence' – lack of knowledge of evil – is a state of mind that is approved of or that is found pleasing, at least in children, yet it seems to have little *moral* worth. One could, however, point to the particular functions that the virtues serve in trying to delineate them systematically. That is, it may be that differing sources of external value offer a way of delineating the virtues. For example, following the lead of Warnock:

. . . 'good dispositions' being crucially important to abatement of the ills inherent in the human predicament, one might with reason regard as specifically *moral virtues* those which, not being essentially, or even potentially exclusively self-profiting, would tend to countervail those laid at the door of the limitedness of human sympathies. (Warnock 1971, p. 81)

It isn't so much the motive central to the disposition that defines it as 'moral,' 'aesthetic,' or 'prudential.' Rather, it is the function of the trait, regardless of the motive that is central to it. This is the general strategy I would like to pursue in defining virtues on consequentialist grounds. Thus, my strategy involves a separation of motive and virtue. On my view, what makes a virtue *moral* is that it primarily produces good for others, it is sustained in this way. What makes a virtue *aesthetic* is that is that the virtue's quality merely be pleasing. What makes a virtue *prudential* is that it produces good primarily for the agent. Some moral virtues may also be aesthetic, but some will not be. This distinction marks the metaphysical – epistemological distinction made use of previously. *Aesthetic* virtues must be recognized as pleasing: they must actually have this subjective effect. *Moral* virtues, on the other hand, may or may not be pleasing subjectively, largely because a trait's good consequences may go unrecognized.

Thus, good motives, like good intentions, are not necessary to moral virtue if by the necessity of good motive we mean that the content of a person's desire (or aversion) that causes the action must be good. It is conceivable, à la Mandeville, that a motive of selfishness could produce a great deal of public good (Mandeville 1970). The motive here is self-oriented, though the good actually produced could be solely the public good. Good motives are important, so being motivated by a desire to see others happy usually produces good, because motives give rise to intentions that in turn typically give rise to actions guided by the intentions (and intentions can in turn give rise to motives). But it may be that a motive of self-interest produces good for others as well – and, if so, that motive forms part of the virtue. The virtue would be a disposition cluster consisting of tendencies to be motivated and forming beliefs in certain ways that produce good action.

Thus, what I am describing here is not a form of motive utilitarianism (Adams 1976). First of all, I make no commitment to maximization in this account. For a trait to be a virtue it must produce more good than not, but this does not mean that it must produce the most good along any specific range of good. Also, I am not claiming that the good in question is pleasure. The good in question is the flourishing of social

creatures, which does not always get cashed out in terms of pleasure. Further, the motive the agent acts on, the motive that causes the agent to form various intentions to act, is only part of the virtue, as described earlier. Motives, of course, can be evaluated separately – as can intentions – and deemed good or bad according to either the intentions they give rise to or the actions typically associated with them. But motives themselves are not virtues, though a disposition to be motivated in a certain way may form an element in a disposition cluster that is a virtue. Indeed, Adams himself remarks that motives generally do not constitute traits of character at all; they are rather wants and desires which give rise to actions: "A desire, if strong, stable, and for a fairly general object . . . may perhaps constitute a trait of character; but motives in general are not the same, and may not be as persistent, as traits of character" (ibid., p. 467) A motive, all by itself, is not a virtue. This, I think, has contributed to the adoption of the moral sensitivity requirement – because it does seem intuitively plausible to hold that no matter how good a person's motives are, if they are not sensitive to morally salient facts they will not be moved to action. For example, there is something defective, morally, in a person who is motivated typically out of a concern for others but who is blind to the needs of others. Indeed, Lawrence Blum explicitly expresses this concern when he writes:

> Moral philosophy's customary focus on action-guiding rules and principles, on choice and decision, on universality and impartiality, and on obligation and right action, [has] masked the importance of moral perception to a full and adequate depiction of moral agency. An agent may reason well in moral situations, uphold the strictest standards of impartiality for testing her maxims and moral principles and be adept at deliberation yet unless she sees moral situations as moral situations, and unless she perceives their moral character accurately, her moral principles and skill at deliberation will be for nought and even lead her astray. (Blum 1991, p. 701)[3]

Amelie Rorty also echoes this concern in many of her articles. The best will in the world is useless without the appropriate sensitivity, or what she calls "habits of salient focusing." The idea is that the morally good or virtuous individual is able to perceive and focus on what is morally relevant, shifting all other features of a given context to the background (for moral purposes).[4]

While true, this is only one aspect of a more complex picture. What one fails to see may be crucial to virtue as well. Consider the case of blind charity. A disposition to not see the minor flaws in others means

that one behaves, given other dispositions, of course, with a charity free of condescension and insincerity. A tendency to *see* the flaws, even conjoined with other generous traits, will inhibit this behavior.

Richard Brandt argues that a virtue is a ". . . relatively unchanging disposition to desire an action of a certain sort (for example, helping one in distress, not stealing) for its own sake" (Brandt 1992, p. 289). He sets out to give a partial defense of the Aristotelian view of virtue. However, his view is certainly different. He argues that many virtues are amenable to what he calls a "motivational analysis" – that is, for x to have the trait in question, x must be motivated in a certain way (to perform intentional actions) characteristic of the trait. Thus, virtues and vices can be conceived as consisting in the appropriate desires and aversions:

> . . . a virtue is a relatively permanent *desire or aversion* (or complex of these) directed at some action-type and/or some expectable kind of consequence of an action (which can be included in the description of the action, for example, helping the distressed), with a strength up to a certain (acceptable) level, and furthermore being good in some sense. (Ibid., p. 293)

The motivational element and the intentional element, it seems to me, can be kept separate; one can be motivated to perform good actions, though not good intentional actions. However, Brandt characterizes virtues as dispositions having to do with intentional action because "Only thus would we be able to regard a virtue as a trait of character" (ibid., p. 306). Yet, some facets of human character have little to do with intentional action. Being an excessive worrier, for example, may not lead to intentional action – just a lot of uncomfortable internal states. However, *moral* virtues may involve intentional action, since they would be other-directed. However, if one believes my analysis of virtues of ignorance, these too are not conducive to the right sort of intentional action alluded to in Brandt's account, since the blindly charitable person does not see that her actions reflect overestimation of the good of others. Brandt does make a distinction between *character* and *personality*. He writes, "There are some interesting personality traits, affecting action or at least a style of behavior, which do not obviously fit into this pattern: gentleness, grouchiness, sulkiness . . . possibly these are not dispositions having to do with intentional action, but are just traits of personality (not of character) . . ." (ibid., p. 295). The idea seems to be that in order for a trait to be a character trait, it must "have to do with" intentional action. Perhaps Brandt would argue that being a worrier isn't a vice because it is a feature of personality rather than character, that is, it

doesn't involve intentional actions so much as feeling a certain way about various states of affairs. Likewise, maybe traits like modesty and blind charity aren't virtues but personality traits. But there is a sense in which blind charity, for example, is responsible for intentional action of a certain sort; for example, Jane Bennet intentionally speaks very well of Mr. Bingley's sisters, since *she* does not think of them as nasty. What she does not intentionally do is to overestimate their goodness. It is the overestimation that characterizes blind charity; thus, this trait fails to be a virtue on Brandt's analysis. This is not surprising, given his Aristotelian leanings. Brandt is still free to argue that the virtues of ignorance may be traits we value, and thus in some sense virtues, but they are not moral virtues. Then the burden is to explain why not. To say that the intentions don't work out right isn't enough. One would also need to explain why properly directed intentions are crucial to the point of being *necessary* to virtue. This is a gap. I can concede their importance without conceding that they are necessary.

Arthur Ripstein has pointed out that some virtues may not involve intentional action in another respect. Some may involve the nonintentional (as opposed to unintentional) refraining from action, for example. The case he discusses is the case of George Orwell, who refrains from shooting a fascist soldier during the Spanish Civil War because the man is running with his pants down. It not so much that he intends not to shoot, but his 'empathy' does not allow him to. Ripstein's point in the article is that traits of character, like compassion, are often not amenable to explanation in terms of general schemata, such as Brandt proposes, where virtues are desires and aversions of certain sorts that function along with beliefs to lead to action (Ripstein 1987).[5] However, Brandt might try to claim that this is an example of a personality trait. This maneuver is a familiar one in theorists trying to deal with putative counterexamples. Bernard Gert, in his account of moral virtue, also argues that moral virtues involve intentional action; affective states like compassion are better regarded as personality traits rather than character traits (Gert 1998).

