ABSTRACT

Appreciation: Its Nature and Role in Virtue Ethical Moral Psychology
and Dialectical Moral Agency

Nathan P. Carson, Ph.D.

Mentor: Robert C. Roberts, Ph.D.

This dissertation is focused on *appreciation* and its role in virtue ethical psychology and moral agency. While appreciation is a central concept in aesthetics, I argue that it still needs to play a deeper and more precise role in virtue ethical discussions of moral understanding, experience, and agency. Overall, I contend that close examination of appreciation opens up a compelling dialectical picture of moral agency that is phenomenologically realistic, narratively unified, progressively unfolding and, ideally, marked by wholehearted engagement with morally significant features of reality. In chapter one I clarify the nature of appreciation, arguing (among other things) that appreciation does not always involve pleasure, sometimes displays minimal understanding, and is often an unfolding activity. Overall, I suggest that there are three broad, sometimes incompatible but often overlapping types of appreciation: (1) phenomenal-affective experience, (2) engaged evaluative understanding, and (3) the activity of evaluative attention. I argue that evaluative attention holds particular promise as a unitive principle for a dialectically unfolding conception of appreciative moral

agency. In chapter two I import these distinctions into virtue ethics, and argue that through greater clarity and liberality about appreciation, we can identify one type that is fundamental to the moral life, clarify the types that express virtue, and better articulate the relationship between appreciation(s) and ethical wisdom. In chapter three I challenge Talbot Brewer's Neo-Aristotelian view that virtuous activity appreciation involves full motivational harmony with the activity and supervening pleasure taken in it. A thorough critique of Brewer's view, partly through cases of appreciative motivational conflict and emotional pain, opens us toward a more realistic and broadly applicable notion of unfolding appreciation as responsively plural, and closely allied with thoughtful evaluative attention. This conception of virtuous appreciating also suggests a new, concerned engagement understanding of wholehearted agency. Finally, in chapter four I examine Iris Murdoch's notion of moral attention, and develop it as the appreciative activity of evaluative attention that unites developmental appreciative agency. Moving beyond Murdoch, I then articulate the basic elements of such dialectical appreciation as genuinely interactive, perennially unfinished, responsively plural, and a source of formal and personal unity.

Appreciation: Its Nature and Role in Virtue Ethical Moral Psychology and Dialectical Moral Agency

by

Nathan P. Carson, B.A., M.C.S., Th.M., M.A.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Philosophy

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Michael D. Beaty, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of

Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Robert C. Roberts, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____

Thomas C. Hibbs, Ph.D.

_____

Robert Kruschwitz, Ph.D.

_____

Phillip Donnelly, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

May 2013

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduation School.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first debt of gratitude is owed to my director, Robert C. Roberts, who generously dedicated his time and insight throughout various stages of this project. Amidst a very slow start to the project, his continued promptings to narrow the focus and to keep moving were indispensable. He also spent many hours faithfully reading through chapter drafts, and my understanding of the subject matter was continually sharpened through his careful reading, timely critiques, and illuminating questions. I would also like to extend my thanks to Alex Pruss. With no prior obligations to assist me in the project, Pruss persevered through an early and very long draft of the first chapter, offering both excellent insights and provocative counterexamples. I am grateful to Robert M. Adams for his work on the appreciative dimensions of practical wisdom that first ignited the project, and for the insights he offered on appreciation through email and personal conversation. I will also extend my thanks to Christine Swanton for her aid in clarifying some of the crucial issues in the project, and for providing me with a better sense of the gap that needed to be filled in virtue ethics, on the subject of appreciation. I owe a debt of gratitude also to my research assistants, Meg Muta and Lauren Nickodemus, for their excellent editing, formatting, and bibliographic work during the final stages of the project. Their help was wholly indispensable to having the project finished in a timely fashion. Phillip Donnelly also deserves thanks, for his willingness to take on the outside readership in the final weeks before the defense.

Finally, on a more personal note, I am deeply grateful to my wife, Margaret, who through her tireless encouragement and support, was a perpetual source of both hope and motivation. During each of the countless times when I thought that I would never bring the project to completion, her encouragement helped me to appreciate, in no uncertain terms, that I would indeed complete it. To Margaret and to my daughter Emma, who for the sake of this project endured countless days and evenings without a husband or a dad, I extend my humblest thanks for much undeserved patience and for unremitting love.

To Margaret

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In her Postscript to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt described her sense of what was missing in Adolph Eichmann's efficient, bureaucratic self-understanding within the Nazi regime: "Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth… He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*…this lack of imagination… [this] sheer thoughtlessness…can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together."[1] One could, however, capture what Eichmann is missing at the level of realization, imagination, and thoughtfulness using a single concept. Eichmann failed to fully *appreciate* what he was doing.

Let us contrast this rather thin description of blindness with an episode in the story of Stephen Kumalo, the central character of Alan Paton's novel *Cry, The Beloved Country*. This rural South African priest is in Johannesburg, angered and despairing about his son Absalom, who is on trial for a racial murder. The episode describes his interaction with a young, impoverished girl who is pregnant with Absalom's child. True to his character generally, up to this point Kumalo has shown profound compassion and kindness toward the girl. However when the girl unassumingly responds to his questions and admits that Absalom is the third man she has been with, Kumalo yields to a cruel desire. It is a deeply uncharacteristic moment for Kumalo, but perhaps rooted in the

[1] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 287-288.

bitterness he has felt over his son's demise in the city, for the girl's role in Absalom's life is partly emblematic of that demise:

> He stood up, and a wish to hurt her came into him. Although he knew it was not seemly, he yielded to it…. And he said to her, will you now take a fourth husband? And desperately she said, No, no, I want no husband any more.
> And a wild thought came to Kumalo in his wild and cruel mood.
> —Not even, he asked, if I desired you?
> —You, she said, and shrank back from him again
> —Yes, I, he said.
> She looked round and about her, as one that was trapped. No, no, she said, it would not be right.
> —Was it right before?
> —No, it was not right.
> —Then would you be willing?
> She laughed nervously, and looked about her, and picked strips of wood from the box. But she felt his eyes upon her, and she said in a low voice, I could be willing.
> He sat down and covered his face with his hands; and she, seeing him, fell to sobbing, a creature shamed and tormented. And he, seeing her, and the frailty of her thin body, was ashamed also, but for his cruelty, not her compliance."[2]

Although Kumalo *knew* what he was doing, he does not fully appreciate his actions until the moment in which shame at his own cruelty overtakes him. In the context, it is clear that Kumalo's general habits of humility, compassion, and lament over the systemic evils of Johannesburg, lie in the background of his ability to appreciate such cruelty through the emotion of shame.

What is the difference between Eichmann and Kumalo? What exactly *is it* that *appreciation* amounts to, and what structures of appreciation lie hidden in the background of each case? These questions are of no small importance. Robert Adams contends, for instance, that wisdom involves a just appreciation for things that matter, a

[2] Alan Paton, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 103-104.

deep perceptiveness with respect to things that enrich or impoverish human lives.[3] In a somewhat different vein, David Velleman suggests that appreciation is the moral glue that holds together partial love and impartial respect, because both involve an "arresting awareness" of something as a valuable end in itself.[4] Similarly, Swanton claims that apprehending the moral value of persons is impossible without appreciation.[5]

If appreciation is remotely as important as our two examples and these complementary comments suggest, one might think that there is a vast literature in moral philosophy in general on appreciation. Moreover, given the deep way in which appreciation seems to impinge on important dimensions of moral psychology, one would likewise expect a great deal of analysis on appreciation in post-Anscombian virtue ethics and moral psychology. Oddly, neither of these is the case. While appreciation is a central, much discussed and deeply contested concept in aesthetics, it is either narrowly deployed or underdeveloped in ethics, if it is developed at all.[6]

Amongst the few who do develop or invoke 'appreciation,' there remains a remarkable panoply of divergent suggestions and a lack of clarity about it on the one hand, and (at least in virtue ethics) a fairly narrow association of the concept with

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[3] Robert M. Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being For the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21, 186.

[4] J. David Velleman, Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (January 1999): 360.

[5] Christine Swanton, "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," in *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lawrence Jost and Julian Wuerth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 246.

[6] Of course, some dimensions of appreciation have been discussed under other names, such as moral awareness, apprehension or knowledge, or ethical understanding. I hope to show, however, that while these may capture something about appreciation, these categories miss many distinctive things appreciation proper, not least in its aesthetic and contemplative dimensions. In chapters two through four I discuss the major figures in virtue ethics that develop the concept under the term 'appreciation.'

practical wisdom, on the other. As a virtue ethicist, it seems to me worthwhile, therefore, to try to understand what appreciation is and what role(s) it might play in living well, specifically with the aim of also deepening and enriching its role in virtue ethical discussions of moral understanding and moral agency. This, then, forms the initial motivation and aim of the current project.

Picturing Moral Agency

There is, however, a second motivation for the present study, and it is related to a problem I perceive about how it is that many moral theorists go about picturing moral agency, the practical thought that accompanies it, and the psychology that underlies it. We do not have to look far in prominent works of contemporary ethical theory to find the pictures I have in mind. A woman finds herself having to decide whether to have doctors keep her long unconscious mother on life support for another year, or remove it and let her die.[7] A roving anthropologist has to decide whether he should kill one innocent hostage in order to save nineteen others, or simply watch all twenty be killed.[8] An agent must decide whether to push a fat man into the path of a runaway trolley in order to save the lives of the five persons tied down on the track just up ahead.[9] The proliferation of such cases in the literature often leaves a person, as Talbot Brewer notes, "hoping

[7] Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 69. See also Michael Slote, "Agent-Based Virtue Ethics," in *Virtue Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp and Michael Slote (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 239-262. For these and the following two references, I am grateful to Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

[8] Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Bernard Williams and J. J. C. Smart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 98-99.

[9] Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die and the Trolley Problem," *The Monist* 59 (1976): 204-217.

fervently not to end up in the starkly catastrophic terrain of a moral theorist's thought experiment," even though we typically manage to avoid such extreme quandaries.[10]

The value of such cases, of course, is that they push our moral intuitions toward one or another moral theory, and may also reveal inconsistencies either in our own moral intuitions or in the theory the thought experiments are meant to problematize. So, I do not wish to deny the real value of engaging in such thought experiments. Rather, not least in light of the sheer volume of these clever cases, I am suggesting that moral theorists need to attend more closely to the stories they tell, especially the ones that seem quite innocently serving the main stories (or theories) they want to tell. For, there are good reasons to think that these little stories are far from mere benign philosophical tricks.

First, they obscure the normative uncertainty with which most of us face real life situations of moral activity. In most morally significant contexts, we simply do not *know* what we should do with any significant degree of clarity, or what the outcome of our actions will be. Second, as Brewer points out, the narrative structure of such cases contains a misleading notion of practical thinking. Such thinking is represented as "occurring in a moment of stasis prior to action," following a purely theoretical description of the circumstances, and outputting some action the circumstances call for.[11] Such a picture not only represents a minuscule percentage of morally significant activity and choices; it also suggests that moral agents *typically* experience a neat line of division

[10] Brewer, 69. Throughout the main problem I discuss in what follows here, my sensitivity to the problem of philosophical representations of moral agency is deeply indebted to Brewer. However, while he focuses on developing a theory of practical thinking that can undermine the narrative structure and picture of the self that is implicit in these cases, I develop a picture of *appreciative* agency that may do the same.

[11] Ibid., 70.

between descriptive theoretical input and evaluative moral output. This is deeply incredible at the phenomenological level, of course, where many of our morally significant experiences and perceptual seemings are already structured by thick evaluative concepts, in which description and evaluation cannot be sundered.[12] Third, these pictures may implicitly reinforce the prevailing cultural assumption that our primary relation to the good as moral agents is one of *promotion* or *production*. Finally, these little pictures of agency potentially fracture the holism and narratively unfolding character of salutary moral experience. That is, conceiving of moral agency in the quandary sort of way prevents us from grasping how it is that moral agents diachronically grow toward deeper insight and maturity of vision, even in a single experience like that of Stephen Kumalo.

In addition to clarifying the nature and role of appreciation, then, the second main aim of this project is to examine how appreciation can function in moral experience and agency as a strong counterweight to this general collection of problems. For instance, in its contemplative deployment, appreciation works stoutly against the productivist assumption about our relation to the good. Moreover, appreciation is often embedded in thick-conceptually structured moral experience, and as a concept it resists theoretical representation in purely descriptive *or* evaluative terms. Further, as a deepening phenomenon it is quite at home in discussions of growing moral insight or maturity. Appreciation often supervenes on incrementally unfolding practical thought, and may involve searching for and seeking out what is worthwhile in a way that gives full voice to

[12] For more on this issue, see Nathan Carson, "Thick Ethical Concepts *Still* Cannot Be Disentangled: A Critical Response to Payne, Blomberg, and Blackburn." Paper presented at the American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, spring 2011.

ordinary normative uncertainty. Putting these pieces (and more) together, then, my ultimate aim is to show how appreciation, once understood and clarified, can provide a compelling picture of moral agency that is phenomenologically realistic, narratively unified, progressively unfolding and, in the best cases, brings moral agents into a wholeheartedness of engagement with morally significant features of reality.

A Roadmap

With the above concerns and issues in mind, the first order of business is to gain some understanding and clarity on what appreciation is. So, in chapter two, I simply ask and attempt to answer the question: What is appreciation? Drawing upon discussions in aesthetics, ordinary linguistic uses of 'appreciation,' and phenomenologically intuitive examples, I construct a conceptual grammar of appreciation. Along the way, I argue (among other things) that there is no necessary connection between appreciation and pleasure (or delight), and that appreciation cannot always be equated with a special state of evaluative understanding. On the whole, then, I identify three broad forms (or family resemblance types) of appreciation, and argue that they are often non-reducible to each other, but may converge or interact in dialectically fruitful ways. In addition to non-occurrent dispositional appreciations, the occurrent varieties I distinguish include (1) phenomenal-affective appreciations, (2) appreciation as engaged evaluative understanding, and (3) appreciation as an extended activity of evaluative attention. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that the activity version of appreciating can contain the other appreciative states within it, thereby generating an initial model for how the various types can dialectically unfold together, while nonetheless remaining unified by evaluative attention.

As I move to chapter three, I apply my distinctions and findings in chapter two to discussions of appreciation in virtue ethics, where its analysis is far more scattered and less clear than in aesthetics. Focusing primarily on Christine Swanton and Robert Adams, I show how many virtue ethicists invoke the term 'appreciation' without being sufficiently clear on what they mean by it, and that this obscures our ability to evaluate their claims about its nature and role in the virtuous life. With some of the distinctions from chapter two at our disposal, however, I show that we are able to clarify (for instance) how appreciation of a certain sort is a *fundamental* mode of moral responsiveness that informs all the virtues. We are also able to isolate varieties of appreciation that do not express (but may lead to) wisdom, and to distinguish the value of appreciations involving critical comparative appraisal from those that involve (relative) noncomparative wonder. Such distinctions and isolated analyses of appreciative types are illuminating and important in their own right. However, I conclude the chapter by suggesting that mere isolated analysis threatens to leave us with a fragmented set of pictures about appreciation and moral agency. This possibility motivates the need to develop the holistic dialectical conception of appreciative agency mentioned in chapter two.

Chapter four focuses on the work of Talbot Brewer, because he not only gives more prominence to appreciation than any other virtue ethicist, but also develops a dialectically unfolding conception of appreciating as an activity.[13] The chapter focuses on the phenomenology of virtuous agency, and particularly on the role of psychic harmony in such agency. Following (broadly) an Aristotelian view on this

[13] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (full citation in note 7 above).

phenomenology, Brewer suggests that excellently *appreciating* one's own virtuous activity requires wholehearted motivational harmony and supervening pleasure taken in the activity. Against Brewer, I argue (among other things) that such a psychically idealized notion of appreciating cannot handle ubiquitous mixed cases of virtuous appreciation, in which the appreciating is properly marked by motivational conflict and pain. Broadly, I contend that we should allow for responsiveness pluralism in our appreciating on the one hand, but retain Brewer's connection between appreciating and the evaluative attentional component of practical thinking on the other. This opens up, I suggest, a more credible version of holistic dialectical appreciating, and also opens the way toward a new, *concerned engagement* understanding of wholehearted appreciative agency.

In chapter two I identify the activity version of appreciation with evaluative attention. So, chapter five is devoted to an analysis of such attention through the work of Iris Murdoch, and to a constructive account of dialectical appreciating as a holistic, diachronically unfolding stretch of moral agency. Using Murdoch as a point of departure and in conversation with recent cognitive scientific work on attention, I sketch the basic elements of dialectical appreciating. I argue that it is genuinely interactive, perennially unfinished, marked by a plurality of responses and modes of response, and a source of formal and personal unity. I conclude the chapter with an extended illustration, using a journal entry from Auschwitz, of what this kind of appreciative agency can look like.

Approach, Assumptions, and Method

Before I turn to chapter two, some comments on my approach, assumptions, and methodology are in order. First, with respect to the approach in general, the project as a

whole is intended as a constructive philosophical effort to understand appreciation and apply this understanding to several contemporary issues and problems. Hence, while I draw upon a great many historical figures in my discussions and analyses—Aristotle, Kant and Hume are three notable examples—the project is not a historical work and has no pretensions of capturing the full nuance of the various historical thinkers' views.

Second, most of what I say about appreciation advances on the assumption that some version of metaphysical realism about value, particularly about moral and aesthetic value, is true. That is, I assume that in many cases of appreciation, it is possible for agent-relative appreciations to be in touch with or track genuinely existing agent-independent values. Moreover I assume (and somewhat argue) that many of the best instances of appreciation bottom out in the apprehension of goods or values in a way that cannot always reduce to the appreciation of purely descriptive facts or normatively neutral reasons.

The particular sort of realism I tend to support is soft realism, which affirms the existence of moral or aesthetic facts, but also affirms that they can only be grasped or perceived with any significant degree of articulacy by persons in a properly virtue-conditioned appreciative posture.[14] That said, my treatment of appreciation throughout the chapters will make it clear that the *point* of excellence in appreciating is far greater than simply putting us in touch with what is normatively *there*. Rather, the best cases of appreciating constitutively draw us into a deeper and more mature evaluative grasp of how to live in the light of such goods or values. In any case, I assume but do not

[14] For an excellent account of the differences between projectivism, hard realism, and soft realism within a virtue theoretical framework, see Amy Lara, "Virtue Theory and Moral Facts," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 42 (2008): 331–352.

substantively defend value realism, and if this assumption is false, then most of what I say in the project is also false (or at least deeply misguided).

This talk of value realism leads directly into the issue of what a *failure* of appreciation amounts to, in a precise sense. Closely related to this is the question of what counts as appreciative *success*, since appreciation is often a success term. It is interesting to ask, for instance, whether Evelyn Waugh's appreciation of Mount Etna is a success, or a failure of appreciation:

> I do not think I shall ever forget the sight of Etna at sunset; the mountain almost invisible in a blur of pastel grey, glowing on the top and then repeating its shape, as though reflected, in a wisp of grey smoke, with the whole horizon behind radiant with pink light, fading gently into a grey pastel sky. Nothing I have ever seen in Art or Nature was quite so revolting.[15]

Waugh's observations and his appreciative reaction invite reflection on a host of issues related to whether appreciations are purely subjective, or whether there are objective success conditions on appreciation. This is a crucial but also deeply nettlesome issue. I mention it here because, in this project, I talk about successes and failures of appreciation a great deal, but never define what counts as a success or failure in any rigorous sense. For the most part I rely heavily on intuitions about such successes or failures, while I acknowledge that these can only take us so far. I mention the issue here not only to acknowledge that it must be addressed, but also to alert the reader to the fact that addressing it with any kind of proper rigor lies outside the scope of the present project.

I will make some final comments about the general methodology I employ throughout the project, but especially the method in chapters one and two, where I

[15] Evelyn Waugh, *Labels* VII, cited in *Arguing about Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, 2nd ed., ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (London: Routledge, 2002), 152.

examine the nature and value of appreciation.[16] When examining appreciation, I engage in conceptual or philosophical analysis that takes its general cue from both Aristotle and Wittgenstein. Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics* when Aristotle examines the nature of *eudaimonia*, he starts with common appearances and opinions, subjects them to conceptual and philosophical dialectic, and concludes with a theory that preserves as many appearances as possible.[17] The later Wittgenstein, for his part, opposes the constant philosophical drive toward premature generalization, as aptly captured in his dictum "Don't think, but look!"[18] Of course, both in Wittgenstein's case and in mine, the looking involves a great deal of thinking. The point, however, is that I generally follow Aristotle and Wittgenstein by being as resolutely empirical and particularistic as the subject matter allows, and by drawing upon a rich enough diet of examples about appreciation so that the appearances are preserved, and the proper sorts of modest generalizations can be made about it, if any at all.[19]

Second, and related to these points, my conceptual analysis approach takes its point of departure from the way 'appreciation' is used in the ordinary contexts of human

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[16] For the overall shape and a significant amount of the content of my overall method, I am indebted to Robert C. Roberts. Some of the general features of my approach can be found, in a far better and more articulate form, in Roberts's *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-5, and 36-38.

[17] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999). Cf. especially book I.4-5, and Aristotle's defense of his account in terms of preserved appearances.

[18] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 66 (31e). Wittgenstein's treatment of games is very much like the way I try to treat all of the myriad cases of appreciation. "What is common to them all?—Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not all be called "games"'—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!"

[19] Ibid., 593 (155e). Here Wittgenstein says: "A main cause of philosophical disease—a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example."

life, at the level of folk psychology and usage. This approach involves some attention to etymological history and the semantics of 'appreciation' as speakers of English normally seem to use it. However, my main method is one of interpreting the data of these linguistic uses in a way that introduces some order of understanding about appreciation in general, or about what appear to be paradigmatic instances or types. Moreover, this emphasis on the way 'appreciation' is used in the context of human lives means to interpret its uses in light of human experiences, concerns, and projects. There is therefore also a phenomenological cast to many of the examples and intuitions I examine. These are often situated within the narrative frame of human concerns, such as a parent wishing that her niece could appreciate everything being done for her.

It should be therefore evident, by now, that I think the most promising way to examine and explain the phenomenon of appreciation is to deal with it at the personal or psychological level, treating appreciation as either a state of mind or as a conscious activity closely allied with and constituted by mental states. This sets my approach in sharp contrast to other possible approaches to appreciation as may be found in sociobiology or evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and cultural anthropology.[20] A sociobiologist or evolutionary biologist might explain appreciation in terms of its being an adaptive survival mechanism. A neuroscientist might reduce appreciation to some neuronal process or processes, whereas a cultural anthropologist might analyze appreciation as a culturally conditioned or determined pattern of behavior that plays some important function within the social whole.

[20] For a good example of aesthetics of appreciation in conversation with sociobiology, see Ziff, Paul Ziff, "Art and Sociobiology," in *Antiaesthetics: An Appreciation of the Cow with the Subtile Nose* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1984), 99-128.

I do not deny that there is value in using such approaches, but it seems to me that none of these dislodge, in any deep way, the need to analyze appreciation as it figures in typical (albeit culturally conditioned) human experiences, aims, projects, situations and relationships. One could certainly analyze, with profit, an appreciation of a sunset's glory or of a lover's preciousness in terms of adaptive survival mechanisms or neuronal processes. However, my suspicion is that the sunset viewer and the lover would stoutly resist the wholesale reduction of their appreciation to such explanatory schemes. My approach (although not rigorously worked out) seeks to vindicate, as far as I can, the lived experience and activity of appreciation as it is rooted in the concepts and concern-laden narratives of human lives.

I turn now to chapter two for an examination of appreciation in some detail. Among other aims, the hope is to grasp not only what happened to Adolph Eichmann or Stephen Kumalo. By starting in conversation with aesthetics, I am also seeking insight into what materializes in James Wright's poem "A Blessing," for instance, as a man finds himself appreciating an Indian pony:

> …At home once more,
> They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
> I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
> For she has walked over to me
> And nuzzled my left hand.
> She is black and white,
> Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
> And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
> That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
> Suddenly I realize
> That if I stepped out of my body I would break
> Into blossom.[21]

[21] James Wright, "A Blessing," in *Above the River: The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 143.

CHAPTER TWO

Appreciation: A Conceptual and Phenomenological Inquiry

In his 2008 article, "True Appreciation," prolific philosophical aesthetician Dominic McIver Lopes made this striking statement about appreciation in general: "Were there a compendium of theories of appreciation, we might look them up…to see which one is best. However, nobody has a theory of appreciation."[1] He further claims that qualifying appreciation as aesthetic, or assuming that appreciation targets only artworks, "gains us little but controversy" as a result of the widespread lack of consensus in aesthetics regarding theories of art or the "aesthetic." Indeed, a widespread lack of consensus exists in aesthetics about what appreciation is, in part because it is an exceedingly elusive concept, resistant to simple or reductive analysis. However, since it is an absolutely central concept in aesthetics, there exists a wide range of proposals about its nature and proper analysis. In contemporary virtue ethics, by contrast, explicit and deep analysis of appreciation is almost nonexistent, and the analyses that do exist are either established but narrowly restrictive, or recent and ill-developed. I am thus convinced that greater attention to appreciation is needed in virtue ethics, especially (but not only) in discussions about the phenomenology of virtuous agency and the peculiar character of appreciative moral apprehension.

In this chapter, then, my goal is to explore the nature of appreciation through a number of its paradigmatic instances or types, with a prospective eye toward enriching

[1] Dominic McIver Lopes, "True Appreciation," in *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, ed. Scott Walden (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 210.

and broadening its potential role in virtue ethics. As I draw from the conversation in aesthetics, attend to linguistic uses of appreciation, and examine its phenomenologically intuitive appearances, a broad pluralism about appreciation emerges. I argue that the nature of appreciation cannot be grasped and distinguished from other states of mind by isolating any particular subjective qualial or experiential feature common to all cases. On the other hand, appreciation is not simply a species of understanding, since it is often an extended activity, unlike a particular mental state such as understanding seems to be.[2] In addition to dispositional appreciations, then, three significantly different but categorically porous occurrent sorts of appreciation emerge from this analysis: (1) phenomenal-affective experiences, (2) engaged evaluative understanding, and (3) the activity of evaluative attention. I conclude the chapter by suggesting a promising way in which all three might converge in a single stretch of dialectical appreciating, which may be particularly promising for the way that we represent virtuous moral agency.

Appearances of Appreciation

Now, I will begin with several initially obvious appearances about appreciation. Dominic Lopes opens his article, "True Appreciation," in the following way:

> "I appreciate fine cooking" – that is, I enjoy it. "I appreciate your point" – that is, I see what you are saying and see that it is warranted, perhaps also true. Thus, appreciation has a cognitive element – sizing something up – as well as an affective element – a response of liking or disliking. The cognitive element is a good place to start looking for a theory of appreciation.[3]

[2] Later in the chapter, I will respond to the specific objection that understanding itself is sometimes an activity. The objection trades on the fact that understanding comes in degrees as a state of one's mind, and so it seems natural to think of oneself as in a growing *process* of understanding a text or phenomenon.

[3] Lopes, 210. In this way of characterizing appreciation, Lopes is drawing upon aesthetician Paul Ziff's influential article, "Reasons in Art Criticism," in *Philosophic Turnings: Essays in Conceptual Appreciation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 47-74. I discuss Ziff's views later in this chapter.

While Lopes's initial formulation here leaves out important details, the simplicity and clarity of his overture are helpful for getting started. In particular, there is a broad line of division, at least in 20th-21st century aesthetics, between two very different notions of appreciation, though this, too, is oversimplified.[4] On one side, appreciation is chiefly identified with experiential qualia or a special psychological attitude, often occasioned by formal perceptual qualities. Disinterested pleasure or enjoyment, as a special "aesthetic attitude" constituting appreciation, is one historically dominant candidate here.[5] One has appreciated so long as one experiences the right sort of subjective state. On the other side, which is the "conceptual" or "art-historical" side, appreciation is cognitive understanding that grasps the aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties of its object in an apt and often critically comparative way. For many in this camp, appreciation requires knowledge of cultural categories of art and is a function of culturally mediated interpretation.[6] Affect-laden phenomenology stands aside, and non-subjective accounts

[4] Carlson sets up the contrast I have in mind in this way: "Accounts of the nature of appreciation traditionally gravitate toward one or the other of two extremes—they are either heavily conceptual, and typically 'art-historical' in nature, or else rather more perceptual, often involving notions such as 'disinterestedness.'" Allen Carlson, "Critical Notice of Paul Ziff's Antiaesthetics," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (December 1987): 925.

[5] Some historical examples include Aristotle's tragic emotions of pity and fear, Aquinas's delight in contemplation as an account of the beautiful, Kant's disinterested pleasure attending the awareness of beauty, and Dewey's notion of a complex yet unified "consummatory" aesthetic experience. For a list of contemporary views in this tradition, see Noël Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42, no. 2 (April 2002): 146. Monroe Beardsley's Dewey-influenced comments on aesthetic experience, summarized here by Richard Schusterman, is a fine example: such an experience is "an 'intrinsically enjoyable' 'experience of some intensity' where 'attention' and 'the succession of one's mental states' is focused on and directed by some phenomenal field in a way that generates a satisfying 'feeling' of coherence or 'wholeness' and 'a sense of actively exercising constructive powers of the mind'." Schusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 34, citing Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958), 527, and *The Aesthetic Point of View* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 287-289.

[6] The second camp I have outlined includes *both* ontological approaches to appreciation (where its distinctive feature is grasping the correct properties of its object), and "institutional" or "cultural"

of meaning and properties take center stage.[7] Of course, while these are broad lines of division, there are mediating positions that seek to do justice to both the phenomenological experience of appreciation and the prospect that it can involve epistemic success, say, as a form of objectual understanding.

At first glance, these broad lines of division point to some of the most obvious properties of appreciation. To return to Lopes, many of the most obvious cases of appreciation do seem to have something to do with enjoyment, pleasure, or *some* positive valuational attitude or phenomenological experience. Many of them also seem to have something to do with understanding, or grasping some important property or set of properties in a discerning way. Upon closer inspection, however, things become much more complicated than that. I will begin with the understanding side.