Brandt, along with many others, seems to feel that the mixed view is the most intuitively plausible one. One of my aims has been to show that this mixed view inherits the problems of its "pure" alternatives and offers no *theoretical* advantage. Superficial plausibility is not worth the heavy burden of inherited problems.

But perhaps the intuition that makes the mixed view appealing can

be used to refine an objective account of virtue. Compare two alternatives:

(1) *x* is a virtue iff it is a character trait that produces actual good consequences overall or systematically.

(2) *x* is a virtue iff it is a character trait that produces what the reasonable person would expect to be good consequences overall or systematically.

Note that (2) is not subjective since the agent's own psychological states play no role in determining the trait's status as a virtue. Note also that (2) can handle the case of the person who is making a ghastly or unreasonable mistake about the good; such a person would not count as virtuous. However, it cannot handle the problem of reasonable mistakes. Consider the generosity case again; if generosity did lead to bad overall consequences, then it would not count as a virtue, even if a reasonable person could not have expected such consequences. (2) would hold the generosity, then, to still be a virtue. The only way to get out of this is to make it into an ideal observer account:

(2') *x* is a virtue iff it is a character trait that produces what the ideal observer expects to be good consequences overall or systematically.

The ideal observer is fully rational and fully informed. But this runs into the objection that (2') is extensionally equivalent to (1), since the ideal observer is simply one who knows what is actually the case. Why not just strip away that extra layer from the account? Thus, while any of these formulations would work for my overall strategy of supporting a purely objective consequentialist account of the virtues, I favor (1) – with a few modifications to be added later.

III. FLOURISHING

Most accounts of virtue, consequentialist or not, tie virtue to human flourishing. Usually, promotion of human flourishing is at least a necessary condition to virtue. However, the problem of specifying the good for humans has been almost intractable, and I will have very little to say about particular conceptions of human flourishing. My concern is the fairly modest one of arguing that while an account of flourishing is important to a complete understanding of virtue as a normative concept, one can still develop an independent theory of virtue.

Another important preliminary point: I will focus the discussion on *human* flourishing for the sake of simplicity and because this is the type of flourishing we are most concerned with. However, it is important to note that the relevant flourishing for virtue will be the flourishing of any beings in the moral community, whether or not they are human beings. Cruelty directed solely toward dogs is still a vice, and it is conceptually possible that alien beings have virtues and vices, though their behavior contributes not one tiny bit to human flourishing.

The following is a brief categorization of some popular attempts at spelling out human flourishing:

1. The *well-functioning view*: a creature flourishes when it functions well. To determine the details of a particular creature's flourishing, one must determine its relevant functions, particularly those that might be distinctive of the creature.
2. The *normality view*: a creature flourishes when it is normal rather than abnormal. Here the normal is equated with the good, the abnormal with the bad. Usually (though not always) there is a statistical understanding of normal, which makes this account both too narrow and too broad.
3. The *subjective good view*: a creature flourishes when it experiences good subjective states such as pleasure.
4. The *objective good view*: a creature flourishes when its activity instantiates some objective good, such as knowledge or rationality, and/or the creature has subjectively good experiences.

Another possibility is a *pure objective good view*, which does not allow subjective states even as a component of the good. Such an account, which completely denies the value of pleasure, would be very implausible. Thus, the objective view I consider is mixed; subjective states matter, but they are not the only things that matter.

Any of these categories may overlap. For example, one could have a well-functioning objective good view of human flourishing that identified the characteristic function of humans as the exercise of rational thought.

Given a well-functioning view, what we try to do is determine the functions of a particular organism to determine whether or not that organism is flourishing. Thus, to be flourishing in terms of health, all of one's biological functions must be operating smoothly. In terms of psychology, the characteristic function or capacity of human beings is rationality. Thus, those who exhibit tendencies that instantiate rationality flourish as human beings. Other facts about human nature will be rele-

vant here. For example, almost everybody who writes on this topic starts out by making observations about human nature – noting, for example, that for human beings flourishing is tied to their social existence. Human beings are social creatures – they are the sorts of creatures that live in structured communities and depend on each other for their well-being to a certain extent. While it is possible for a hermit to live *entirely* alone, it seems plausible that even such a person's existence could be enhanced by the contributions of others. Thus, even a hermit's flourishing can be tied to others. It is the social nature of humans that was also thought to set them apart from animals, though perhaps to a lesser extent than rationality, since many animals do seem to be social, and some, like insects, live in highly structured communities.

The well-functioning view has the interesting feature of being non-normative, unless, of course, one just assumes that human flourishing understood in this way is good. But some kind of separate argument needs to be made for this. Indeed, as far as developing our concept of virtue as a normative one, this line isn't too promising. This is because virtue would be dependent upon whatever characteristic functions humans have. Rationality and social interaction are benign features of human existence. But suppose that something like anger functioned, for humans, as a mechanism of intimidation. Intuitively, anger is not a virtue *even* if it has some typical role in human interaction. This is because anger, aimed at intimidation, isn't generally good. Thus, to be plausible, the well-functioning view with respect to virtue needs to be restricted to "good" functions. But then one simply needs a normative theory, and the pure well-functioning view itself, as has been discussed, doesn't fit the bill.

Also, 'function' is ambiguous between design function and use function. 'Design function' refers to the use that the feature was designed for; 'use function' refers to the function the feature serves in use (Achinstein 1983, pp. 272–5). Thus, a pen has the design function of writing, though its use function can vary; for example, a particular pen may be used to prop open a door. One theme brought up earlier is that something like design function hardly seems normatively relevant. Suppose that we were designed by evolutionary forces to feel an overwhelming homicidal rage whenever someone stepped on one of our big toes. That certainly doesn't make such rage good or desirable. Similar points can be made regarding the use function of objects and traits; to evaluate these as good or bad, we need separate criteria. Thus, one could give an account of virtue along the lines of well functioning as human flourish-

ing, but this by itself is not an account of human flourishing as good, which is needed to make virtue normative.

The normality view holds flourishing to consist in a normal state for that being; lack of flourishing consists in an abnormal state. There are a number of ways to spell out this account. It might be purely statistical – so that 'normal' is determined by what most beings in that class are like with respect to a given trait. Thus, if most human beings have ten fingers, then that is normal, and that would be taken to be a condition of health or biological flourishing. The problem with such an account is that it is both too narrow and too broad. It is normal for humans to experience tooth decay, but that is not a part of flourishing. Various "abnormal" traits may be associated with superior flourishing – like having an unusually generous nature or being heroic and brave. Still, normality need not be statistical. Sometimes what is normal for a being, or a trait, refers to what it was designed for or what it aims at. The normal function of a sperm is to enter an egg cell, though very few actually make it.[6] However, this understanding of the normality view collapses into the well-functioning view.

James Wallace has developed a naturalistic account of the virtues that uses a normality view of flourishing. He regards the virtues as qualities that are desirable for human flourishing, and flourishing is something determined in a roughly scientific manner by observing the normal functioning of entities. That is, when we want to determine what is good for humans, or what constitutes human flourishing, we should do what scientists do when they try to determine what is good for bald eagles, for example. We observe them in their habitats to determine what is normal and healthy for them and also what is abnormal.

> . . . life is a normative concept that cannot be understood apart from the conception of a creature's good. It does not follow from this, however, that dicta about a certain creature and its life divide into objective facts and subjective normative notions that exist in an epistemological vacuum. Among the facts about living creatures are how they live normally, under what conditions they flourish or languish, and what the proper functioning is of their parts. Knowledge of such things is indispensable for the biological sciences. . . . There is no reason in principle why [the] study of human excellences based upon the nature of human life need be any less objective, well founded, or authoritative than the study of any sort of living creature. (Wallace 1978, pp. 16–17)

Wallace goes on to use a thought experiment about Martians in order to make his point more salient. In order to understand what is good for

these creatures, one needs to first figure out what kind of life is "characteristic of its kind" (ibid., p. 20). This will involve an understanding of what is normal and what is abnormal about such creatures. And this brings us into the realm of the normative – but it is also quite objective (at least, Wallace thinks we should grant this if we think that biology is objective).