Appreciation as Cognitive Understanding

Here are some common ways that many people talk about appreciation. First, 'appreciation' often refers to an occurrent grasp or recognition of some fact, property, or state of affairs, quite absent of any positive valuational attitude. For example, one could say, "I appreciate the point you're making, but I just don't think it's all that important." Here is a case in which someone succeeds at grasping the point by virtue of semantic recognition and connection of those semantic pieces to each other and to other

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approaches, made famous by George Dickie, Arthur Danto, and Kendall Walton, among others. Generally, this latter approach takes the appreciation-relevant properties to be a function of art-historical or culturally mediated categories. On this view, a person whose culture had no category for tragedy would be unable to successfully appreciate *Hamlet*. Gregory Currie, "Interpretation in Art," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 300.

[7] Some candidates, here, include Goodman's reduction of aesthetic experience to cognitive experience (of unique symbolic characteristics, in the case of art), Carlson's scientific cognitivism about nature appreciation, Dickie's cultural or institutional view of art and its appreciation, and Danto's proposal that appreciation (whatever it might turn out to be) is a function of interpretation.

propositions, and yet does not think what is appreciated is of any importance or value. Moreover, the commenter is not committed to saying that the point made is *bad* in some way; he just does not think it matters.[8]

Consider another example: "Until I went on that guided tour, I didn't appreciate the difference between an Arctic and Common Tern." Here, again, the comment appears to be non-evaluative in character and equivalent to grasping, recognizing, or understanding the difference in question by virtue of knowing certain propositions about the birds, while knowing *how* to fit them together so that the bird's properties and the relational properties between them are understood.[9] Inasmuch as know-how or sense-making ability is a dimension of such understanding, it is also a dimension of appreciation in both cases. Such an appreciative grasp by virtue of this ability could, of course, be cognitively better. The veteran ornithologist who specializes in Terns *has* a vast, cognitively detailed, and perceptually seasoned appreciation, and has the ability to bring such understanding, comparative knowledge, and acquired perceptual abilities to bear on situations involving Tern identification, classification, and habitats. Moreover, upon request, the ornithologist can *explain* with great detail just about anything you might want to know about the birds.

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[8] Another case brought up by Ziff, is that of having an appreciation of a work of art by virtue of knowing some proposition relevant to its composition, where the proposition in question is not relevant to evaluating its aesthetic merits. For example, if I know that Haydn stopped incorporating his signature continuo in his late string quartets, knowing this proposition might help me better appreciate the difference and uniqueness of his late quartets with respect to the early ones; however, the appreciation in question does not seem to be directed at the evaluative aesthetic qualities of either his early or late quartets. For more discussion of this, see Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," 49-50.

[9] For instance, I might come to know that 'the Arctic Tern has a mono-colored bill' and that 'the Common Tern does not have a mono-colored bill.' More than that, however, I also appreciate the *difference* between the birds by virtue of fitting all my known propositions about them together in a sense-making way, not only with respect to these two birds, but also with respect to a system of bird-species taxonomies and classifications. Thus, appreciating the difference seems more like a matter of understanding and less like a matter of knowing the truth of isolated propositions.

The two cases show that such appreciation comes in degrees, and that some of its levels are available only to the connoisseur or expert appreciator. However, if this is the whole story about appreciation, then it is simply equivalent to a descriptive, cognitive grasp of some body of information, and appreciation will simply reduce to some kind of understanding currently under discussion in epistemology. As one might suspect, however, there seem to be other varieties of appreciation that may include some measure of cognitive understanding, but cannot be wholly reduced to it.

Appreciation as Evaluative Understanding

We might call the next candidate *appreciation qua evaluative understanding*.[10] There may be at least two different versions of this sort of appreciation. First, in addition to appreciating or grasping various non-evaluative properties in view (cognitively factual understanding), one could appreciate the evaluative point of some practice, person, object or state of affairs without oneself experiencing any valuational or motivational attitudes such as liking, caring about, taking pleasure in, and so on. For instance, one could appreciate the expressive or evaluative properties of a ballet performance—such as noting the graceful character of the dancers' collectively unified movements—without experiencing any positive (or negative) valuational states. One might notice the gracefulness but feel quite indifferent to it. A better example, perhaps, is that I can appreciate the value of the state of affairs involving Osama bin Laden being brought to

[10] Against this distinction between cognitive and evaluative understanding, Ayca Boylu argues that all cognitive understanding *is* evaluative understanding. If cognitive objectual understanding essentially requires grasped coherence relations, and coherence is kind-relative and an evaluative property found only in objects with a *telos*, then it would seem that all cognitive objectual understanding is evaluative understanding. I think this view is false, for cognitive understanding is often directed at worthless or pointless bodies of information that possess descriptive and non-teleological coherence. See Ayca Boylu, "How Understanding Makes Knowledge Valuable," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40, no. 4 (December 2010): 591-610.

justice, but unlike my friends in New York, I might not be moved in any particular way by it. I can, however, appreciate its importance, significance, and value.

The claim that this sort of 'unengaged' evaluative understanding is possible, sets my analysis of appreciation in opposition to a very common view in ethics. Stephen Darwall, for instance, claims that "virtuous activity involves a distinctive mode of awareness of merit or worth." *Appreciation* is this "direct" and "quasi-perceptual" experiential awareness which, unlike beliefs or knowledge that *p, necessarily* involves "feelings" or attitudes of esteem toward the meritorious or worthy thing *itself*.[11] If my examples above are correct, then this view is false. An anthropologist can directly appreciate the worth (say, the social or religious worth) of the practice of infanticide amongst the tribe he studies without at all having feelings or attitudes of esteem toward the practice. In the very same paragraph, however, Darwall articulates a more plausible view that is compatible with my own. Here, he claims that "it is impossible to directly appreciate something's worth without being in the state of deeming or holding *it* important, without its seeming to one as if it matters."[12] On this softer view, it can *seem* to the anthropologist that tribal infanticide is worthwhile or important (in that such acts constitutively preserve tribal religious identity) without his having to *admire* or have positive feelings about it. Indeed, he could appreciate it in this softer way and have deep feelings of contempt or aversion directed at the practice.[13]

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[11] Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 90.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Such an anthropologist is what Bernard Williams has called "the insightful but not totally identified observer." When it comes to ethical concepts or practices, says Williams, such an observer often must imaginatively grasp the evaluative point of a practice or concept, before he can really grasp its meaning. However, such a sympathetic observer need not *endorse* the practice (or concept use) himself,

The Difference Engaged Appreciation Makes

Now, while Darwall's first claim that direct appreciation *necessarily* involves engaged feelings of worth is overstated, there surely are such instances of appreciation which, absent the emotional engagement, would be less fully appreciative of the object. My friends in New York might tell me that I *do not* really appreciate, or do not fully appreciate, the importance or value of the state of affairs in Bin Laden's being brought to justice, if I am not the least bit moved by it. The New Yorkers may have a point, and they are trading on yet another aspect of the concept of appreciation. Gilbert Ryle clarifies this in saying that that there is something incongruous about "a person's knowing the difference between good and bad wine or poetry, while not caring a whit more for the one than for the other; of his appreciating without being appreciative of excellences…. At least in this field, the partitions are down between the Faculties of Cognition, Conation, and Feeling."[14] If my analysis above is correct, then the partitions are not *always* down, but perhaps sometimes they should be.

It would seem, then, that if we limit our analysis of appreciation to either cognitive understanding or unengaged evaluative understanding, we still may be missing something distinctive and valuable about many paradigmatic instances of appreciation. Perhaps, then, we ought to look more closely at appreciation *qua* evaluative understanding, where in addition to cognitive understanding, our emotions, desires, hedonic states, or grasp of importance is *engaged* in some way. Here, of course, we have

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either in thought or in moral feelings of admiration or approval. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 141-142.

[14] Gilbert Ryle, "On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong," in *Collected Essays 1929-1968: Collected Papers Volume 2* (London: Routledge, 2009), 385.

now straddled the line that Lopes drew for us above, between understanding and enjoyment.

Appreciation as Engaged Understanding-Enjoyment?

If a wine connoisseur mentions that she appreciates a good 17-year-old Burgundy Pinot Noir, we assume that she not only has a complex understanding of and cultivated taste for such wine, but also enjoys it. In addition, the understanding and enjoyment come together, perhaps indistinguishably, in the moment of the wine's tasting. Indeed, in some appreciative cases *enjoyment*, or something like it, can be a necessary condition of a certain kind of understanding. In the connoisseur's case, the enjoyment partly constitutes his or her attunement to its excellent features.[15] Using a less "elitist" example, we could surely say the same for a video game enthusiast's appreciation for Call of Duty 5. Similarly, when a neo-Aristotelian says that the *phronimos* appreciates generous activity, he usually means that the *phronimos* has an experientially rich cognitive understanding and grasp of its excellence, partly *by* taking pleasure in it. Indeed, for Aristotle, both seamlessly come together in an instance of generosity issuing from virtue.[16]

Is appreciation a distinctive state of mind and uniquely valuable as a result of this conjunction of evaluative understanding and enjoyment? This suggestion is problematic, for enjoyment is far too narrow. An FBI agent can appreciate the cleverness of a brutal

[15] For recent empirical evidence in psychology that many pleasures (even merely sensory ones) appear to be cognitive states, and so able to play an epistemic role, see Paul Bloom, *How Pleasure Works: The New Science of Why We Like What We Like* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1099a17-20 and 1175a31-33.

serial killer and be thoroughly repelled by it instead of enjoying it.[17] Furthermore, if a man says, "You can appreciate, I trust, that a man in my position cannot afford to be seen in public with you," he is not asking the listener to understand and enjoy the situation, but only to recognize and understand *sympathetically*.[18] Similarly, consider these two common uses of appreciation. "I just didn't appreciate what I had until it was gone," or that time-honored parental litany, "Some day you'll appreciate what we've done for you today." In these cases, as with (merely) cognitive understanding, appreciation is an *achievement*, a state of realization one gets into. Appreciation in this sense occurs when one perceives the full force (or perceives more fully) the significance or importance of the appreciated object or state of affairs so that one is moved by it (sometimes quite deeply); but, one need not enjoy it.

Presumably, in each case prior to appreciation, the subject *knew* what he or she had, or knew what the parents had done in the propositional sense (or at least believed or judged that *p*). The subject may have even possessed some inchoate understanding of its value, but until the appreciative moment did not understand, grasp, or fully recognize its significance, value or importance in a first-personally engaged way. To say that "I didn't appreciate what I had until it was gone" is to say that I did not recognize and *care* about the value of what I had until it was gone. *Enjoyment* seems too narrow, and care and enjoyment do not entail one another.[19] If you say that someday your teen will appreciate

[17] I am grateful to reader Alexander Pruss for this example. Of course, there are cases in which such agents could admire criminal cleverness, especially when the crime is less serious. My only point is that this isn't necessarily the case for many genuine instances of appreciation.

[18] I am indebted to Stan Godlovitch for this example. Stan Godlovitch, "Carlson on Appreciation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 53.

[19] For instance, I can enjoy a trivial summer blockbuster action film, but neither care much about it nor care about the experience of watching it. Likewise, in an estranged relationship (for instance), one can

what you have done, then you probably mean that he will experientially perceive, first hand, the good-making qualities of what you have done and be grateful for it, where such gratitude is an engaged instance of appreciation. It makes little sense to say that he will enjoy it.

Engaged Appreciation and Positive Valuational or Qualial States

The fact is that appreciations involve *many* positive valuational states. Some that have been suggested in aesthetics include delight, disinterested pleasure, felt liberation, and a consummatory sense of unity, to name a few.[20] So perhaps appreciation is a distinct state of mind in that it involves the synthetic conjunction of understanding (*qua* cognitive or and engaged evaluative grasp) and *some* positive valuational attitude or phenomenological state. Many who endorse a distinctly aesthetic appreciation have defended this view, where the valuing in question is intrinsic.[21] When it comes to appreciation *simpliciter*, then, a common view is that the appreciator must take the object of appreciation (or the *experience* of the object) to be good *in some way*.[22] George

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care deeply about a person (where that caring involves vividly seeing the person as valuable), in the total absence of enjoyment or positive affect. However, sometimes caring and enjoying do converge, as when we say "John has an appreciation for 19th century Russian novels." He not only enjoys the novels, but he also cares about them.

[20] Historical and contemporary proposals include those by Kant and Hutcheson (disinterested pleasure), Aquinas and Walton (delight), Schopenhauer (felt liberation from practical concerns), as well as Dewey and Beardsley (felt harmony or integration of self, or of a stretch of one's experience). Each of these views is summarized in Carroll, "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," 146-147.

[21] Cf. for example James C. Anderson, "Aesthetic Concepts of Art," in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 65-92. Since there are nonaesthetic appreciative experiences that involve intrinsic valuation of the experience, Anderson is only committed to such valuing to be a necessary (not sufficient) condition for aesthetic appreciation. Cf. also Carroll's comments on these general "axiological" approaches in "Aesthetic Experience Revisited," 153-63.

[22] For a view that appreciation requires that we take the object (or one of its properties) to be good in some way, see George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1971), 105. For a view that appreciation only requires us to take our own experience of the object (or one of its properties) to

Dickie, for instance, claims that one is appreciating something when "in experiencing the qualities of a thing one finds them worthy or valuable."[23] Presumably, Dickie means either intrinsic or instrumental value.

The difficulty with this entire approach is that it cannot account for what appear to be apt appreciations involving essentially negative psychological or hedonic states. Noël Carroll points out, for instance, that many works of art (like Damien Hirst's work) are intended to unnerve or disturb us, and absent such unnerving or disturbance, we will be failing to appreciate them fully.[24] Even if one was to admire the *artist* in virtue of his ability to so disturb us, one could fully appreciate the work *itself* simply by being unnerved or disturbed by it. There are of course moral cases as well. Experiencing deep anger upon witnessing an instance of blatant racial injustice is a form of appreciation involving an essentially negative emotion and hedonic value. Absent the anger, one might argue, one would be failing to fully appreciate the injustice or its badness.

Moreover, appealing to some positive qualia state like felt freedom, a sense of coherence or felt personal unity, will not isolate what is distinct (or valuable) about appreciation either. For, some genuine appreciations are had in virtue of experienced fragmentation or a sense of entrapment. For example, In Book VIII of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dmitri Karamazov's appreciation of the gravity of his sensualist "insect" life as a human being is partly constituted by an experience of vivid psychological

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be good in some way, see Gary Iseminger, "Aesthetic Appreciation," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39, no. 4 (Summer 1981): 389-397. Notably, Iseminger restricts this taking of the experience to be good in some way to *aesthetic* appreciation.

[23] Dickie, *Aesthetics*, 105.

[24] Carroll offers another example. He says, for instance, that artistic works of social criticism—like Daumier's caricatures—seem to require an appreciation that involves being moved to indignation by them. Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), 149.

fragmentation.[25] Generally, Dostoevsky held that human beings possess a deep need for ideal beauty and harmony, a need most acutely felt when one is immoral (and hence ugly), for in those moments one also experiences deep psychological fragmentation and dissonance.[26] However, even without Dostoevsky's freighted metaphysical views and moral psychology, the deeply fragmentary appreciative experience of sudden and vivid grief over losing a loved one, is a fairly ordinary case of appreciation-in-fragmentation.