For human beings, of course, the "habitat" or context in which they dwell is a socially structured community. What we try to figure out is what character traits are conducive to human well-being within a community. Thus, human excellences will turn out to be understood relative to what is normal for human beings. Pincoffs has criticized Wallace for making his account "observer oriented" rather than "agent oriented":

> The agent, the person living in the convention-ordered community, is not primarily interested in the qualities in other people and in himself that are conducive to or are constitutive of health and flourishing. He is primarily interested in whether he can trust a person, whether he can count on the person's remaining constant in his attitudes, whether he is likely to be cruel, unjust, or cowardly. (Pincoffs 1986, p. 98)

Virtues, on his account, give us reasons to prefer one agent over another. Thus, Pincoffs picks up on motives as the defining characteristic of moral virtue. My account would be as guilty as Wallace's in this respect: virtue is judged to be whatever trait is conducive to human flourishing, whether or not agents in the community recognize the trait as a virtue. But this just shows that one needs to distinguish the metaphysics of virtue from the epistemology: agents within the community are working with limited cognitive abilities and information. What they may be picking up on is that good motives (intentions, etc.) are reliable indicators of the presence of virtue. So, if John is the sort of person who is motivated by a concern for others, then I can reliably assume that he is virtuous: that he is a generous person, for example. But this does not mean that such states are necessary conditions for virtue. They are merely very reliable indicators. Pincoffs is making the mistake of assuming that what people are looking for defines the trait. That is confusing the epistemological issue with the metaphysical one.

When I judge someone, I will look at their motives, too, as a guide. If John does something good, I may want to know his motive, because this will give me information about what sorts of things move John to action. The better John's motives, the better able I am to rely on him to act well.

My disagreement with Wallace's account lies in several points. First, consider his general definition of virtues: "Human excellences, including virtues, will be capacities or tendencies that suit an individual for human life *generally*. These traits are such that if they were lacking altogether in a group of people, these people would be incapable of living the life characteristic of human beings" (Wallace 1978, p. 37). But I can imagine a society of intemperate individuals living a relatively happy existence, yet I would still maintain that temperance is a prudential virtue even though a society lacking it is not thrown into utter disarray. This is because it seems plausible to maintain that temperance would make things better for the individual in a variety of ways. Overindulging in food and drink can lead to ill health. Of course, at this point, Wallace could reply that such intemperate people are not really living the life characteristic of human beings. But my question will then be: what is this life? This is my second qualm. He seems to say early on that the life characteristic of humans is the life ordered by convention, but this is somewhat vague. The naturalistic part has to do with figuring out what is normal for humans. But it seems an open question whether what is normal is bad.

A variation on the normality view is the view that what is natural for humans constitutes their flourishing and is therefore good. This "natural equals good" view was roundly trounced by David Hume, who pointed out that many things that are natural are not good, and many things that are good are not natural: ". . . nothing can be more unphilosophical than those systems, which assert, that virtue is the same with what is natural, and vice with what is unnatural . . . in the first sense of the word, Nature, as opposed to miracles, both vice and virtue are equally natural; and in the second sense, as oppos'd to what is unusual, perhaps virtue will be found to be the most unnatural. At least it must be own'd that heroic virtue, being as unusual, is as little natural as the most brutal barbarity" (Hume 1960, p. 475).

The subjective good view has many different versions. One common suggestion along the lines of a subjective good view is hedonism. What is good is what is pleasurable. Thus, human good is what is pleasurable for humans. Thus, good communities are structured in such a way as to promote the pleasure of their inhabitants and minimize the pain. Of course, hedonism is subject to rather notorious difficulties and has been pretty much discredited as an account of the good. There seem to be things that people value independently of whether or not they cause pleasure. Moore considers beauty and knowledge to be examples. Plea-

sure is important, but other things are important independently. Thus, human good consists in having pleasurable responses, but also having lives filled with beauty and dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. The truth is that there are any number of ways in which someone's life can be fulfilling. What is the case, however, is that because of this very fact we can make observations about how a good community deals with this fact. Thus, individual autonomy is crucial to human happiness and well-being, in part at least because of the variety of lives people have to choose from, and the fact that individuals are in the best position to choose for themselves how to flourish.

However, there is a split in value theory among those who view value as subjective – consisting in pleasure or desire satisfaction – and those who view it as objective – consisting in something valuable independent of its contribution to pleasure or desire satisfaction. My inclination is to agree with the objectivists on this. Objectivists do not deny that something like pleasure is good; they simply deny that pleasure is the one and only good. Thus, when it comes to discussing human flourishing, part of that flourishing will consist in having pleasurable sensations but other things as well. As Nozick's experience machine has shown us, how one gets the sensations also seems very important. Of course, as has been pointed out before, the experience machine case is consistent with the desire satisfaction model. But this has its own weaknesses. David Brink has pointed out that the desire satisfaction model of value puts the cart before the horse, so to speak:

> The desire-satisfaction theory says that something is valuable just in case, and because, it would contribute to the satisfaction of actual or counterfactual desires. But . . . this seems to get things just about the opposite way around in many cases; we desire certain things *because we think these things valuable*. . . . It is not that these things are valuable because we desire them; rather, we desire them because we think them valuable. (Brink 1989, p. 225)

It is not simply satisfying desires or preferences that is good. Rather, it is the sorts of desires satisfied. Are the desires of the sadist, for example, to figure into the calculation? If not, then it is only "appropriate" or "proper" desires that count. One way to determine which count and which do not is to try to determine what desires are either (i) normal for humans, (ii) a component themselves of human flourishing, or (iii) contribute to overall happiness (ii and iii would be the same only if happiness and flourishing are considered equivalent). But this puts a constraint on desire satisfaction that interferes with the definition of the

good. One cannot say that the good consists in or *is* the satisfaction of good desires – at any rate, not if one is concerned with explaining or defining the good.

Brink himself argues for an objective conception of welfare, in a discussion of those things important to human flourishing. At the risk of simplifying his position, I note that he makes a distinction between the intrinsic good of the reflective life and our social nature. Thus, practical reason is intrinsically valuable – the ability to make plans, formulate and pursue projects, and so on. Also, our sociality is an important and intrinsically valuable part of our nature: "We have social capacities for sympathy, benevolence, love, and friendship whose realization makes our lives better than they would otherwise be" (ibid., p. 233).

This distinction, though Brink himself doesn't note this, seems to mark the distinction in our nature between the reflective and the affective. The realization of our intellectual and affective capacities is what makes our lives meaningful. To this extent, then, the virtues will promote that realization: intellectual virtues – intelligence, methodicalness, genius, cleverness, clearness, and so on – are traits that enable us to realize our capacities for intellectual development and the attainment of true belief; prudential virtues – which overlap with intellectual ones – enable us to pursue our self-interest; and moral virtues enable us to do things that help others, and thus realize our *social* or other-directed capacities. Thus, given this mixed view of the good, it is not at all surprising that some virtues will be seen to promote one type over another. The virtues of ignorance eschew the intellectual in favor of the social. Some of the goods associated with our social being are our ties to family and friends. Thus, forms of trust that exist peculiarly in friendship will not be odd, or discredited, if they do require a certain amount of faith (against a more normal requirement of intellectual rigor). This account allows a form of consequentialism to advocate a balanced life for the individual. In terms of having virtue, good-promoting traits may be family specific or friend specific. I take it that this is one of the points Railton is arguing for in defending objective consequentialism (Railton 1984); and Frank Jackson also tries to show how consequentialism can incorporate a preference for the "near and dear" by arguing that focus on a group is the most efficient way to ensure good for that group. For us this might well warrant a focus on family and friends (Jackson 1992). A similar theme appears in Hare's two-level theory: dispositions that favor specific individuals may not be incompatible with consequentialism. Such traits may promote the good very effectively. The virtue

strategy – of arguing that the virtues of friendship themselves promote the good – is another way of reflecting this value. Another alternative has been recently suggested by Amartya Sen (Sen 2000), who argues that consequential evaluation is prefectly compatible with "situated evaluation," which holds that a person making a moral choice ". . . cannot escape the necessity to take note of her own position vis-à-vis the actions and their consequences" (483). Thus, parents, in making decisions, must consider the effects on *their* children, in particular. Thus, many current consequentialists hold views that try to show how the theory can be construed to incorporate special concern for the near and dear.[7]

On my view, also, consequentialism isn't committed to agent neutrality; indeed, consequentialist arguments can easily be given for a wide variety of agent-centered considerations. This view tends to be shared by those who view either indirect forms of consequentialism or forms of objective consequentialism as the best alternatives in developing the theory. The objective account I favor in no way commits one to the unpleasant view that one must think in terms of promoting the good in living up to the norms of friendship. This way of thinking is no more bizarre than the way of thinking many scientists exhibit when they argue, for example, that certain human traits evolved for certain ends that are good ends: we can recognize that jealousy has the function of solidifying family ties, perhaps, or reinforcing attachments, and yet when we actually experience jealousy, that function is not something at all apparent to us, or if it is, it's not a factor in our feeling – and not considered an appropriate factor in our feeling. There may be a certain schizophrenia involved, but that's not an argument against its *truth*. It's just a consideration that points to the fact that we may be *uneasy* about the truth, and it may be difficult to accept.

The virtues promote the flourishing of individuals in a wide variety of ways, then, many of which may be incompatible. The unity-of-virtues thesis seems clearly false; otherwise, the issue of balancing concerns would hardly even be an issue. If generosity toward the community and concern for one's family's interests are two aspects of the same thing, then why balance them as separate concerns? The only alternative would be to adopt a sort of holistic view of virtue, like that of McDowell (1979), holding virtue to consist in a single capacity – correct perception – that produces a recognition of the always appropriate balancing of goods.

Even assuming some plausible, mixed view of value, which Brink and others suggest, fleshing out virtue remains problematic. These ac-

counts of the good are offered from the point of view of the individual. Does virtue promote individual good or the good of the community, or both? Some might try to argue that there is no real distinction here since the good of the community is made up of the good of its individual members. However, there are clearly cases of conflict. Individual sacrifice may on occasion be necessary to promote the good of the group. This problem in virtue theory is the general problem of spelling out the *connection* between virtue and human flourishing, even assuming an account of what that flourishing consists in. One way to spell out the connection is to make distinctions between types of virtue. Thus, as far as virtue in general goes, these virtue traits promote the individual good as well as the good of the group – but individual virtues do one or the other. One popular suggestion, adopted by Warnock, among others, and mentioned earlier, is to say that *moral* virtues promote the good of others primarily, whereas *prudential* virtues promote the good of the individual primarily. Writers such as Hursthouse try to keep the connection between individual well-being, virtue, and promotion of the social good by claiming that the life of virtue is the best bet in terms of leading to happiness for the individual; additionally, virtue benefits society. By making the claim this way, Hursthouse can accept the seemingly irrefutable evidence that virtue does in some cases harm an individual – if Roger makes a heroic sacrifice to save another, he is harmed yet virtuous. But virtue generally makes things better for the individual; such an individual benefits from the virtuous reputation, and it's much easier to look virtuous if you really are (Hursthouse 1999).

However, I follow writers such as Warnock to the extent that I believe that moral virtues benefit others primarily. It should be noted that to the extent that other members of a community have virtues, individuals in the community are benefited. *My* benevolence is directed to others; but by encouraging benevolence, the fact that others become benevolent also benefits me. It is very important to the community that people be benevolent; thus, benevolence will be admired and encouraged, and communities in which it takes place are better for the individuals living within their bounds. Goods – things valued either intrinsically or extrinsically – are not usually directly available to each individual in isolation from others. Generosity is a moral virtue, for example, because goods needed for people to live well – food, clothing, shelter – are not distributed evenly. Generous persons give to those who are lacking, thus enabling them to flourish (or at least flourish more than they otherwise would). Loyalty is a virtue because it binds people together more effi-

ciently and reduces psychological stress in relationships. You can count on someone who is loyal. You can work more efficiently with someone who is loyal. Like loyalty, honesty is a trust virtue; it enables one to count on those who have the trait. Thus, some moral virtues will support cooperative enterprises that are crucial to human flourishing. This is why writers on virtue have emphasized reliability so much; they have recognized the importance it has in human interaction. Capriciousness in an individual is frightening. Reliable good is comforting; we needn't be "on the alert" around such an individual.

This doesn't mean that moral virtues fail to benefit the agent – only that they *needn't* benefit the agent.[8] The question one asks to determine whether or not character trait x is a moral virtue is "Does this promote flourishing, and would it have a use even if others didn't exist?" Intelligence promotes flourishing, regardless of the existence of other members of a moral community and is sustained by the benefit to the individual as well as promotion of intellectual good – true belief. Therefore, though it is a virtue, it is not a moral virtue. We now have some tentative way of cashing out the "aims at" in the initial characterizations of types of virtue.

There is a problem with this tentative scheme. Consider traits like wit and charm. One might argue that these are worthless outside of social interaction, and thus could oddly qualify as moral virtues on my view.

David Hume regarded such distinctions as merely verbal. A *virtue* is simply a meritorious quality, regardless of who it benefits. Wit and generosity are the same in that both are virtues. This is a point I agree with. Still, this is not incompatible with noting that there is something particularly meritorious about traits that benefit others, and thus we may want to make further distinctions within the class of virtues. Moral virtues benefit others primarily and are associated with the agent's giving up, either consciously or unconsciously, some advantage. This means that charm is not a moral virtue, though it is found to be pleasing. The charming individual is not giving up any advantage, unlike the honest person or the kind person or the fair person. This characterization has the advantage of explaining why courage is such an odd virtue – difficult to classify. That's because sometimes the agent is giving up an advantage, other times not, and we can't tell what is predominantly the case with this trait.

Another possibility would be to hold that moral virtues are concerned with preventing harms, whereas nonmoral virtues are concerned with

causing positive goods. Thus, a trait like charm would not count as a moral virtue, since it doesn't function primarily to prevent harms (Gert 1998). One problem with this approach, however, will be in the difficulty of spelling out how a trait merely prevents harms without causing positive good. Further, traits we intuitively regard as moral virtues – as, indeed, paradigm moral virtues – resist this classification. Generosity may function primarily, for example, to cause positive good more than simply prevent harm. Additionally, this suggestion suffers from the same indeterminacy of other accounts. Since most virtues have mixed functions, it is difficult to differentiate primary functions for some, such as courage.

Like Hume, I believe the distinction to be largely semantic. These traits are all good-producing traits, and as such can be described as moral virtues. The good of the individual does matter morally. Calling other traits moral virtues simply acknowledges the wider benefits of these traits and conforms with commonsense morality, which holds morality to consist in relationships between people.

IV. PSYCHOLOGY AND VIRTUE

A more serious difficulty in making distinctions between types of traits has to do with the fact that it's possible that some good-producing traits are not psychological. Suppose that someone smelled good, so good that whenever this person walked into a room, tensions were eased, conflict reduced, and so on. Is smelling good a moral virtue, then? Well, one response to this case would be to maintain that since it involves no features of psychology whatsoever, it is not a moral virtue. When we ask about moral virtues, we are asking about what features of human psychology – what dispositions or character traits – are morally valuable in that they tend to lead to *intentional* action on the part of the agent (even if, as discussed earlier, the intention does not take a good direction). Smelling good simply doesn't fall into that category. Thus, while it may be a virtue, it is not a moral one.

Of course, the more radical and daring response is to simply bite the bullet and maintain that smelling good is a virtue if it does have these good effects. According to commonsense usage, we would not *call* it a moral virtue because it does not involve the agent's giving up some advantage. But it doesn't seem at all odd to say, "Steve has the virtue of smelling nice."

However, some – indeed, many – argue that virtues must have a connection to the will of the agent in order to be *moral*. Recognizing

this does not commit one to the view that the agent must therefore be willing or intending in a certain special way to be virtuous. Still, we can modify the definition to the following:

(1") A character trait is a moral virtue iff it is a disposition to produce (i.e., it tends to produce) *intentional* action that is systematically productive of the good.

This definition is still objectivist since the moral quality of the trait is not dependent upon the agent's internal states. It is simply the consequences that matter morally.

A potential problem with this definition is that it might indicate an asymmetry between vice and virtue. Moral vices do not involve any connection to intentional action. For example, negligence and insensitivity are bad traits, but their badness isn't tied to the production of actions with bad consequences. Indeed, negligence often consists in failure to act, as when a doctor fails to operate when she ought or a truck driver fails to monitor his driving as he ought. Insensitivity is a failure to attend to important features of one's environment, such as the feelings and circumstances of others. Both are vices. Moral virtues, on the other hand, do not *characteristically* involve failure to act. A possible exception is self-control. However, a failure to give in to temptation can also be characterized positively in terms of the alternative positive action performed. Jones eats the grapefruit instead of the chocolate cake or walks away from the fight instead of punching the provocateur. But what of the virtues of ignorance? After all, blind charity can be characterized as a *failure* to see certain bad features of others. However, the failure is enabling in a way – it does affect Jane's actions. She intentionally defends Darcy and Wickham to Elizabeth.