I suggest, then, that at this point we may give up on both the initially obvious view that appreciation essentially involves pleasure or enjoyment, and also on the view that appreciation has some single, distinctive, phenomenological, or psychological cast, whether positive or negative. This suggestion is confirmed by the fact that one can *have* dispositional appreciations (of Dostoevsky's novels, say) while asleep. However, even when it comes to occurrent appreciations, it appears that no particular attitude or feature of experience can, across the board, isolate whatever it is that makes all appreciations distinctive, when compared to cognitive or evaluative understanding.

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[25] Dmitri's appreciative fragmentation (resulting from his attack against Grigory, the household servant) reaches an intense breaking point. When the authorities finally apprehend him, a tremendous storehouse of internal pressure explodes from Dmitri as he finally is offered the occasion for a desperately needed catharsis: "…he exclaimed loudly, at the top of his lungs: 'I un-der-stand!'… 'The old man!' Mitya cried in a frenzy, 'the old man and his blood …! I un-der-stand!' And as if cut down, he fell more than sat on a chair standing by." Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 443.

[26] Cf. Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Mr. –bov and the Question of Art," in Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art* (Bloomington, IN: Physsandt, 1978), 41. The clearest case of appreciative fragmentation is Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky mentions this this character—a rationalist gone mad—in a letter: "Insoluble questions confront the murderer; unsuspected and unanticipated feelings torment his heart. Divine truth and justice, the earthly law, claim their rights, and he ends by being *compelled* to give himself up…. the criminal is much less daunted by the established legal punishment for a crime than lawgivers think, partly because *he himself experiences a moral need for it*." Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Letter to Katkov," cited in Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, trans. Michael A. Minihan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 272-273. Primary source unavailable in English.

Phenomenal-Affective Appreciations

One might think at this point that appreciation, if it is a unique state of mind or mode of responsiveness, then it must be evaluative understanding plus *some* additional engaged hedonic, valuational, or qualial state, positive *or* negative. That is, appreciation is achieved understanding engaged in some way other than the merely cerebral grasp of descriptive or evaluative properties. The cerebral kind of understanding I have in mind is a version of objectual understanding as some epistemologists currently construe it: understanding is an occurrent or nonoccurrent cognitive grasp of some coherent set of true (or mostly true) propositions, the relational and logical links between them, and an engaged grasp of the relative *value* or significance of these things with respect to one another.[27] Perhaps appreciation is something like that state of understanding, plus *some* engaged positive or negative psychological state.

Appreciation Defined by Experiential Qualities?

The problem with this view is that many appreciations seem, at best, only minimally or indirectly related to such understanding; they are often quite unlike achieved occurrent states of appreciation possessed by the passionate expert or the connoisseur. Often, if there is understanding involved, it will merely be the sort of sense-making ability that is minimally necessary for intelligible perception and propositional knowledge at all, and not the discursive type that either presupposes or includes an

[27] For example, see Catherine Elgin, "From Knowledge to Understanding," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 199-215. See also Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

acquired grasp of some coherent body of propositional knowledge.[28] With this minimal sort of understanding *qua* sense-making ability in the background, sometimes the *defining feature* of appreciation is the emotional or affective attitude, or the phenomenal quality of the experience involved.[29]

Consider the following case. A child encounters her first waterfall (this one quite sizable) and says, "Wow! Look at *that!*" Lacking an adult vocabulary for its aesthetic properties like "powerful," "magnificent," or "majestic," the child nonetheless ostensively appreciates the waterfall in and through his or her own phenomenal or affective experience of pleasure, delight, or a vivid sense of wonder or awe. What does the child need to know or understand about the falls in order to appreciate them in this way? Not very much, it would seem. Understanding of a minimal sort structures her perception of the vista, and the child has some direct acquaintance knowledge (she knows "what it is like"). The child's appreciation may also be relative to other things that she

[28] Robert C. Roberts and Jay Wood give a nice example of this 'low-end' understanding. For instance, "to see a red bird outside of one's window involves something like understanding: recognizing the situation as having the elements and structure that it has: namely, that it is a bird, sitting on a branch, outside your window." Gestalt drawings make this role of understanding in perception more clear. Until one *makes sense* of the gestalt drawing as a duck or a rabbit, or both, all one sees is a jumble of lines and patches. So, says Roberts and Wood, "you have to understand even to have perceptions that give rise to propositional knowledge by way of basic belief formation." Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 48.

[29] Klein refers to this kind of appreciation as a "direct, full, uncensored, unmediated, and unqualified experience." In addition to childlike appreciations, Klein mentions watching sunsets, listening to Rubenstein, having sex, killing a charging tiger, engaging in battlefield experiences, and going on LSD trips. As a psychologist, Klein points out the contrast I will suggest. He says that "as our mental capacities develop…we come to use our Power of Appreciation less and less. We reserve it for those special occasions when our mind says, 'This is an experience… that is appropriate. Go ahead and appreciate it.' In other words, the cerebral realm of ideas and judgments *precedes* and acts as a censor of a more direct, appreciative knowing" (309). Klein is wrong to claim that such phenomenal-affective appreciations are "always positive," in light of the negative and fragmentary considerations I raised above. Moreover, his suggestion of the *priority* of cerebral ideas and judgments is confusing, in light of his claim that appreciative knowing is more direct. However, his comments are helpful in getting at the contrast between what I am suggesting are *two very different* (and sometimes incompatible) types of *appreciation*. Donald C. Klein, "The Power of Appreciation," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 16, no. 3 (June 1988): 305-324.

has seen, such as water, tall objects, and falling things. However, the understanding required for the Tern expert's appreciation above, which presupposes knowledge of propositions or sets of propositions, skilled perception and experience, seems to be minimally in view, at best.

Interestingly, most of us would be hard pressed to come up with something *wrong* with the child's appreciation, absent some special story or circumstances. She may not know the relative merits or demerits of this waterfall with respect to others (the one downstream is far more impressive). So, of course, adding bits of knowledge (such as natural historical facts or that the waterfall has the property of 'displaying the glory of God') might enrich the appreciation. However, such additions do not seem necessary for the appreciation to be not only adequate, but also contagious. We educated adults who have seen the falls eleven times before, know our natural history, and are acquainted with the glory of God might just smile and behold the site anew with the eyes of a child. In some appreciations (like this one), the phenomenal or affective dimension, rather than achieved understanding, is the central and crucial feature. Of course, many appreciations like these *can* be instances of direct acquaintance knowledge (and thus instance engaged understanding), like that of the child in my example, but they need not be. The point here is that, while it would be a mistake to deny some overlap between engaged evaluative understandings and phenomenal-affective appreciations, the two appear at first glance as (at least potentially) quite different.[30]

[30] One might (rightly) think that the difference *in this case* should not be overstated. After all, we probably have *epistemic* reasons for thinking there is nothing wrong with the child's appreciation, since it seems true that her wonder *fits* the majesty-involving vista. If the child was to appreciatively construe the falls as vividly fearsome because she associates them with the fear of sitting on the toilet while it is flushed, we might indeed think there is something wrong with her appreciation. So, this is not the best example to use if we really want to drive a wedge between appreciations primarily defined by experiential qualities on the one hand, and those that are centrally defined by their epistemic truth aptness. However, I use this

Non-Reflective Absorbed Experience

We may press this difference even further by noting that many phenomenal-affective appreciations do not seem to require explicit *reflection* at all. Frequently, they are sufficiently constituted by absorbed phenomenological attention, which often (but not always) simply amounts to attentional pleasure or delight. Here, an objection arises, and it is related to the trouble I tried to create above for the view that appreciation is mere enjoyment or delight. The objection is that merely *liking* or being *impressed* by the good or apparently good qualities of an object is not sufficient to yield appreciation. Walton and Ryle have both suggested that an important difference may exist between mere liking (or enjoyment) and appreciation.[31] Walton argues that many experiences can be enjoyed without appreciation, such as a hot shower or an invigorating walk through the park. Appreciation, he says, involves not merely liking, enjoying, or delighting in something, but it also includes the enjoyment or delight taken in reflectively *noting* something's value, *thinking* or *judging* it as special in some way, like our child at the waterfall might. Another child can enjoy and delight in a game of make-believe, for instance, but on Walton's view he or she does not appreciate the game unless the enjoyment and delight involves explicit reflective recognition or judgment (however minimal) of what makes the game so good.[32]

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example, here, to point out a broad difference between these two kinds of appreciation, and I will presently employ other examples that demonstrate their frequent incompatibility.

[31] Ryle makes the same point but with respect to a more sophisticated version of appreciation related to the educated critic or connoisseur. Ryle states, "Unlike mere relishing of one piece of music more than another, appreciating the superiority of the one piece over the other involves knowing their relative merits and demerits. Taste is educated preference, preference for recognized superiorities." Ryle, "On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong," 384.

[32] Kendall L. Walton, "How Marvelous! Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 504.

However, while Walton's view seems right for many cases of occurrent appreciation, I think he overlooks common and important cases of *absorbed* appreciation, where one can literally catch oneself appreciating, mid-stream, as it were, in a proto-reflective and proto-judgmental experiential state. In 2006, when I crested the top of the Ptarmigan Wall in Glacier National Park and beheld the whole of the Belly River Valley spread out below me on the other side, some stretch of time passed before I reflectively noted, "Wow, how marvelous!" Still, I would say that my appreciation was active from the first moment I crested the wall and took in the sight. The central feature of absorbed appreciation seems to be the phenomenological vividness or experiential qualities occasioned by the view and various affective construals are involved in the appreciation, rather than explicit notings or thoughts.

Likewise, one can appreciate (in the sense of enjoy or take pleasure in) one's own virtuous activity without *noting* how virtuously one is behaving. Indeed, sometimes reflexive notings can distract one from the appreciative motive essential to a given virtue, as when one continually notes one's own generosity, when the point of the virtue involves attentiveness to and motivational focus on *another's* genuine need, accompanied by pleasure in the giving.[33] So the reflective requirement seems either too strong, or inappropriate, at least in these common cases. Second nature or tacit appreciations need to count as often sufficient, and these appreciations demonstrate an important difference between reflective and non-reflective appreciations.

[33] "Look how marvelous my humility is," for instance, seems like movement toward its opposite, i.e. pride.

Phenomenal-Affective versus 'Expert' Appreciations

We could draw out additional differences, however, between the child's appreciation and that of the passionate video-game connoisseur or Tern expert. First, unlike appreciations more closely associated with practical wisdom or connoisseurship, "phenomenal-affective" appreciations (as I call them) do not appear dependent on much prior experience with or propositional knowledge about the kind of thing being appreciated. By contrast, occurrent connoisseur appreciations appear to rely *essentially* on background knowledge, explicit reflective activity, and experience of both good and bad versions of the appreciated object.[34] Second, phenomenal-affective appreciations seem more typically passive in the sense that they *happen* to us without our actively having sought them out. Of course, such moments of unexpected wonder or delight happen upon the connoisseur or expert as well, but the posture of the expert is more typically one of actively *seeking* for the merits or demerits of a given appreciative object. Third, as noted briefly above, a centrally defining feature of phenomenal-affective appreciative experience seems to be *the phenomenal quality of the experience itself*, rather than the epistemic goods involved in it.[35] Finally, expert or connoisseur appreciations rely heavily on knowledge of relational, historical and artifactual properties that may not be perceivable in the appreciated object, while these other appreciations are

[34] Cf., for example, Matthew Kieran's "Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Cognitive Immoralism," in *Art and Morality*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Jose Luis Bermudez (London: Routledge, 2002), 56-73. Kieran argues convincingly that in the case of some works of art (say the film *Goodfellas*), the immorality of the imaginative experience sometimes *deepens* our appreciation and understanding of the good, since we're exploring and appreciating a flawed moral perspective. So Kieran claims that "morally defective imaginative experiences, including taking up attitudes and responding in ways that are morally problematic, are required to enable one more fully to understand things than one could otherwise have done" (63).

[35] I will say more about this difference below, and also in chapter two.

largely guided by what is present in the perceptual encounter. This seems to be one reason why expert or connoisseur appreciations are typically comparative in character, as differential evaluation enters reflectively into the appreciation proper. By contrast, phenomenal-affective appreciations are often marked by *absorbed attention*, though of course implicit comparison may lie in the unreflective background.

The Compatibility of Phenomenal-Affective and Expert Appreciations

In sketching the significant differences between expert and phenomenal-affective appreciations, I am drawing on a long-standing conflict between two traditions in aesthetics that are typically set in opposition: the art-historical tradition and the disinterested-perceptual tradition, as I noted at the outset of this chapter. However, I will argue that the conceptions of appreciation represented by these traditions need not conflict. This can be illustrated with a brief debate between Jerome Stolnitz's aesthetic attitude view, and George Dickie's institutional view.

Stolnitz argues that these two ways of appreciating are incompatible, and only one of them counts as genuine appreciation. On his "aesthetic attitude" theory, a critic's relation to a work of art is different in kind than that of the appreciator. If a percipient of a work "has the purpose of passing judgment upon it, his attitude is not aesthetic," for appreciation (perceiving with an aesthetic attitude) and criticism are not only distinct activities, but also "psychologically opposed to each another." Unlike the analytic attitude of the historian or critic, which probes, compares, discerns, evaluates for strengths and weaknesses, and largely has a "cognitive… interest in gaining knowledge about an object," the true appreciator does the exact opposite: he or she commits "allegiance to the object freely and unquestioningly" and "surrenders" herself to the work

of art. Hence, wherever cognitive or other interests peculiar to the appreciator are present or where reflective criticism intrudes, appreciative aesthetic interest is diminished.[36]

The more explicit reason for this incompatibility, it seems, is that the disinterested attention part of the aesthetic attitude isolates the perceptual object from its relations to other things, while comparative criticism essentially involves relating the object to other things, thereby competing for appreciative psychic space.[37] Having taken up the interest-suppressing aesthetic attitude, appreciation proper is simply the activity of disinterestedly attending to the object, and submitting oneself to contemplative guidance by its immediately given perceptual qualities, while savoring its value. This is a sort of appreciation in which nearly anyone, regardless of his knowledge or experience, can in principle engage. One need not be familiar with Pablo Picasso, or know anything about the Spanish Civil War, to appreciate *Guernica* richly.

In his response, Dickie famously accuses Stolnitz (and the whole family of "aesthetic attitude" views) of psychological myth-making. We have no reason, says,

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[36] Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), 35-36, 38. Jerome Stolnitz, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1920), 377-378. These comments notwithstanding, Stolnitz does have a place for subtle discrimination, for "to fully savor the distinctive value of the object" one often needs an "acute awareness of details" provided through meticulous knowledge about the work, repeated experience with it, or technical training in the art-form. But his point is that these are, at best, only preparatory for the appreciation proper. Cf. Jerome Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude," in *Aesthetics: The Big Questions*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 82.

[37] I owe this point to George Dickie, "Stolnitz's Attitude: Taste and Perception," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, no. 2 (Winter 1984): 196. Kant's account of the disinterested nature of our contemplation of the beautiful is a helpful comparison here. He notes, in his "Analytic of the Beautiful," that any delight connected with supposing the object *exists* is not aesthetic delight, for such delight always involves reference to the faculty of desire. When we ask whether something is beautiful, we are not concerned with whether the object exists, and hence whether we or anyone else could be concerned with it. Rather, we want to know "what estimate we form of [the object] on mere contemplation…." For Kant, then, when one experiences the beautiful the object of such experience is contemplated *as* unrelated to anything else. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 42.

Dickie, to posit a special kind of aesthetic consciousness, attention, perception, or appreciation.[38] For, *disinterested* attention (or contemplation) cannot plausibly be a unique mode of *perception*, as Stolnitz has it, but rather simply indicates different motives perceivers may have. If listening to a piece of music "with no ulterior purpose" is to listen disinterestedly, as Stolnitz says, then we have here a motivational or intentional distinction, and not a perceptual one.[39]

As for Stolnitz's "psychologically opposed" relationship between criticism and general cognitive interest on the one hand, and appreciation on the other, Dickie aptly points out that for practiced appreciators, criticism doesn't merely take place before engagement with a given work, but is often tacit and continuous with it. Moreover, says Dickie, why should the *explicit* practice of looking for reasons why a work is good or bad interfere with appreciation? If we are set the task of evaluating and discussing a particular film, for instance, we are often *more* attentive to details such as dramatic development, an actor's performance, organization of the screen-plane and screen-space, and so on. There is then, says Dickie, no compelling reason to think Stolnitz's appreciation and criticism are incompatible.[40] Following Dickie, it does seem correct to

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[38] George Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude" in *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Steve Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 457. Dickie notes, then, that what distinguishes art-objects from nonart objects is simply cultural or institutional convention, rather than the psychological effects certain objects have on appreciators.

[39] Ibid., 457-458. He adds that there is no perceptual difference between interested and disinterested attention; there is simply paying attention or failing to do so (in varying degrees, of course). For instance, alleged cases of interested attention (as when a playhouse proprietor, while watching the play, is delighted that there is a full house in light of economic concerns) are simply cases of *not* attending to the object (the play, in this case). Distraction isn't a special kind of attention (or perception); it is just inattention brought about by the motives one might have.

[40] Ibid., 461. Now, while I think that Dickie is basically right here, there remain clear and common cases of appreciation where reflective criticism and comparative evaluation *do* seem to interfere with (or even eliminate) one's appreciation (say, appreciating someone's generosity through the emotion of admiration). This issue will take some sorting out, and that is something I will take up later on.

say that there is nothing *necessarily* incompatible about these two sorts of appreciation, broadly conceived, so long as we avoid adopting Stolnitz's psychologically implausible view that appreciation requires the impossible: total suppression of cognitive and practical interests.[41]

Appreciation By Degrees?

In light of this broad compatibility and since appreciation seems to come in degrees, one might then suppose that phenomenal-affective appreciations *can* be fine as far as they go, but adding bits of knowledge, critical comparative insight and experience will always make the appreciation *better* and richer. Arthur Danto's famous argument from perceptual indiscernibles, while making a different point, is a helpful illustration. Say one is in an art gallery, appreciating (in a phenomenal-affective way) the brilliance and luminescence of a large red square. One is also quite absorbed in and taken by the perceptually identical one next to it. One then reads the informational brochure and discovers that the left-hand square is entitled "Israelites Crossing the Red Sea" (with the artist's explanation that "The Israelites had already crossed over, and the Egyptians were drowned"). The right-hand square is entitled "Kierkegaard's Mood," and turns out to be a psychological portrait.[42] It is a commonplace, says Danto, that perceptually

[41] Presumably, for instance, Stolnitz's view requires that the appreciator be *interested* in contemplating the work for its own sake. Unlike Stolnitz's (and Clive Bell's) 'strong' disinterested view that requires elimination of all such interests, including beliefs about the work that may be impossible to suppress, we could adopt a more defensible weaker view, for instance, that allows the appreciator to draw (cognitively, emotionally, and practically) on a wide range of external referents but proscribes *purely* idiosyncratic responses.

[42] Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 1-2. In Danto's fictional "Red Square" art exhibit, he has nine square canvases painted in red, all perceptually indiscernible from each other. The first two squares are the examples I've given; a third is called "Red Square Moscow" (a clever piece of Moscow landscape); a

indiscernible objects can belong to radically distinct ontological kinds in virtue of their origin, relation to human intention, historical relational properties, and the like. Adding *knowledge* of such imperceptible properties to one's phenomenal appreciation would, it seems, necessarily increase the quality of one's appreciation of the respective squares.

Experiential and Epistemic Appreciations: Some Incongruities

While this understanding of the ascending relation between phenomenal-affective and "expert" or critical connoisseur appreciations is tempting, it does not always (or even typically) work, and this is partly because Danto's examples are limited to cultural artifacts. If we move beyond these examples, it becomes clear that sometimes adding bits of knowledge about the appreciated object either destroys or is indifferent with respect to phenomenal-affective appreciations. Suppose I am canoeing with a friend on a mountain lake, and find myself appreciating the water as luminous, dazzling and pristine. Then suppose my friend mentions that the only reason it's so clear is because of the runoff from the nearby molybdenum mine, and that I certainly shouldn't swim in it since it could cause diarrhea, copper deficiency, headaches, and major skin and eye irritation, among other things. I might then be unable to appreciate the water in the way that I had. I have a new appreciation (*qua* understanding) to be sure, complete with a new set of expressive properties I perceive as supervening on the descriptive ones (perhaps menacing, tainted, nasty). However, this new appreciation will often, for the appreciator, be incompatible with the first type and threaten to eliminate its experiential value. Even if the first appreciation was predicated on a falsehood, I still found it valuable as an

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fourth is "Red Square" (a minimalist painting); a fifth is simply a square painted in red lead (perhaps found in someone's garage), and the list goes on.

experience, which may now be lost. Other times bits of knowledge are irrelevant. If I am on a beach, attending to the curvature of the waves and invigorated by the sound of them crashing on the shore, my appreciation need not be affected in any substantial way when I am told that the waves are an aspect of a great lake (rather than the ocean), or that they are produced by an enormous offshore wave-machine. I can trade out a false belief rather central to the appreciation with a true one, without its affecting my appreciation at all.

Further, sometimes phenomenal-affective appreciations have deep experiential value that is *unavailable* to more epistemically oriented appreciations "higher up" the supposed scale. Compare, for instance the expert on Ancient Near Eastern prophetic literature, the Minor Prophets of Scripture and Hosea in particular, with a person engaged in *lectio divina*, a form of meditative, repetitious and contemplative reading. Say that both of them read this passage from Hosea 6:3: "Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearing is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth."[43] The appreciation of the expert will bring to bear (let us say accurate) contextual, linguistic, text critical, socio-economic and historical knowledge of the text. His evaluative appreciation of the significance or importance of this particular text will issue from these quite *appropriate* considerations.[44] The *lectio* practitioner, on the other hand, may lack much of this knowledge, but meditatively repeats the text many times, each time more deeply attending to its words and imagery. Perhaps the *lectio* reader is captivated by the simile between the coming of the Lord, and the dawn and spring rain, such that she vividly feels her own spiritual poverty and need

[43] Hosea 6:3 (NRSV).

[44] That is, this expert is not analyzing the work in an invasive, genre-insensitive or otherwise inappropriate way, as when a person tries to appreciate an impressionist work with a magnifying glass.

for such life-giving and transformative divine renewal. She may even experience an anagogical vision of the eschaton, seeing herself as personally caught up in the ultimate victory of Yahweh and transfiguration of all things. In order to have this sort of appreciation the expert often will need to *put aside* his detailed and discursive appreciation, and enter into the text in a different sort of way, and the same would be true for the *lectio* reader.

Now, nothing in principle precludes the compatibility of phenomenal-affective and "expert" or critical connoisseur appreciations, and they can certainly both be cognitive and truth-apt. However, their frequent mutually exclusive character suggests that a progressive movement from the former to the latter does not invariably deepen one's appreciation, making it better and more rich.

The State-Activity Ambiguity of Appreciating

Now, I have been trying to drive a wedge between phenomenal-affective appreciation and appreciation as a form of engaged evaluative understanding, where the latter involves a cognitive and (mostly) factive grasp of some coherent set of propositions, the relational and logical links between them, and a grasp of the relative value or significance of the different parts. Many appreciations seem, at best, only minimally or indirectly related to such understanding; they are frequently quite dissimilar to the achieved discursive appreciation of the passionate expert or the connoisseur. However, the difference or incompatibility between the two should not be taken too far. After all, *some* kind of understanding and knowledge is essential to the waterfall, wave, lake, and *lectio* appreciations. Moreover, it is plausible to think that some phenomenal-affective appreciations *just are* instances of engaged evaluative understanding. This

could be the case when the latter has a less discursive, more direct and intuitive experiential cast and puts the appreciator in contact with significant truth(s), as perhaps is the case for our *lectio* reader.[45] So, we may have to distinguish between two types of appreciation *qua* engaged evaluative understanding: (a) an intuitive experiential type and (b) a discursive-consequent type, where the latter is the result of a process of reflective critical appraisal, but the final appreciative state is affectively (or otherwise) engaged in some way. Still, I do hope to have given some good reasons to think that phenomenal-affective experiences and discursive engaged evaluative understandings are substantially different varieties of appreciation, which may sometimes be incompatible with or non-reducible to one another.

The State of Understanding versus the Activity of Appreciating

However, since there is nothing common to all appreciations on the "enjoyment" side of the original "understanding and enjoyment" schema, perhaps we should persist in pinpointing engaged evaluative understanding as the common feature of all appreciations, while simply lowering the epistemic bar on the sort of understanding this needs to be. I do not think we should. For, a third kind of appreciation exists, already implicit in the discussion above, which significantly weakens the view that appreciation is wholly reducible to one form or another of understanding.

Let us again revisit the Lopes comment with which I opened this chapter:

> "I appreciate fine cooking" – that is, I enjoy it. "I appreciate your point" – that is, I see what you are saying and see that it is warranted, perhaps also true. Thus,

[45] While I am not confident about this, I do not think phenomenal-affective and intuitive engaged evaluative understandings are wholly reducible to one another. I mention some less-developed reasons throughout the rest of this chapter, but I make a stronger case for their difference in chapter two.

> appreciation has a cognitive element – sizing something up – as well as an affective element – a response of liking or disliking.

Here, a significant ambiguity is present in Lopes's characterization of the cognitive element. On the one hand, "I appreciate your point" means that I *see*, grasp, or understand your point, and Lopes uses the visual metaphor to emphasize this sense. However, he also refers to the cognitive element as a case of "sizing something up." Now, sizing something up is not a perceptual *grasp* or an occurrent state that one gets into in an instant, like understanding seems to be. Sizing something up is an activity.

As it happens, 'appreciating' may be state-activity ambiguous in a way that 'understanding' is not. If someone says to me "What are you doing?," it makes little sense to reply, "Oh, I'm understanding this book and have been doing so for about ten minutes now." What does make sense to say is that I am *trying* to understand the book by reading, inquiring, weighing this bit against the other, and the like. The contrast with 'appreciating' is stark. If someone asks me, "What are you doing?," it makes perfect sense to say, "Oh, I'm appreciating the beauty of the sunset" or "I'm appreciating this painting, and I have been doing so for about ten minutes now."[46] Here, perhaps partly because of the *contemplative* history of 'appreciation' in the 18th-20th century Western tradition in aesthetics, appreciating appears to be something like contemplating, or attending in a way that is partly constituted by enjoyment, delight, admiration, or progressive states of understanding. Or perhaps less evaluatively, appreciation as "sizing

[46] For Ryle's well known distinction between task and achievement verbs, see Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Penguin, 1978), 143-144. Of this distinction, Ryle notes, "one big difference between the logical force of a task verb and the corresponding achievement verb is that in applying an achievement verb, we are asserting that some state of affairs obtains over and above that which consists in the performance, if any, of the subservient task activity." Notably, 'appreciating' fits the bill for *both* tasks and achievements. For comments on appreciation as (sometimes) contemplative activity, see Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," 55.

up" an object or situation could be the activity of "taking in" all the relevant facts about an object or situation with an appraising eye. This is hardly what we mean when we talk about understanding. Seeing, recognizing or grasping this or that fact, expressive or relational property (that is, engaging a state of occurrent understanding) all appear to be things that happen (if they do) *amidst* the activity of appreciating, so conceived.

Perhaps this is wrongheaded though, since the English language is messy. So, one might object, first, that 'understanding' can also be state-activity ambiguous in English. "Are you following the argument?" seems equivalent to "Are you understanding the argument?" Understanding or *following* an argument in the sense of tracking its moves, seeing connections along the way and tracing its various sequential parts, seems very much like an activity in its own right. This is quite distinct from understanding as a momentary insight or achieved state, as indicated above. A second objection might be that appreciation, much *like* understanding, seems to be not an activity in its own right but an adverbial concomitant of another activity like reading, for example. If someone is reading a book, it makes just as much sense to ask "Are you understanding what you're reading?," as it does to ask "Are you appreciating what you're reading?"[47] In both cases, appreciating and understanding might appear to be adverbial concomitants of more ordinary activities like reading, viewing, listening, giving, and so on. One reads or listens *with* appreciation or understanding. If understanding is sometimes an activity in its own right and appreciation appears to typically be an adverbial concomitant of other activities, just like understanding, it would seem misguided to differentiate the two in virtue of state-activity ambiguity.

[47] I am grateful to Robert C. Roberts for both of these examples, in a personal conversation.

There are several responses to these two objections. With respect to the first one, my initial reply is that I never deny that 'understanding' can refer to an activity. My claim is simply that appreciation is sometimes state-activity ambiguous in a *way* that understanding is not. With respect to 'following,' then, I will claim (and presently show) that appreciation is sometimes identified with activities that are not reducible to such intelligible tracking, if indeed such tracking or 'following' is an activity of understanding. A second response to this objection is to question the truth of the equivalence claim. It seems quite possible to trace the sequence of or follow something without understanding it. One can follow the sequence of letters, *OLLP RM GSV IZUGVIH*, without thereby understanding it, and especially if one doesn't know that the sequence is a reverse alphabet code message.[48] So, one can follow *with* understanding of meaning and follow without such understanding, and if so, then the alleged activity of understanding may reduce to an adverbial concomitant of the activity of following. That is, understanding in this case turns out to be following *in a sense-making way*.

The second objection is that appreciation, like many cases of understanding, is merely an adverbial way in which another ordinary activity is carried on, and not an activity in its own right. My reply here is that unlike states of understanding and partly in light of its etymological history, 'appreciation' is *often* identified with activities like appraising, evaluating, enjoying, or contemplating. While some of these might require

[48] If Z stands for A and so on, throughout the sequence, the message reads "LOOK IN THE RAFTERS." Now, one might object that there *is* understanding in the mere following of the sequence, for presumably the one following it has an understanding of the alphabetic characters of English, related to his understanding of the rules of English, which also produces an understanding of the sequence as (at first sight) nonsense. The objection is ineffective, for the understanding in question is a possessed grasp the reader brings to the sequence following activity, and not the *following* activity itself. The point is emphasized if we substitute cuneiform characters for the English ones, where the reader doesn't understand the shapes *as* cuneiform characters.

understanding (like contemplation), none of these activities can be identified with it. By contrast, appreciating the beauty of a blade of grass often just *is* the activity of enjoying or delighting in it. Likewise, appreciating the *already* grasped or understood fine qualities of a friend is (often) just to *contemplate* those qualities, in the sense of turning over in one's mind truths about them or their value that are already possessed. Finally, as I will explain shortly, appreciation is often a *seeking* activity of appraising, sizing up, evaluating, or looking for value. In each case, the difference between these activities and understanding (as either a state of having grasped facts or value properties, or as an adverbial component of these activities) is quite stark.