An asymmetry between virtue and vice is not a problem, at least intuitively, since intuitively associating vice with a failure to do what one should do seems plausible. However, another strategy is to argue that this intuitive plausibility is misleading – that vices such as negligence can be characterized positively too; the negligent person is *doing* something, though is not necessarily aware of what it is that makes her behavior vicious. The negligent truck driver is dozing off instead of watching the road or pulling over for a rest. Jane Bennet fails to see the bad in others, and this failure affects how she behaves and acts. The connection between virtue and the will that seems so appealing may simply boil down to an observation that it is only those beings who are capable of willing – who are capable of performing intentional actions – who possess moral virtues, or qualities of the mind that are good-

producing. These are creatures who act, even if the virtue/vice does not consist in activity, but rather in failure to act. Most actions can be described either way and involve some kind of mixture. My doing *x* involves a failure to do *y*, and so on. My failure to do *x* involves doing *y*, and so on. This does not tie virtue to the production of intentional action, necessarily, and can still handle the smelling-good quality; that quality is not a moral virtue because it is not a character trait or quality of the *mind*. The objectivist account of moral virtue is preserved with just an attenuated connection to the will, since minds and wills go together. *Thus, the correct definition of moral virtue will be the one previously developed (1), which simply holds that a moral virtue is a character trait that systematically produces or gives rise to the good*. To hold that a moral virtue is a character trait is to recognize that moral virtue is something possessed only by creatures who have minds or characters. Thus, not just any good disposition counts as a moral virtue.

Conclusion

The purpose of this book has been to set out and defend an objective consequentialist account of moral virtue. It has not been to defend a complete account of objective consequentialist moral evaluation, though I believe such an account to be the correct one.

In the course of arguing for this view, I have attempted to make distinctions that I also believe help to clarify crucial differences between different accounts of moral virtue. I have also tried to show that the classical account is deeply flawed – in a way, an intellectually elitist account that places enormous psychological requirements on moral virtue. Of course, the view I propose, at the other end of the spectrum, will to many people have the opposite problem of making virtue too easy and accessible – perhaps I should have called the book *Easy Virtue*. But this inference would be a mistake. Virtue may or may not be easy for the agent. That's the whole point behind the attempt to deflate the conflict between Aristotle and Kant. After all, for Aristotle, once the virtuous agent has the virtue, it starts looking easy too. My account simply holds that a trait that is good-producing – however acquired – is a moral virtue. It may be contingently true that these traits tend to be ones that we have to work hard to acquire and that require some effort to maintain. My view is simply that this is not a necessary feature of moral virtue.

I have further tried to loosen the tie between willing and having virtue. The only agents who possess moral virtues are those with wills; indeed, beings are not agents at all unless they have wills. However, the will need not be directed to the end achieved in order for the character trait conducive to that end to be a moral virtue.

In arguing for these claims, I have tried to show that the best view of

moral virtue is externalist or essentially consequentialist in nature. This approach recognizes the essential importance of the actual creation of the good for virtue while jettisoning theoretically problematic commitments to inherently good internal states. Further, as I hope to have indicated at the end of Chapter 5, this approach is not one that fails to recognize the significance of personal and social relationships in realizing the good. Our nature is such that these relationships are intrinsically satisfying, though it is also the case that development of individual capacities, and production of pleasure and other good feelings, are valuable as well.

But the focus of this book has not been on value theory. It has simply been the project of criticizing the standard view of virtue and showing how another, purely consequentialist alternative could be developed that would avoid the major problems of the classical account. The critical portion of the book, while motivating the positive portion, is independent. If one rejects the consequentialism, one will still have to address the concerns raised for the other standard views. What are the viable alternatives?

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. See R. Jay Wallace's "Virtue, Reason, and Principle," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (December 1991), 469–95, for an illuminating discussion and criticism of McDowell's development of Aristotelian practical reason in explaining the nature of virtue.
2. Michael Slote comes close to attacking it in "Is Virtue Possible?" *Analysis* (March 1982), 70–6. However, rather than concluding that virtue isn't necessarily correct perception, he concludes that it may not be truly possible to have virtue, given that we do have moral progress.
3. Many fine books have recently been written on Aristotle's ethical theory. See, for example, Richard Kraut's *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Nancy Sherman's *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Sarah Broadie's *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Amelie Rorty has edited an excellent anthology of articles on Aristotle's ethics – *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). Julia Annas in *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), also has much of interest to say on Aristotle's ethics – including the almost heretical claim that Aristotle's notion of morality is much like the modern notion.
4. See Rosalind Hursthouse's discussion in *On Virtue Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 7. She has been influenced by Neera Badhwar's article "The Limited Unity of Virtue," *Nous* (1996), 306–29, and Gary Watson's "Virtues in Excess," *Philosophical Studies* (1984), 57–74.
5. See *Nicomachean Ethics*, beginning of Book III.
6. See, for example, Robert Audi's "Acting from Virtue," *Mind* (1995), 449–71, for a discussion of requirements for virtuous action.
7. Throughout this book, 'virtuous action,' unless otherwise specified, refers to action that is the result of a virtue. Sometimes I use the term to refer to action that merely conforms to virtue, but that will be clear in the context.
8. This is controversial. One alternative interpretation is that the virtuous agent must have practical wisdom but need not use it in every single case. Rather, as

long as his actions conform to the dictates of practical wisdom, he is acting virtuously. If practical wisdom is thought to involve only calculation, then this seems to be correct, because Aristotle claims when discussing courage that in the best of cases, such calculation is not present (because the agent must act very quickly). But Aristotle also writes that virtuous action involves choice, and choice involves deliberation, and deliberating well is the job of practical wisdom. We are led to the view, then, that practical wisdom may be exercised on each occasion of virtuous action, but that it may not involve conscious calculation of the best way to achieve ones ends. See Richard Sorabji's article "Aristotle and the Role of Intellect in Virtue" in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 201–19), for an excellent discussion of the textual evidence supporting the view that practical wisdom guides virtuous action on each occasion.

9. For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Aristotle's theory see Sherman *The Fabric of Character*, Chapter 2.
10. For excellent discussion and criticism of some of these views, see Sorabji's article "Aristotle and the Role of Intellect in Virtue." See also Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 57ff.
11. W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). On pp. 70–1 he writes, on Aristotle's theory of virtue, :". . . mature men who have acquired not only a virtuous *ethos* but also practical wisdom may find themselves in situations where their practical wisdom is of no use. . . . [T]hey simply respond correctly without reflecting upon various courses of action. Their good behavior is a matter of moral virtue and not of practical wisdom."
12. Julia Annas also has trouble with this view of Aristotle, i.e., that virtues are habits, if 'habits' are to be understood as rigid dispositions to act in certain ways. She writes (in *The Morality of Happiness*, 50): ". . . the actions I perform from habit are precisely those where I do not have to think about what to do. But how can I rightly be praised or blamed for what is done unthinkingly?" Annas argues that Aristotle would not hold that virtue is a rigid habit; rather, it is a disposition involving deliberation and choice; it is built up by the agent making appropriate choices and developing habits of choice. To use her example, an honest person has the virtue of honesty because she is disposed to make honest choices. The habit of being virtuous is not mindless or mechanical because the appropriate *choices* will have to continue to be made by the agent.
13. See Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, Chapter 5, for one interpretation of this process in Aristotle.
14. There is some disagreement here. Robert Adams, in "Involuntary Sins," *Philosophical Review* (1985), 3–31, argues that there are many involuntary states of mind that are subject to ethical appraisal. Robert Louden in *Morality and Moral Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 64–5, argues, however, that the states of mind alluded to by Adams are subject to moral appraisal because they are "indirectly" voluntary – though not "directly" voluntary: ". . . something is directly voluntary if the time, place, and manner of its occurrence depends directly on my choosing . . . something is indirectly voluntary if, though I am unable to always choose the exact time, place, and manner of its occurrence, I am nevertheless able to undertake some voluntary efforts to

control it." So, some emotions are such that I have little control over specific occurrences of them, but I can still try to train myself to bring them under control. Adams could probably respond to this maneuver by arguing that attempts to control the negative emotions (envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, etc.) are voluntary, but the emotions themselves are not always controllable and are still blameworthy (i.e., even if I train myself really hard, I may not be able to control them effectively).