All told, then, there is a strong presumption in favor of not only preserving a distinction between active appreciating and states of understanding, but also in favor of resisting (at least sometimes) the wholesale reduction of appreciation to an adverbial mode of other ordinary activities. As I hope to show, appreciating does indeed supervene on other activities (like reading with appreciation), but it is also capable of being a meta-activity in its own right.

Appreciating as Activity: Two Models and a Proposal

Thus far, in addition to dispositional appreciations (possessed and non-occurrent), purely cognitive understandings and unengaged evaluative understandings, I have considered the differences between (1) phenomenal-affective appreciations and (2) appreciation as engaged evaluative understanding (intuitive and discursive-consequent types), both of which are occurrent states of appreciation. We must now consider a third variety of occurrent appreciations: (3) appreciating as an activity. However, in order to consider the similarities and differences between this last version of appreciation and the

other two occurrent varieties under chief consideration, we need to develop some intuitively appealing candidates for appreciating as activity. I suggest that we look to aesthetics, where unlike in ethics or epistemology generally, a *dominant* view is that appreciation is either a process or an activity. Lopes, for instance, comments that while he does not know what appreciation is, he will assume for the sake of his argument that it is "a process made up of a series of states of mind and typically leading to the state of mind traditionally named 'judgment' – that is, an evaluation, an ascription of value."[49] While this is an interesting proposal, we need to go further to examine *what* process (or activity) appreciation is. Paul Ziff and Susan Feagin are two aestheticians who assume appreciation is activity, but also offer proposals about what it is, and provide suggestions for schematic ways of placing the several types or versions of appreciation into coherent relation to one another. So, I turn now to examine their views, with the aim of developing a proposal of my own.

Paul Ziff: Appreciating As 'Sizing Up' and Contemplating

Mid-20th-century aesthetician Paul Ziff was the first philosopher to characterize appreciation, somewhat ambiguously, as partly a cognitive activity of "sizing up," and his views continue to be widely influential in aesthetics. Ziff recovers one historical meaning of 'appreciate' in its connection with logistics rather than with expressed pleasure or liking.[50] After the first World War, for instance, the British Admiralty asked Winston Churchill to write up an appreciation of the Battle of Jutland. Moreover, prior to

[49] Lopes, "True Appreciation," 211-212.

[50] Paul Ziff, "Art and Sociobiology," in *Antiaesthetics: An Appreciation of the Cow with the Subtile Nose* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1984), 101.

a battle or military action, says Ziff, commanders often gather for an *appreciation*, a sizing up of the character of their own and the enemy's forces and armaments while planning a course of action. In this logistical sense of "sizing up," says Ziff, one can appreciate a position in chess, a political situation, or a work of art.[51]

Focusing on visual art and contemporary Western and non-utilitarian aesthetic practices, Ziff then divides the viewer's appreciation into two distinct classes of "ancillary" and "constitutive" acts of appreciation. Ancillary acts of appreciation involve logistically "sizing up" the work by discerning or identifying the kind of work it is (a seascape, say), determining the artist and date of execution, noting what the pigmentation is like, classifying the work according to its place in an artistic tradition, and so on.[52] For Ziff, this ancillary activity is quite distinct from critical *evaluation* or appraisal.[53] Moreover, logistic sizing up enables one to "recognize, discern, make out, identify, label" or "classify" aspects of the painting, such as recognizing the hidden bull's head in Picasso's *Guernica*.

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[51] Ibid., 101.

[52] However, something like evaluative understanding is also part of these ancillary acts, for Ziff contends that something like empathetic understanding of the artist and the whole conceptual background of the work is a crucial precursor to constitutive appreciation. For instance, "If one wants to understand Van Gogh's trees it is useful to go mad under the trees around Arles." Paul Ziff, "The Cow with the Subtile Nose," *Antiaesthetics*, 26. Notably, Ziff takes seems to treat the logistical acts of sizing up as purely cognitive acts that pick up on factual properties. The sympathetic evaluative understanding doesn't seem to play a constitutive role in the sizing up itself, as I note below.

[53] Ziff says that "any fact at all about a work may facilitate or enhance an appreciation of the work" ("Art and Sociobiology," 100) but only some of these appreciation-relevant facts will have a direct or indirect bearing on an evaluation of the work ("Reasons in Art Criticism," 50). When someone says, "Notice that this is a seascape," a characteristic of that painting has been pointed out, and one's attention is perhaps directed at this characteristic; however, the fact that the work is a seascape fails to be a reason why it is a good or bad painting. The same is true of noting that the work was executed while the artist was in Rome ("Reasons in Art Criticism," 50-51).

By contrast, constitutive acts of appreciation involve attending to the work through some "act of aspection" (i.e. a mode of viewing) appropriate to it, such as contemplating, surveying, studying, and the like.[54] These constitutive acts of appreciation involve attending to the work visually, and are logically distinct from ancillary acts in that they are non-terminating (e.g. *running*, rather than running for ten minutes), potentially of intrinsic value, and involve viewing the object as a complex whole.[55] In the constitutive activity of appreciation one attends to what is *seen* in the work, though the imperceptible properties lie in the background and crucially inform the constitutive appreciation. In this way Ziff's account of appreciation draws together the two dominant and historically opposed streams in aesthetics: the aesthetic-perceptual and the conceptual art-historical traditions.

Through Ziff's proposal, we have a clear and determinate idea of what 'appreciating' as an activity could be like, at least in the case of the visual arts. 'Appreciating' can involve states of grasping or recognizing (like states of understanding), but can also be partly constituted by the activity of sizing up, discerning, critically appraising, and contemplating or viewing. Among other things, this captures a *zetetic* sense of appreciating as often a kind of search in an appraising mode. Moreover, Ziff also provides a nice way to place different sorts of appreciation in coherent relation to one another. For instance, (1) logistical appreciating as a 'sizing up' involves active

[54] Ziff distinguishes hundreds of these different aspection acts (acts of viewing) and coordinates different ones with works and their styles that call for them. For instance, he says "I survey a Tintoretto, while I scan an H. Bosch. Thus I step back to look at the Tintoretto, up to look at the Bosch. Different actions are involved. Do you drink brandy in the way you drink beer?" Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," 71.

[55] Ziff, "Art and Sociobiology," 101-102.

discerning, classifying and exploring that is often a necessary condition for (2) recognitional moments of appreciation (such as recognizing the hidden Bull in *Guernica*). Both of these are necessary, for Ziff, to achieve *an appreciation* of the whole: (3) an overall understanding or grasp of the piece that positions one to evaluate the overall work.[56] Finally, however, (4) aspective or constitutive appreciation (contemplating, viewing in various ways, etc.) remains for Ziff the non-terminating and constitutive *telos* of all the other forms. If we engage in the other appreciative acts without this one, we are missing the aesthetic point of it all.[57] Notably, however, constitutive appreciating is *not* merely the end *product* of (1) – (3); it has a kind of self-sufficiency as an activity in its own right.

While Ziff offers a clear picture of active appreciating and a schematic way of relating some different types of appreciation to each other, there is one rather central problem with his view. The problem is that he neatly separates and temporally prioritizes purely cognitive 'sizing up' (as a stage of factual input, say), from judgmental *evaluation* or evaluative contemplation as a final output at the end of the sizing up process. As a phenomenological fact, however, active appreciating often includes *continuous* proto-doxastic or judgmental evaluative construals that structure perception, often through 'thick concepts' that are evaluation-description amalgams.[58] The screaming woman in

[56] Ziff, "Reasons in Art Criticism," 54.

[57] Even though this is such a *telos*, Ziff also contends that (1) – (3) are *not* necessary conditions for constitutive appreciating, though they might make it better or richer. For instance, a child who skips (1) – (3) could, for Ziff, *still* succeed in performing an act of constitutive appreciation, though this might be a "primitive" one involving simply "some attention to an entity with some response to its physiognomic characters. Ziff, "Art and Sociobiology," 102.

[58] For a defense of this view, see my (unpublished) paper, "Thick Ethical Concepts *Still* Cannot Be Disentangled: A Critical Response to Payne, Blomberg, and Blackburn" (presented at the American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, Minneapolis, MN, spring 2011). Ziff's view remains,

Guernica may show up in perception as tormented and the water of the falls as magnificent, without either of these amounting to a full-fledged input of belief or output of judgment.[59]

If appreciating is partly the activity of 'sizing up' an object, it is fairly limited and artificial to insist that there is always (or even typically) a discrete and extended stretch of purely cognitive input driven by seeking insight, classifying, discerning and the like, before anything evaluative gets underway. After all, most agents who commence with such a logistical activity of sizing up, think that it is in some way *worthwhile, important,* or *good* to do so. A denial of Ziff's neat separation of factual and evaluative appreciation may move us closer to a more phenomenologically realistic view: that continuous stretches of appreciating often involve a seamless integration of purely cognitive states with the hedonic, emotional and erotic dimensions of the appreciating. With Ziff's helpful contributions and these criticisms in hand, I now turn to Susan Feagin's more nuanced and compelling view of active appreciating. After stating some of the shortcomings of her view as well, I will attempt to account for the best of both views, in pursuit of a more compelling conception of active, dialectical appreciating.

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broadly speaking, locked into an increasingly implausible philosophy of mind that seeks to neatly divide factual inputs from evaluative outputs.

[59] I have mentioned the existence of a mental state called a proto-doxastic or judgmental evaluative construal. I should say what I mean by a construal, and what I mean when I call it proto-doxastic or judgmental. A construal is a propositionally structured apprehension that involves "seeing as" construction, but that does not necessarily involve beliefs or judgments. For example, a sense perceptual case could be construing a stick in water as bent. If I have examined the stick and know that it is perfectly straight prior to immersion, I can then construe the immersed stick as bent without judging or believing it to be bent. In the case of evaluative construals, then, one can construe a waterfall as majestic in an absorbed or tacit way, without such a construal being the same as a belief or a judgment. However, since many such construals can incline or press one toward belief or judgment (the falls *seem* majestic), I call them proto-doxastic or proto-judgmental.

Susan Feagin: Appreciation as 'Getting the Value Out' of Something

Feagin has done a great deal of work in aesthetics on what it is to appreciate literature and film, and her diachronic account of exercised appreciation reflects this in many ways. It is also an account that merits some extended engagement. For Feagin, appreciation is essentially the ability to perform successfully the activity of "getting the value out of" something, where this involves being emotionally or affectively moved by the object.[60] This accommodates the fact that appreciation, in Feagin's view, (1) necessarily involves perceptual interaction with an external object, (2) is temporally extended, and (3) involves success.[61] As a diachronic activity of "getting the value out of" some external object, constituted by its performative moments, appreciation also entails doing something successfully, not by producing a product or end result external to the activity, but by succeeding at performing the activity itself. This activity involves, says Feagin, three distinct components: the affective (or emotional), the theoretical, and the reflective. The affective component consists in responding in emotionally appropriate ways to the work; the theoretical component consists in interpreting as one goes; and the reflective component involves reflecting on the relevance and appropriateness of one's affective responses. On this view, appreciating is a *meta-activity* that contains or is constituted by these activities (emotionally responding, interpreting, reflecting) and other

[60] Susan Feagin, *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1

[61] Ibid., 23-24.

states, since when one is appreciating, none of these activities can be understood apart from one another.[62]

Further, to ensure that appreciation is genuinely dialogical and interactive, Feagin includes the notions of "conditioners" and "elicitors" in the activity. Elicitors are properties or qualities of the object itself that elicit certain responses from us.[63] However, such responses are conditioned by states the agent brings to the activity, including beliefs, background knowledge, past experiences, memories, and his or her current psychological state. All of these affect how one responds and to what one responds in the work, and this can clearly be generalized to the appreciating of nature, persons, and morally significant situations among other things.[64]

With all of these pieces in hand, then, Feagin gives us more detail on what appreciating as an activity is like, and an account of its distinctive value.[65] She describes the activity of film appreciation, for instance, as an activity that

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[62] Ibid., 23. This claim, whatever Feagin means by it, prevents her from counting absorbed appreciations, due to the reflective requirement. It seems better to say that the mix of states and activities involved in appreciating *sometimes* cannot be understood or experienced apart from each other, while at other times they can.

[63] In the case of fiction, says Feagin, elicitors will be linguistic units whose outer limits are drawn at the boundary of what can occupy the phenomenal present for an appreciator, given his condition. Ibid., 29.

[64] Feagin does not make this last point, but I take it to be fairly obvious. For example, "conditioners" play a role in the appreciation of nature. My past experiences in Glacier National Park, love for the mountains, the grueling physical effort it took to climb the Ptarmigan Wall, and the prolonged sense of anticipation building up in the climb, all conditioned my absorbed appreciation of the view on the other side. Of course there had to be something there to elicit it as well, capable of (vividly) occupying the phenomenal present for me. The robust role of conditioners is made evident by contrasting my own appreciation with that of another hiker who, strolling along a high elevation trail, simply notes the view and moves on.

[65] When she goes about describing what this activity is like, Feagin uses both "process" and "activity" interchangeably. However, in the context of her work, it is obvious that she means *activity* in the Aristotelian sense of something that is complete at every moment of its performance, and Gilbert Ryle's sense that it has no product separable from the performance.

> …takes place over a period of time during which one watches a film, and perhaps for some time after. This process comprises various states and activities: perceiving, imagining, having affective responses, figuring out how to think about what one perceives, making preliminary and overall judgments about the artistic quality of a work, and much more. Critics explain and defend what is valuable about a work; appreciators get the value out of a work partly in virtue of engaging in appropriate activities and having affective responses at particular points in and through time.[66]

Appreciation in this diachronic sense is not only constituted by its performative moments, but (for Feagin) its *telos* and value also lies in the successful performance.[67] Feagin notes, for instance, that if we could paint a room or get a haircut instantly, nothing significant would be lost.[68] For these, there is a process whose value is instrumental with respect to some external product or *telos*. We certainly neither want to hear all the notes of a symphony nor see all the frames of a film at once. Even if we could, says Feagin, something significant about the diachronic activity itself would be lost. So, Feagin argues, since "getting the value out of" something in this way requires engaging in the temporal activity itself, appreciation is "necessarily" diachronic in character.

Moreover, the value of appreciating for the agent lies not in the phenomenological quality or pleasure of the experience, or in the knowledge and understanding gained from it. Rather, for Feagin, the value of appreciation lies in the "affective flexibility" developed through engagement in the activity itself, which allows an agent to appreciate

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[66] Susan Feagin, "Film Appreciation and Moral Insensitivity," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 34 (2010): 26-27.

[67] Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 33-34.

[68] Ibid., 31. Feagin's point is of no small importance for the way 'appreciation' is typically conceived of in some current virtue ethicists, who take it as a perception of situationally salient reasons for action. See, for instance, my discussions of Rosalind Hursthouse, David Wiggins and John McDowell in chapters two through four. Here 'situational appreciation' appears to have largely (but not *merely*) an instrumental value with respect to a separable end product: an instantiation of the right action. Presumably, such a right action (as a separable product) could in principle be achieved through luck, absent the appreciation.

a wide range of literary works or other objects in a nimble and sensitive way.[69] Notably, developing such flexibility is not an achieved *product* of appreciative activity, separable from the appreciating itself. For, one cannot achieve "an appreciation" of a literary work by luck apart from the active process of appreciating it. Finally, a successful stretch of appreciating, for Feagin, is just to engage in the activity well and to have acquired a richer ability to appreciate.[70] This ability is a psychological "product" of sorts, and we can judge appreciative acts as successes or failures with reference to it.

Now, while Feagin's account of active appreciating is illuminating, some aspects are implausible. First, if appreciating is successfully "getting the value out of" something, it is not clear how Feagin can account for appreciations that involve getting the *dis*value out of something. Failing to appreciate what is genuinely *bad* about a Harlequin Romance novel would be a failure of appreciation.[71] Moreover, some objects or states of affairs call for an appreciation of their pointlessness or worthlessness, and this too is left out on Feagin's view. Second, if appreciation is ability, does its exercise *require* perceptual interaction with an *external* object of some sort, as in the case of

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[69] For instance, appreciating Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood* might perfect and enlarge one's ability to appreciate things as diverse from O'Connor as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dickens's *Bleak House*. Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 17 and 238-239.

[70] Ibid., 36, 38, and 40. Appreciation as a success term is part of the way Feagin distinguishes it from interpretation. She says that while there are misinterpretations, there are no "misappreciations." Rather, there are only failures to appreciate. But "a misinterpretation is still an interpretation." Ibid., 35. This view is implausible. 'Understanding' is a success term, but that doesn't preclude the possibility of *misunderstanding*. So, Feagin's suggestion here gives us no reason deny that "misappreciations" are possible, even if appreciation is a success term. I am grateful to Robert Roberts for this point, in his review of this chapter.

[71] Many intelligent readers tend to be unimpressed by such books because they fall so short of the excellent storytelling humans are capable of. But this is not to deny that such a novel is still a great cultural achievement and an expression of the fundamental human desire for storytelling. Such novels do have value in this sense. My only claim here is that if the value is *all* that one "gets out of" such a book, one has failed to fully appreciate it for what it is. Compared to greater works, it should be at least partly appreciated as a morally deleterious, sentimentalized form of escapism.

playing chess or reading a book? I would think not. I can mentally compose a haiku, and then appreciate it. I can recall a deceased person to mind, and appreciate them. Against Feagin, thinking, remembering and even imagining, in themselves, can be forms of apt appreciation. I see no reason to restrict appreciation to perceptual interaction with an external object.[72]

Third, Feagin claims that appreciation is an ability "necessarily involving temporally extended activity."[73] However, requiring temporal extension cannot account for dispositional appreciations that one can *have* (while asleep, for instance), some of which are the very abilities central to Feagin's account. Surely, I can *have* an appreciation for fine wines or Dostoevsky's novels without such appreciation being temporally extended or even expressed in a mental state. Feagin can accommodate this by saying that appreciative ability necessarily involves temporal extension *when exercised*, but then this is trivially true. With this correction and despite her temporal extension requirement, Feagin can also account for immediate, momentary appreciative experiences or insights as cases of appreciation. For, as she says, various states of understanding, sudden emotional responses and proto-judgmental discernings are all constitutive parts of appreciative activity.

However, the reality of isolated and immediate appreciations are problematic, specifically for her view that *an* appreciation, as a product, cannot separated from the *process* of actively appreciating, and so cannot be obtained or achieved by luck. It

[72] This is no small point. In chapter four, for instance, I will defend a version of Iris Murdoch's view, that thinking and imagining are, in themselves, deeply significant forms of moral appreciation. Cf. Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," in *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1971), 1-44.

[73] Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 41.

should be manifestly obvious that immediate recognitional appreciations *can* be acquired by luck (or perhaps by providence). Sudden and unexpected appreciations of persons, gods, truths or predicaments, quite absent a prior process of appreciating, are the common stock of stories, religious conversions and ordinary experiences. Saint Paul had a sudden appreciative experience of Christ on the road to Damascus, and this seems unrelated to any explicit and prior active appreciative process.[74] Moreover, he walked away from the encounter with *an* appreciation, a new understanding or take (however incomplete) on Christ, the identity of God, and the nature of Israel's promised eschatological restoration. Immediate appreciative experiences *happen* to us, often quite independent of being situated within a coherent appreciative process or activity. And, maybe one cannot acquire the end product of "an appreciation" of a novel or symphony without going through the process of engagement, but one should not (like Feagin) overgeneralize from the appreciation of literature or film to appreciation *simpliciter*.

Finally, for Feagin, the production of affective flexibility is the primary value of appreciating. However, one might wonder whether gaining additional affective flexibility is always what is valuable about appreciation. For instance, such a view unduly ignores the epistemic goods (like wisdom or understanding) often involved in appreciation, which aren't acquired solely from the affective experience. Second, affective flexibility may not always be valuable in itself, especially if we consider the sort of appreciating we need outside the arts. Say that I have never nursed deep-seated envy toward my closest friend, hatred toward my wife, or felt the distinctive affective appeal that sadists enjoy when torturing other persons. Perhaps, when it comes to human

[74] Acts 9:3-9 (NRSV).

relationships, I do not have these feelings in my affective repertoire at all. On Feagin's view, my ability to appreciate human interactions and relationships is less affectively flexible, and thereby less valuable. This is highly counterintuitive, indeed.

However, Feagin's account is helpful in showing how appreciation can be dialogical, exploratory and genuinely interactive with respect to its objects, whether strictly in thought, attuned action, or perceptual encounter. Her account also allows us to see how appreciating can sometimes be an activity in its own right, rather than merely a mode of some other activity (like reading *with* appreciation). That is, if appreciating is something like "getting the value out" of something (even if this is too narrow), then one will be reading *while also* appreciating. Moreover, Feagin's view helps us to grasp how active appreciation can be partly constituted by (without reducing to) the states and activities occurring within it and which it carries forward. Unlike Ziff, these cognitive *and* evaluative states and activities can include thinking, discerning, emotionally responding, imagining, recognizing, desiring, enjoying, and so on.

The Activity of Appreciating: A Proposal

If appreciation is an activity, what activity is it? While there are many additional considerations one could attempt to account for, it may be helpful at this point to simply try to state what it is, in a way that preserves the best of Ziff's and Feagin's views, while dispensing with the deficits. I propose, then, that the activity of appreciating is the activity of *evaluative attention.* In the best and most distinctive cases of appreciating, to say that "I'm appreciating *x*" is to say that "I'm attending to (or tuning in to) the evaluative dimensions of *x*, if there are any to tune in to." With this formulation, I mean for "attending" or "tuning in" to carry the sense of *engaged* attending, where some

hedonic, emotional or conative states other than the purely cognitive are "on the hook" in the attending, so to speak. Unengaged attending, or tracking and picking up on the descriptive and evaluative dimensions of *x*, can be an active form of evaluative understanding or cognitive appraising, as mentioned above. However, these will often lack the depth, *care*, and agential holism characteristic of the engaged instances of active appreciating, and such features often seem to make an appreciation go better.

Appreciating as *evaluative attention* fares quite well at capturing all of the relevant pieces of appreciating we are looking for. First, it can capture both the *seeking* and appraising dimension of appreciation, as well as the *finding*, contemplative dwelling dimension. For, evaluative attending need not be simply a matter of attending to something that is *there*, and that we have already found, like appreciatively dwelling on the thoughtfulness and generosity of one's friend for a few moments just after unwrapping his gift. Evaluative attention can also operate in a searching, seeking, or appraising, or even imaginative mode, in which one is poised or attuned to find out the value, disvalue, or relative worthlessness of a given object.

Second, this (rough) proposal preserves the evaluative no less than the purely cognitive dimensions of appreciating, for the purely cognitive proposals (like 'sizing up') threaten to reduce to ordinary activities like discerning, comparing, noting and the like, thereby rendering 'appreciating' as an activity superfluous. Moreover, unlike Feagin's "getting the value of" something, evaluative attention (or attending) is broad enough to capture both the positive and negative valences of evaluation. We can tune into or seek out not only value, but also the disvalue or relative worthlessness of some objects, qualities or states of affairs.

Finally, evaluative attention allows us to grasp the *unity* of an extended stretch of active appreciating, despite the myriad activities or states that it accompanies or that partly constitute it. It allows us to say, for instance, what it was that we were *doing* in appreciating the exploratory and adventuresome hike we just finished, or appreciating our orphanage visit, which oddly juxtaposed lamentable neglect, acts of merciful charity, and intimations of unsettled hopefulness about the children's future. In suggesting such a unity, it becomes quickly apparent that appreciation as evaluative attunement can contain instances of the other sorts of appreciation within it—like phenomenally vivid experiences, cognitive appraisals, and moments of engaged understanding—and that it may evolve and advance through dialectical interaction with and dependence on these various types, while terminating on a deeper disposition to appreciate. In this sense, which I expand below, evaluative attention may provide a principle of subjective unity that allows us to develop a holistic and unfolding picture of *dialectical appreciation.*[75]

Conclusion: Dialectical Appreciation

I began this phenomenological and conceptual exploration with Dominic Lopes's claim that no one really knows what appreciation is.[76] Faithful to the ontological vertigo this elusive concept has induced traditionally in aesthetics, I have examined a dizzying number of potential varieties and features of appreciation, placed along various axes of difference.[77] So, while I *also* have not offered a unified theory of appreciation, I hope to

[75] So far as my larger project is concerned, the point of developing such a picture, as I hope to show in subsequent chapters, is to articulate a more realistic and holistic picture of virtuous moral agency.

[76] Lopes, "True Appreciation," 210.

[77] These axes or principles of difference include (at least) the following. First, there is the distinction between occurrent (expressed) versus non-occurrent (dispositional) appreciation. Then, among

have created a workable order of understanding about the distinctive aspects or paradigmatic family resemblance instances of appreciation. I have suggested that, broadly speaking, in addition to dispositional, non-occurrent appreciations, at least three significantly different versions of occurrent appreciation exist: (1) phenomenal-affective experiences, (2) engaged evaluative understandings (intuitive and discursive), and (3) appreciating as the activity of evaluative attention or attunement (where this includes both seeking modes and finding modes).

Throughout the chapter I have tried to show that (1) phenomenal-affective appreciations may be non-veridical, need not presuppose a great deal of knowledge, reflection, comparative evaluation, or experience with the object of appreciation, and seem often compatible with fairly permissive epistemic standards. Here the primary point and value of appreciation seems to be a function of the experience itself. Appreciation as (2) a moment of engaged evaluative understanding, on the other hand, is typically more truth-apt, presupposes significant measures of knowledge and experience, involves much higher epistemic standards, and may sometimes be closely allied with or directly *consequent* on reflective critical appraisal. The chief ingredient appears to be the engaged cognitive-evaluative grasp of properties, relations, worth or importance. These are the reasons why I have tried to show that, at least sometimes, these two sorts of appreciation are incompatible with or indifferent with respect to each other. However,

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occurrent appreciations, there are the following axes or principles of difference: (1) temporally instant gestalts (experientially vivid moments, recognitions, states of understanding) versus temporally extended activity (attunement, contemplation, critical-comparative appraisal); (2) experiential value vs. epistemic value (though these can converge); (3) interrogative (sizing up, seeking value or appraising, clarifying intimation evaluative intimations) versus contemplative (dwelling on found or already grasped value); (4) the reflective versus the tacit or non-reflective; (5) comparative versus absorbed; and (6) actively attuned versus passively undergone.

there appear to be two different varieties of engaged evaluative understandings: (a) intuitive, direct apprehensions of value, significance or importance (the *lectio* reader?) and (b) discursive-consequent evaluative understandings (the Hosea scholar), where the appreciation is the end product of a reflective critical-evaluative process of appraisal.[78] Finally, appreciating as (3) the activity of evaluative attention seems partly constituted by activities that do not reduce to instantaneous or achieved states of mind, such as 'sizing up,' appraising, or contemplating already grasped insights. Moreover it is an active attunement, rather than an appreciative gestalt *event* that happens to us or occurs instantaneously, as is so often the case with phenomenal-affective experiences and moments of appreciative insight or understanding.

Dialectical Appreciating: An Initial Model

However, while there are general differences, there are also important convergences. For instance, it is possible that phenomenal-affective and evaluative understanding appreciations may converge, as in the case of the vividly absorbed and delighted wine connoisseur. Moreover, either of these two types may *launch* an episode of extended evaluative attention, as would be the case if our child at the waterfall were to attend to its wonders for some time, while seeking for, discovering, and dwelling on new insights or evaluative features not fully grasped in the initial moment of wonder. Either of the first two types could also therefore occur *within* an episode of evaluative attention, as I suggested above, or amount to the achieved state of appreciation at the close of the active attunement. So, there is a sense in which all three put together can sometimes

[78] I will say more about this distinction in chapter three.

constitute a (more or less) unified stretch of dialectical appreciating, which I attempt to model in figure 1.

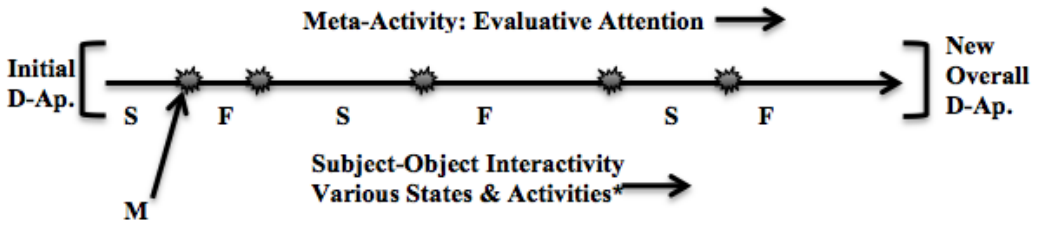

Figure 1. Dialectical Appreciation: *S*, appreciation in the evaluative seeking mode; *F*, appreciation in the evaluative finding/found mode, which often involves contemplative attunement; *D-Ap.*, achieved overall or dispositional appreciation; *M*, a phenomenal affective experience or moment of engaged understanding; *Thinking, recognizing, imagining, emotionally responding, enjoying, seeking insight, etc….

The prospect of this kind of dialectic holds, I suspect, a great deal of promise for enabling us to picture a certain type of holistic and narratively unfolding moral agency, and also for uncovering an appealing conception of what it means to virtuously engage the world in a wholehearted way. In the forthcoming chapters, I will employ my distinctions between different types or family resemblance members of appreciation in order to clarify ambiguous or unduly restrictive uses of the concept by contemporary virtue ethicists. However, I engage in this task with an eye toward the implications of those uses for how we picture virtuous agency. As the forthcoming chapters unfold, then, the overriding aim is to develop a model of dialectical appreciating that is realistic, articulate and holistic enough to capture the narratively unfolding shape of many important instances of virtuous, appreciative moral agency. The first order of business in the next chapter, however, is to clarify and broaden the scope of 'appreciation,' as it is currently employed in recent virtue ethical literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Appreciation in Virtue Ethics: Fundamentality, Wisdom, Analysis

In chapter two, with reference to established conversations in contemporary aesthetics, I examined several different types or paradigmatic instances of appreciation. These included, in addition to dispositional appreciations, (1) phenomenal-affective experiences, (2) engaged evaluative understandings (intuitive and discursive-consequent types) and (3) appreciation as an extended activity of evaluative attention. In that analysis I tried to show that appreciation, at the conceptual and phenomenological level, resists wholesale capture on either side of the 'understanding-enjoyment' continuum, and possesses strong state-activity ambiguity. I also suggested that these three varieties of appreciation, while sometimes incompatible, can nonetheless converge and interact in dialectically fruitful ways. The activity variety of appreciation, for instance, can contain, presuppose, be initiated by, and perhaps terminate on the other types. The activity of evaluative attention (as appreciation) may thus provide a way to picture the overall interactive unity of the various types. For the most part, however, I leave the substantive development of active appreciating and its allied dialectic to chapter four, and especially to chapter five.