15. See Susan Sauve Meyer's *Aristotle on Moral Responsibility*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), especially Chapter 5, where she discusses responsibility for character. Here Sauve Meyer plausibly argues that when Aristotle holds persons responsible for their characters – even though childhood habituation is important to being receptive to virtue – he means that we are responsible for choosing to be good or bad persons. That is, training can point out to a child what is required for virtue, but the agent must choose to be virtuous; the knowledge itself is insufficient to make someone virtuous. In presenting his considerations against the Socratic identification of virtue with knowledge, she writes, "Both virtue and vice are still open to those who possess such knowledge, and it is up to them whether they become virtuous by following the prescribed activities or vicious by following the proscribed activities" (140). She points out also that Aristotle, in presenting this account, is assuming that the child is raised in a society much like the one he is familiar with: Athens, where one has many appropriate examples to learn from. "But at a certain point (the transition from *trophe* to *epimeleia* in EN × 9) it is up to the young person himself or herself to undertake the activities that will complete the process of habituation and in the end determine whether he or she becomes virtuous or vicious" (141). Thus, the responsibility for character that Aristotle argues for is *qualified* responsibility.
16. Gage's case is discussed in *Descartes' Error* by Antonio Damasio (New York: Avon Books, 1995).
17. Indeed, on some occasions, a simple feeling of pleasure will be appropriately absent: ". . . men are called courageous for enduring pain. Hence courage is a painful thing and is justly praised, because it is more difficult to endure what is painful than to abstain from what is pleasant" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1958, 76).
18. Being properly affected will include, as Kosman points out in "On Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 103–16). emotions are quite distinct from pleasure for particular virtues. For example, it may be that courage would require anger at the appropriate things. Still, pleasure in achieving the courageous end is necessary.
19. See M. F. Burnyeat's essay "Aristotle on Learning to be Good" in Rorty (note 18) for a discussion of how habits regarding pleasure are crucial to developing virtue on Aristotle's account: "Aristotle holds that to learn to do what is virtuous, to make it a habit or second nature to one, is among other things to learn to enjoy doing it, to come to take . . . the appropriate pleasure – in doing it" (77)
20. He also recognizes this when he advises people to avoid improper pleasure:

    . . . we must especially be on our guard against pleasure and what is pleasant, for when it comes to pleasure [we] cannot act as unbiased judges. Our

attitude toward pleasure should be same as that of the Trojan elders toward Helen. . . . (*Nichomachean Ethics*, 1109b7–10)

21. For a modern twist on this theme see Philippa Foot, "Moral Beliefs," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 83 (1958–9), 83–104.
22. As will be discussed later in more detail, Aristotle does make room for *pain* in exercising virtue. This will occur, for example, in situations where the agent is faced with some kind of conflict. So, a good person inflicting a just punishment on another will feel pain – at the other person's suffering. But even though she dislikes the suffering, the punishment is just, and thus achieving that end will give her satisfaction, even though she may be conflicted. She is still flourishing because, in acting well, she is promoting a good type of life for herself and one she recognizes as good. See Michael Stocker's *Plural and Conflicting Values* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), Chapter III, for a discussion of conflict in Aristotle's ethics.
23. One reason is the conviction that the superiority of human beings over animals is one of kind rather than degree, and thus human virtue or excellence is tied to the unique quality of rationality. Ethics is still in the grip of this conviction, quite surprisingly. Progress made since Darwin in other areas is only imperfectly reflected in progress in ethics.

CHAPTER 2

1. It needn't be his own self-worth, at least directly. A person could be modest with respect to his children and their accomplishments. Even this sort of modesty, however, involves self-worth if one believes that the deeds of one's children reflect on oneself. And, for sincere modesty, it is still a matter of underestimation.
2. For this reason, we might consider the modest person's modest *beliefs* to be *moral* examples of what Roy Sorensen terms "blindspots"; see Roy Sorensen, *Blindspots* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
3. This trait may or may not be a virtue. Be that as it may, it is a separate case from sincere modesty (see Ridge 2000).
4. The view that modesty is recognition of good luck could render the following account of immodesty – as recognition of bad luck. So the modest person points out the ways she has benefited from good luck; the immodest person points out the ways she has been harmed by bad luck. If what is going on is more than merely *pointing out* luck factors; that is, if it is only good luck that the agent is attending to, then this account would still be a sort of ignorance account since the agent is failing to consider the counter evidence of bad luck. If the agent is aware of the counterevidence but doesn't point it out, then the sincerity issue is raised again.
5. See Michael Slote, *Goods and Virtues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 61ff. Slote discusses humility as a virtue, and humility is closely akin to modesty. The humble person has a tendency to avoid vanity, arrogance, boastfulness, and so on. But Slote discusses humility as though it were the same as modesty; he talks of humility as a virtue being dependent upon the humble person's having other

desirable traits but, for example, choosing not to discuss them or to take credit for them. But I believe that there is a distinction to be made here. A humble person, unlike a modest person, can paint an accurate, though perhaps unflattering, picture of himself. The modest person needs to underestimate.

Norvin Richards, in *Humility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), views humility as a virtue that involves accurate self-assessment, but of the sort that resists ". . . pressures toward incorrect revisions" (5). I believe that his use of 'humility' is basically the same thing as what I mean by 'modesty.' In arguing for his view, he disagrees with the sort of account I offer. However, he fails to make a distinction between a low-estimation view and an underestimation view. These are not at all the same. He seems to view the only alternatives as either accurate self estimation or complete self-deprecation. This is a false dichotomy. I, too, would not view self-deprecation as a virtue.

6. See Margaret Gilbert, "Vice and Self-Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (August 5, 1971), 443–53. This same sort of asymmetry is discussed with respect to evil.
7. There are, as Williams notes in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, exceptions to this observation, 'just' being one such exception. A person can, and does, act according to justice by making decisions because they are just.
8. It is conceptually possible for someone to be falsely modest without bad effect and even to good effect. Such a person would have to have great self-control to behave this way without detection, and thus I don't think this possibility is realistic. However, there are places in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (edited by J. B. Schneewind, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983) where David Hume would seem to disagree with me here, arguing that false modesty is preferable to sincere modesty. However, even he writes at one point: "A small bias toward modesty, even in the internal sentiment, is favorably regarded . . . ; and a strong bias required in the outward behavior . . ."(87). This indicates that he would agree that some underestimation is good (though not strictly required) as long as it doesn't go too far. In this respect, anyway, Hume would agree with my account.
9. I also think that a person who does not exhibit exaggeration is not necessarily modest; he isn't modest if his opinion of himself is still too high.
10. Another possible way of dealing with virtues of ignorance is hinted at in *Nicomachean Ethics*, when Aristotle writes that the truthful person tends to understate the truth because it is more tasteful than exaggeration. This would mean that the truthful person tends to be modest because modesty is more pleasing than boastfulness. Perhaps it is possible to view the virtues of ignorance as aesthetic virtues rather than moral virtues. Thus, the analysis would be that, though it is necessarily true that no moral virtue rests on ignorance, this is not the case for aesthetic virtue. Although I think that this is a very interesting line to pursue, it would entail developing an account of aesthetic virtues and how they differ from moral ones.
11. Owen Flanagan argues that modesty can be characterized as nonoverestimation (see "Virtues and Ignorance," *Journal of Philosophy* 87 (August 1990), 420–8). But a person who does not overestimate self-worth isn't necessarily modest. If Leonardo da Vinci had told people he was one of the greatest artists in the

history of Western civilization, he would not have been overestimating at all. Nor would he be modest. Further, even if some cases of modesty involve nonoverestimation, my larger point holds as long as some cases of modesty involve underestimation. The claim I argue against – that no virtue involves ignorance – is a universal claim. Thus, a single counterexample is sufficient to refute it.

12. Daniel Statman, in his article "Modesty, Pride and Realistic Self-Assessment," *The Philosophical Quarterly* (October 1992), 420–38, has helped to draw my attention to this gap in my analysis.
13. Alexander Nehamas has pointed out to me that what people may actually be referring to here is not forgetting in a cognitive sense; rather, it is purely affective. The agent remembers all of the facts but simply doesn't let the facts bother her anymore. However, while it is true that one remembers certain general facts and features of past harms, beliefs involving them become less vivid over time – they become paler. Pale beliefs don't move us as much, and the reason is that they're stripped down; vivid detail is lacking. So the forgetful person's level of affect is influenced by the facts she retains. That she remembers general features of past events doesn't make her not forgetful; she is simply less forgetful than someone who has totally forgotten past events.
14. James Wallace would argue that this is not a true case of courage, since it violates a condition he considers necessary, i.e., that the agent believe that the action he or she is performing is dangerous to the self. See his *Virtues and Vices* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 78ff.
15. See Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue" in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 201–19. In correspondence Julia Annas has suggested to me that this case is not a problem for Aristotle because the agent's action is still due to deliberation, even though he is not consciously deliberating at the time the action is performed; that is, even though the agent is *not* figuring out how to act, he just acts – he is still acting with a particular aim in view, which is a noble one. This is necessary to differentiate courage from reflex. Sorabji goes into the issue of acting virtuously, with some view of the good life in mind in these sorts of situations. But then the issue becomes one of what type of ignorance Aristotle intends to rule out. These agents are still not calculating and weighing, even though their actions are not reflexive. Simply requiring that the agent act with some conception of the noble in mind is not sufficient, since many foolish agents would satisfy this requirement. What makes the actions different from reflexes is that they are intentional actions. But performing intentional actions doesn't require calculation. Agents who display behavior typical of the virtues of ignorance are also acting intentionally under some description; for example, Jane Bennet is acting intentionally when she offers excuses for Darcy. So her behavior is not a reflex behavior, but I take it to be the case that it doesn't satisfy the deliberative framework set out by Aristotle, since she displays lack of practical wisdom – an inability to see and weigh particular morally relevant features of a context – though she surely possesses a conception of the good or noble that she tries to live up to.
16. Daniel Povinelli's research with chimpanzees suggest that researchers looking at

chimp behavior tend to redescribe the behavior in terms of deliberative processes on the part of the chimps rather than as simply responses to a situation that meets certain descriptive criteria. The tendency is to attribute deliberation where it is lacking. Povinelli also suggests that we (closely related to chimps) have a tendency to do the same thing with respect to our own behavior and that, while human deliberation certainly occurs (and thus there is a distinction between chimps and humans), it occurs much less frequently than we are prone to think. Instead, we "redescribe" actions as deliberative when in fact they are result of some hard-wired noncognitive process of response to a certain feature of the environment. These comments were made at a presentation of Povinelli's research at Dartmouth College in December 1999.

17. Amelie Rorty points out in "The Two Faces of Courage," *Mind in Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 303, that "Even in the dramatic cases that involve risking life rather than livelihood, the courageous generally say that they were able to do what they did because they saw it had to be done. . . . [S]ometimes the fascination for the task was so great they hardly felt their fear. . . ." It is common for those who perform courageous acts to say that they didn't really feel any fear; that they either didn't think about the danger at all, or that it didn't seem real to them. Otherwise, with the danger very salient, they would have frozen and been unable to act.
18. See G. J. Warnock, *The Object of Morality* (London: Methuen & Co., 1971), 78ff., in which he argues for a distinction between *moral* and other virtues. I will take up this issue later.
19. As Hume pointed out with modesty: ". . . were the door opened to self-praise and were Montaigne's maxim observed, that one should say as frankly, *I have sense, I have learning, I have courage, beauty or wit,* as it is sure we often think so – were this the case, I say, everyone is sensible that such a flood of impertinence would in upon us as would render society wholly intolerable" (*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* ed. J. B. Schneewind, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), 86.
20. In conversation, Bernie Gert has suggested the following analogy: on my account, virtues are ranked in the same way we might rank meals. For example, I might commend both the spicy Thai meal and the rich French meal, though the two are incompatible (they don't go together). I might also prefer the Thai meal while still commending the French meal and recognizing that it, too, is quite good.
21. 1988. Screenplay by Shawn Slovo.
22. *Weapons of the Spirit* was directed by Pierre Sauvage (1987).
23. Larry Blum discusses this case in "Community and Virtue" (in *How Should One Live?*, ed. Roger Crisp, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), remarking that the notably virtuous agent ". . . does not regard her act as morally optional; rather, she feels some sense of moral compulsion to perform it. This sense of moral compulsion need not be straightforwardly that of duty. . . . On the other hand, the virtuous agent may regard the act as her duty" (246). Blum is making the point that virtue needs to be understood as sustained within communities, and the villagers of Le Chambon set a standard for how this is done. However, the description of the psychology is what I am picking up on. They could be

completely mistaken about the moral status of what they are doing and still be virtuous. Indeed, this particular sort of mistake seems especially admirable, because it looks as though they are shouldering a larger moral burden than most people are willing to sustain.

CHAPTER 3

1. It should be clear by now that I have many other reasons for wanting to deny that other-directed motives are necessary for moral virtue. The virtues of ignorance are examples of virtues that may produce actions not at all motivated by a concern for others. If an agent is modest, it is simply the case that she's underestimating, and that influences her behavior, but the specific motives behind her behavior could be various.
2. A great deal has been written contrasting Aristotle and Kant on virtue. See, for example, Gabriele Taylor and Sybil Wolfram's "Virtues and Passions," *Analysis* (January 1971), 76–83, and Nancy Sherman's *The Fabric of Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), as well as her *Making a Necessity of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Rosalind Hursthouse also devotes a chapter of her recent book, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) to this contrast.
3. I follow Aristotle's translators in using 'pleasure,' although 'satisfaction,' at least in some cases, may be more felicitous since, as was discussed earlier in the book, Aristotle notes that the exercise of some virtues such as courage is often accompanied by pain.
4. This issue has engendered a great deal of debate in the literature. Barbara Herman has developed the best-known interpretation of Kant on this matter; see her "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty," *Philosophical Review* (1981), 359–82.
5. In *The Doctrine of Virtue* (trans. Mary Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) the account Kant gives of virtue is complex and sophisticated. A virtue must be a settled state of character. Thus, it is possible to separate good will from virtue in that one could have a good will on an occasion but not have virtue, since the good will did not indicate a settled state of character. For an illuminating and thorough discussion of the details of Kant's theory of virtue and 'duties of virtue,' see Onora O'Neill's "Kant's Virtue Ethics," in *How Should One Live?*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), see also J. B. Schneewind, "The Misfortunes of Virtue," *Ethics* (1990), 40–63.
6. Hursthouse offers the interesting view that there's not as much difference between the two as the traditional interpretation would suppose. On her analysis there is still a difference, but it is simply one that reflects the different commitment to emotion in the theories. See her interesting discussion in Chapter 4 of *On Virtue Ethics*. Also see Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 222–6, for a brief discussion of why she feels that the distinction between Aristotle and Kant on virtue has been overblown.
7. Julia Annas discusses this in *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 53ff. The quote she cites is from Plutarch's *De Virtute Morali*.

8. Foot, in *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 10, notes the ambivalence when she writes: ". . . on the one hand great virtue is needed where it is particularly hard to act virtuously; yet on the other it could be argued that difficulty in acting virtuously shows that the agent is imperfect in virtue. . . ." Foot also views the cases as getting support from underdescription; our intuitions will vary, depending on what it is that makes it "hard" for the agent. My view is that we need to look at characteristic consequences in fleshing out the examples.
9. See her interesting discussion in Chapter 4 of *On Virtue Ethics*. For some articles that also attempt to focus on the similarities between Aristotle and Kant, see *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, ed. Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). See particularly Christine Korsgaard's essay "From Duty and For the Sake of the Noble," 203–36. Korsgaard also believes that, while there is some difference to be made out between Aristotle and Kant, it has been overestimated. She also believes the difference has to do with how each would characterize the cold person: "There remains only this difference: Kant would certainly not say that the cold person, provided he somehow managed to do his duty, was any less good, or was in a less morally good state, than the person who does his duty and also enjoys it" (223).
10. David Carr in "Two Kinds of Virtue" (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 85 [1985], 47–61) suggests this general strategy for delineating two distinct types of virtue: virtues of self-control and virtues of attachment.
11. Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), 225.
12. To say that freedom for Jim is, according to Huck, a nonmoral good is to say that Huck regards freedom as morally bad for Jim to have, given its effects on Miss Watson. Huck fails to see it as something Jim deserves or has a right to. But Huck loves Jim, and because freedom is something Jim wants, he helps him.
13. Stocker ("Morally Good Intentions, *The Monist* [January 1970], 124) goes on to modify the analysis from "good intentions" to "at least partly good intentions," to some extent to deal with Huckleberry Finn–type cases. One change is that the agent needn't believe that the object of the intention is an overall good. Yet, even on Stocker's refined analysis, the most that could be said of Huckleberry is that his intention with respect to Jim is partly good.
14. Hume writes in the *Treatise*: "It appears, therefore, that all virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives, and are considered as merely signs of those motives" (ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 478.
15. The consequences in question are goods for others in order to distinguish moral from prudential virtues. There will be more discussion of this issue later.

CHAPTER 4

1. I should point out that there are at least a couple of competing conceptions of what it is to be a consequentialist theory. On the most basic understanding, a consequentialist theory is one that defines right action, or what one ought to

do, in terms of consequences, period. On this characterization, even egoism is a consequentialist theory. Samuel Scheffler, however, gives it a more robust definition: "Consequentialism in its purest and simplest form is a moral doctrine which says that the right act in any given situation is the one that will produce the best overall outcome . . ." (Scheffler, *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1. On this view, consequentialism is characterized as a maximizing theory. This would rule out satisficing versions of the theory (e.g., Slote 1989). Utilitarianism is then understood as a consequentialist theory that identifies the good to be maximized as pleasure. Some may also view agent neutrality as essential to consequentialism. I don't believe it is, since this would rule out various forms of objective consequentialism that seek to incorporate norms that are not agent neutral. Thus, I use 'consequentialism' in the first and most general sense mentioned unless otherwise specified. This is in keeping with how Philip Pettit roughly characterizes consequentialism as ". . . the theory that the way to tell whether a particular choice is the right choice . . . is to look at the relevant consequences of the decision; to look at the relevant effects of the decision on the world" (Pettit, introduction to *Consequentialism*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993, xiii).

2. It could also be pointed out that a consequentialist who wanted to assimilate Hume could maintain that the pleasing quality of even excessive benevolence is a good effect. Thus, a trait is a virtue if it is pleasing because its social utility is perceived or just naturally pleasing somehow, like benevolence. Since Hume seems to make no commitment to maximization, it is difficult to see how he could be interpreted as a Utilitarian, however.
3. I find this really odd, given the emphasis that Hume placed throughout the *Treatise of Human Nature* on things holding "generally" and for the most part. For example, ". . . as every thing, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue . . ." (ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 499.
4. Ibid. Also, in the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* he writes "It is the nature, and, indeed, the definition of virtue, that it is a *quality of the mind agreeable to or approved of by everyone, who considers or contemplates it*" (ed. Eric Steinberg, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1977), 60, fn. 1.
5. Also, in *The Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* Hume writes: "The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces character and actions, amiable or odious, praiseworthy or blamable; . . . – it is possible, I say, that the final sentence depends on some internal sense or feeling which nature has made universal in the whole species" (ed. J. B. Schneewind, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), 15.
6. This raises an interesting issue regarding the scope of relevant consequences, or how 'generally' or 'systematically' is to be understood in this account. The account that I'm pushing in this book focuses on the production of good within a population, and not simply with respect to an individual. This seems intuitively plausible to me. Further, one can point out that if one of the main functions of virtue evaluation is to provide descriptions that are informative regarding the

reliability of the agent's qualities, then this also seems to fulfill that function better than restricting the scope of relevant consequences to those good effects generated by the individual. That would make the description more subject to luck factors. While there will, of course, be contexts in which we're interested merely in the agent's reliability, that reliability is usually parasitic on the more general reliability of the trait within a population. We're less interested in the fluke cases, since these don't give us equally good information about what to expect.

7. The contrast is not simply between actual good and expected good. The subjective view can also be spelled out as holding that the agent must simply try to maximize the good, where this is not identical to doing what one believes will maximize the good (i.e., expected good). So, for example, Sally might try to save the world from destruction by an asteroid – and thus try to maximize the good – even though she does not believe she will succeed, because the probability of success is low, and thus she is not acting so as to maximize expected utility. Elinor Mason makes this distinction in "Consequentialism, Obligations as Tryings, and the Ought Implies Can Principle," unpublished manuscript. One might wonder whether this is really 'trying' rather than 'hoping,' but insofar as this represents determining rightness in terms of the agent's subjective states, it is still a form of subjective consequentialism.
8. One can't avoid the moral luck problem altogether, since there would still be the problem of constitutive luck or luck in character. One's character development is influenced by factors beyond one's control (see Nagel 1979). However, the Kantian perspective minimizes the impact of luck considerably, and one might even argue in the case of constitutive luck that its impact could be diminished if rational agents could, at some point, take control of their own character formation.
9. See Chapter 1 of *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), where her suggestion is that "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances" (31).
10. I am unclear about how Railton should be classified along these lines. He is generally taken to be promoting the indirect form of objective consequentialism, though on my reading he seems to endorse the sort of ambivalence about hard cases that I allude to here. Since he seems to be endorsing the view that in order to do what is right the agent may need to act in ways that he believes do not maximize the good, and since he also seems to hold a split between act and character evaluation in analyzing the case of Juan and Linda (Juan needs to decide between visiting his wife or spending the money in a way that maximizes the good – e.g., by writing a check to Oxfam), I view his account as very close to the one I give: ". . . an intuitive sense of the rightness of visiting Linda may be due less to an evaluation of the act itself than to a reaction to the sort of character a person would have to have in order to stay home and write a cheque to Oxfam under the circumstances . . . especially in view of the fact that it is his spouse's anguish that is at stake" (Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* [1984], 134–71), fn. 30.

11. For an interesting discussion of this issue see Roger Crisp's "Utilitarianism and the Life of Virtue," *Philosophical Quarterly* (1992), 139–60.
12. (2) is not as ridiculous as something like

    (3) If I were talented, I would be a proficient musician

    which is totally lacking in specificity. (3) would apply to *anyone*, and that accounts for its absurdity.
13. Another problem with this approach has been pointed out by Marcus Singer, who argues that the view is incoherent because it is impossible to compare the actual consequences of an action with the actual consequences of its alternatives, since those actions that are not in fact performed have no actual consequences. But note that on this view, with respect to character traits, one is comparing the good produced with the bad produced and judging the good to be greater (for the trait to be a virtue). The extent to which it is greater in order to qualify as a virtue can be open to debate, of course, and I don't go into that in this book. However, this will avoid the problem that Singer tries to develop for actualism. See his "Actual Consequence Utilitarianism," Mind (1977), 67–77.
14. See Jonathan Kvanvig *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992) and Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) for a discussion of the reliabilist alternative in virtue epistemology. Most of the following discussion is indebted to Kvanvig's work, though, of course, I disagree with his account.
15. Kvanvig characterizes this virtue differently, and holds the trait to be a virtue even though the motive in a particular case may not be to acquire true belief (p. 121). The point I am making here is that even if, in general, methodicalness were not characterized by a motive to acquire true or justified belief, it would still be a virtue. Kvanvig also definitely seems to share my view that virtue can still be used for a bad end. For a different critical discussion of Kvanvig's project, see my review of his book in *Informal Logic* (Winter 1993), 73–7.
16. I thank Sam Levey for making this point.
17. Regarding analogous views in virtue epistemology, this seems closest to a suggestion that Alvin Goldman makes in "What Is Justified Belief?" in *Justification and Knowledge*, ed. G. Pappas (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), where he writes: ". . . a belief in possible world W is justified if and only if it results from a cognitive process that is reliable *in our world*" (17). However, the view that I am suggesting for moral virtues isn't focused on accounting for moral justification. And Kvanvig points out that we have no way of knowing what the actual world is really like. This poses special problems for virtue *epistemology*. Since my account of virtue is bypassing the issue of justification, I don't view this to be a problem. The best solution, to my mind, is one that Kvanvig dismisses as implausible: the position that in the evil demon world there are no intellectual virtues.
18. Is production of *actual* good what is morally preferable? The theory presented here would respond in the affirmative. However, others could disagree. Imagine two universes. In the first universe, all rational beings believe they are harming others when in fact they are helping, and this is no fluke. In the second universe,

all rational beings believe they are helping others when in fact they are harming them, and this is no fluke. Which is morally preferable? An internalist would hold the second *morally* preferable.

CHAPTER 5

1. Shelly Kagan makes this point in *Normative Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), 65.
2. This will help to explain something that I have always believed – that virtue is not always good for the agent.
3. Exactly why particularism is presented as an alternative to rule-based ethics is unclear to me. A consequentialist is perfectly free to say that one ought to obey the rule "maximize the good," and further maintain that this works only when people are able to discern what is good. A rule-based theory will not necessarily deny the importance of moral discernment. Rules themselves may be crude implements, but they can be applied with delicacy and discernment.
4. See especially her articles "The Two Faces of Courage" and "Virtues and Their Vicissitudes" reprinted in *Mind in Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).
5. For an excellent discussion of Ripstein see also Douglas Butler's "Character Traits in Explanation," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (December 1988), 215–38.
6. Ruth Millikan used this example during a talk she gave at New York University.
7. Neera Badhwar seems to disagree. See her article "Why It Is Wrong to Always Be Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship," *Ethics* (April 1991), 483–504.
8. Brad Hooker offers an interesting test to show that moral virtues don't necessarily benefit the agent – the sympathy test. Since we don't feel sorry for an unscrupulous agent in virtue of his failure to possess moral virtue, this shows that moral virtue is not a benefit to *him*. Otherwise, presumably, we'd feel sorry for him if he lacked it. As Hooker points out, however, the sympathy test may break down in these sorts of cases (Hooker, "Does Moral Virtue Constitute a Benefit to the Agent?" in *How should One Live*?, ed. Roger Crisp, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 141–55). Consider a vicious person who lacks, let's say, wit. I won't feel sorry for him either, probably (because he's immoral); yet, I still generally believe that wit is something that benefits the agent possessing it.

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