The task of this chapter, by contrast, is primarily to draw upon and refine some of the distinctions from the previous chapter and apply them to discussions of appreciation in virtue ethics, where the conversation is far smaller and less clear than it is in aesthetics. In what follows, I argue that a number of virtue ethicists invoke the term 'appreciation'

either with insufficient clarity, or with undue restrictiveness. Unfortunately, this twofold problem either weakens our ability assess some of their claims about appreciation (the vagueness problem), or impoverishes the role we might give to it in virtue ethics (the restrictiveness problem). For example, Christine Swanton claims that 'appreciation' is a fundamental mode of moral responsiveness that informs the expression of all the moral virtues, but she invokes at least two (and perhaps three) different notions of appreciation.[1] Without greater precision about which sort of appreciation this fundamental version might be, we cannot determine whether or how appreciation plays this crucial role.

In response to the problems of vagueness and restrictiveness, I argue that through greater clarity about and liberality with the varieties of appreciation, we can identify the specific form of appreciation that is fundamental to the moral life, grasp the difference between appreciations that express virtue and those that do not, and articulate more precisely the relationship between appreciation(s) and wisdom or ethical understanding. After making these arguments, I then conclude the chapter by suggesting that while these insights demonstrate the value of analyzing isolated varieties of appreciation and their role in the ethical life, such analyses threaten to leave us with a fragmented picture of moral agency. This possibility motivates the need to develop holistic dialectical appreciating since, at present, it remains underdeveloped in the virtue ethical literature.

Clarifying 'Appreciation' in Virtue Ethics

While appreciation is a carefully articulated and well-developed concept in aesthetics, such is not the case in contemporary virtue ethics. For example, in his recent

[1] Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6, 99, and 292-293.

virtue ethical work, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, Talbot Brewer employs the concept more extensively than anywhere else in current virtue ethical literature, and yet his use of the concept is riddled with equivocations and ambiguities. Brewer uses 'appreciation,' for instance, to refer to immediate subjective impressions of value, immediate genuine apprehensions of value, vivid desires, vivid pleasures, a separable activity that *completes* pleasure, absorbed attentive presence, active practical thinking, and an achieved state of evaluative understanding that is the *telos* of such thinking.[2] With so many senses of 'appreciation' in play and without any effort to distinguish them, Brewer's admirable aim of giving 'appreciation' ethical prominence, and the claims he makes about it, often remain obscure and underdeveloped.[3] I will engage Brewer's work in chapter four; in this chapter, I address and attempt to amend similar problems that occur in the work of several others who give prominence to the concept and defend claims about it, beginning with Christine Swanton.

Christine Swanton: Appreciation as a 'Fundamental' Mode of Responsiveness

In her recent work, *Virtue Ethics*, Swanton argues that appreciation is a "fundamental [mode] of moral responsiveness," which plays a constitutive role in all of the virtues.[4] Here, we need a few contextualizing comments to clarify what she means by this. For Swanton, "A *virtue* is a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent

[2] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 63, 92, 100-101, 116, 119, 133, 137, 143-144, and 220.

[3] In the next chapter, I develop this critique in some detail.

[4] Swanton, 6, 99, and 292-293. Specifically, Swanton claims that appreciation is "part of the profile of all the virtues" (293).

or good enough way," where such fields constitute a given virtue's sphere of concern.[5] These items include states of the agent, persons, inanimate objects, situations, knowledge, and the like. Finally, Swanton offers a variety of "*modes* of moral responsiveness (or acknowledgement)" that might be proper to various virtues. In her account, such responsiveness modes are plural, and include promoting or actualizing value, honoring value or other things (such as rules), producing, loving, respecting, creating, being receptive, appropriately handling and *appreciating*. A virtue, for Swanton, has its status as a virtue in light of its being an excellent or good enough disposition to respond in one (or more) of these appropriate ways to the "demands of the world."[6] She claims that such modes of acknowledgement are not necessarily themselves virtues; rather, they "inform" the virtues, as when one's virtue of benevolence is informed by creativity.[7]

When it comes to appreciation, it is clear that Swanton does not take it to be merely one mode of responsiveness or acknowledgement among others, but rather a *fundamental* such mode that is part of the profile of all (or nearly all) the virtues, alongside other fundamental modes such as love and respect.[8] However, Swanton has at least two (and perhaps three) different conceptions of appreciation in play, and it remains unclear in her account how many or which one of these types of appreciation is such a fundamental responsiveness mode, or how each is fundamental.

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[5] Ibid., 19.

[6] Ibid., 20-21.

[7] Ibid., 161.

[8] Other fundamental modes include receptivity, creativity, honoring and promoting. Receptivity is fundamental, for instance, because it allows for the world and its demands to be properly registered, including the kind of 'attention' that seems essential to many (if not all) the virtues. Ibid., 292.

Swanton's first type of "fundamental" appreciation is related to "the virtues of connoisseurship" and is a necessary condition for wisdom, "involving as it does fine discrimination so that the merits and qualities of things can be properly understood."[9] Here, she links appreciation with Hume's view that good taste involves "delicate sentiment" and so highlights the comparative, experience-dependent, differential evaluation so central to *some* forms of appreciation I explored in chapter two.[10] Swanton's description of such "analytic" appreciation is helpful because it highlights the type that is closely associated with "sizing up," a critical appraisal and discernment of worth that proceeds from and terminates upon an acquired and refined dispositional state of appreciation. For Swanton, this type of "analytic" appreciation may play a fundamental role in the virtuous life because it serves as a necessary condition for practical wisdom, or wise comparative judgments.[11]

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[9] Ibid., 292.

[10] Ibid., 22. If Swanton wants to connect appreciation to wisdom, then invoking Hume's sentimentalism for *this type* of appreciation is a mistake. For, in his search for an objective "standard of taste" for subjective preferences, Hume ultimately appeals not only to a criterion of delicate *taste*, but also of delicate imagination. A lack of delicate *imagination*, says Hume, deprives a person of "the proper sentiment of beauty," for it is a necessary condition of "true taste." So, Hume's delicate sentiment is not merely a superior and educated ability of *perceptual* discrimination. It is more fundamentally a fine-grained ability of imaginative association based on perceptual input. Unfortunately, as Gracyk notes, the moment we try to pin down the difference between what is an admirably subtle cue for the imagination to pick up on, and what is too subtle, this standard lands us in a sorites paradox. Hume ultimately does not offer criteria sufficient for distinguishing meritorious and capricious delicacy of imagination, and so Swanton's appeal to his standard provides no way to vindicate appreciation as a success term or to link appreciation to genuine wisdom. Cf. David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987), 234, 241. Theodore Gracyk, "Delicacy in Hume's Theory of Taste," *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2011): 13.

[11] It plays this role even though, for Swanton, there are some passion-centered "heroic" virtues that need not involve wisdom at all. While Swanton does acknowledge that practical wisdom is a component of all virtue, at least characteristically" (Swanton, 99, 135, 293), she also downgrades the requirements of wisdom or denies its presence in the case of the heroic virtues, due to their passion-centrality (Ibid., 27-28; 171ff.). Why, one might wonder, would passion necessarily be distinct from wisdom? In order to be so, the passions (and our emotions) must be non-cognitive states. Such noncognitivism is a highly controversial position, and currently one of the least defensible positions in

However in addition to such analytic appreciation, a second type of appreciation crops up in Swanton's account, and it too has the status of being a fundamental mode of moral responsiveness. While she does not frequently distinguish this second variety from the first, it does indeed seem broader than the type that is linked to virtues of connoisseurship and the actively appraising dimension of practical wisdom. This sort of appreciation is a more direct, noncomparative and intuitive perception, awareness of, or responsiveness to value or other items of moral significance.[12] In this second version, appreciation is an interpretive construal that *appears* to be, for Swanton, necessary for other fundamental modes of moral acknowledgement to obtain.[13]

In a more recent article, for instance, Swanton argues that the proper moral reverence for persons necessary for both respect and love requires, in a Kantian vein, "appreciation of a human being as having dignity as opposed to price," as well as the

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philosophy of emotion. Swanton needs to clarify why she treats passion and wisdom as mutually exclusive, especially in light of the connection she posits between Hume's sentimentalism and wisdom.

[12] Swanton explicitly rejects "value-centered monism," or the notion that virtue (or the appreciation supporting virtue) is entirely a matter of responding to things according to their degree of value. On the value-centered monist view, "The rightness of moral responsiveness is determined entirely by degree or strength of value" (41). Cf. *Virtue Ethics,* 34 and 41ff. Moreover, while Swanton appears to reject the view that virtues are responsive to virtue-independent values (34ff.), she elsewhere claims that appreciation of persons is apt only when it involves seeing them as having dignity. Of course, dignity is a kind of worth, and thus a form of value. If appreciation is not a mode of responsiveness to value at all, then Swanton owes us a (projectivist?) story about what makes a dignity construal "apt" when it comes to appreciating persons. In an earlier piece, by contrast, Swanton clearly endorses a "value-centeredness" view of virtue ethics: "what *makes* a character trait a virtue is that the trait facilitates or makes natural an agent's responding in various positive ways to value as opposed to disvalue." Christine Swanton, "Profiles of the Virtues," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (1995): 47.

[13] I should note that, where this kind of appreciation is veridical, it may also be seen as a necessary condition for practical wisdom. Aristotle, for instance, speaks of the perceptual dimension of practical wisdom (*aesthesis*) that allows a practically wise person to perceive the character of particular situations. Such perceptions are wise due to being an apt evaluative construal, an accurate perception of a situation *as* having a particular bearing on *eudaimonia*. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1142a13-15, 27-30. Moreover, Deborah Achtenberg has recently argued, quite plausibly, that Aristotle takes *emotions* to be evaluative perceptions and essential to the perceptual component of practical wisdom. Deborah Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics: Promise of Enrichment, Threat of Destruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

appreciative construal of another as "someone not to be violated."[14] Velleman similarly argues that (something like) this form of appreciation is the *tertium quid* linking together partial love and impartial respect, for both involve "the arresting awareness of a valued object as an end in itself."[15] If Kant's general claim is true, that love and respect are two "great moral forces" upon which the whole fabric of morality depends, then this sort of appreciation appears to be very fundamental indeed.[16]

Swanton further illustrates this new sort of appreciation when, while commenting on the environmental virtues, she notes that "without appreciation, it is difficult to gain respect for, let alone love, the natural order."[17] Moreover, given her aligning of this type of appreciation with "receptivity" and "openness" (rather than comparative critical appraisal), it is clear that this is indeed a second type of appreciation that is a concern-based, immediate apprehension of importance, value or worth, and only implicitly

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[14] Christine Swanton, "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," in *Perfecting Virtues: New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lawrence Jost and Julian Wuerth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 246.

[15] J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (January 1999): 360. Here, Velleman seems to have in mind some combination of what I call phenomenal-affective appreciation and appreciation as engaged understanding. Velleman gives no indication that he takes appreciation to be an extended activity of attention. Interestingly, the *object* of our appreciation of persons is, for Velleman, the other person's capacity of appreciation. In love (and respect) we are responding to the value of a person's rational nature, where the 'rational nature' isn't the intellect, or even practical intellect, but rather, says Velleman, "a capacity of appreciation or valuation—a capacity to care about things in that reflective way which is distinctive of self-conscious creatures like us." Such a capacity involves the other person's "core of reflective concern" (365-66).

[16] Immanuel Kant, "Doctrine of Virtue" in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor, intro. Roger J. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:449, §24. Here, Kant quotes Haller's poem *Uber die Ewigkeit* (1736), and says "should one of these great moral forces fail, 'then nothingness (immorality), with gaping throat, would drink up the whole kingdom of (moral) beings like a drop of water.'" One could agree with Kant that love and respect are indeed two great moral forces, without endorsing the further claim that they are the only fundamental moral forces, or (much like Empedocles's view) that they are two great *opposing* forces.

[17] Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*, 291-292

comparative. It is therefore much like the phenomenal-affective appreciations I examined in chapter two.

Moreover when veridical, this second type can also be an appreciation *qua* moment of engaged ethical understanding, for then it will involve apt recognition of and care for morally significant items or for persons. For instance, Swanton says that having one's heart "seized by engaging tenderness" for another, or being caught up by the "dazzling splendor" of nature are appreciative occurrences expressive of flourishing lives. As briefly noted in chapter two, these appear to be phenomenal-affective appreciative experiences that just are instances engaged appreciative understanding; they expresses an agent's fine, virtue-conditioned ability to appreciate.[18] As I argued in chapter two, phenomenal-affective appreciation (and its experiential value) can converge with appreciation as engaged evaluative understanding (and its epistemic value).

However, Swanton does not fully develop the difference between connoisseur-like appreciations and the more direct, vividly experiential types. However, the two seem rather different and often at odds with one another, as I argued in chapter two. Indeed, the tension between these two naturally reflects the divide in aesthetics, also mentioned previously, between the disinterested perceptual and art historical versions of appreciation.[19] It also mirrors a current divide in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science, between a phenomenal or focalizing and a functional process notion of

[18] Ibid., 94. Cf. also pp. 22 & 46.

[19] Allen Carlson, "Critical Notice," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (December 1987): 919-934.

attention.[20] While one typically involves reflection, analysis, critical appraisal, and comparative evaluation against some standard, the other is (typically) absorbed, is not explicitly comparative and is more intuitive in character. The critical connoisseur who comparatively ranks the merits and demerits of a gymnast's performance (say), on the one hand, and the lover who beholds the beloved aright, on the other, do seem to have different sorts of appreciation in play.

Of course, one might object to the suggestion of difference by imagining the connoisseur-type as *preparation* for the lover's kind of affective experience. Surely, once he achieves it, he could grasp the overall excellence of the gymnast's performance and contemplatively behold or turn the value of the performance over in his mind. In this sense the culminating psychological appreciative state might be quite similar to that of the lover. This does seem to be correct. However, the objection assumes that the preparatory activity is not already itself a mode of appreciating, as I argued in chapter two. If we can rightly imagine the connoisseur *appreciating* by critically searching and evaluatively sizing something up, while never achieving that end state—suppose he doesn't know, overall, what to make of the performance—then the difference between these two types is a bit more clear. Moreover, even if he does achieve that end state, it may be more discursively achieved, unlike that of the lover, even if affective engagement is involved in both end states of appreciation. So, another difference is that the gymnastics appreciator may, like our ornithologist expert of chapter two, be capable of *explaining* his final appreciative grasp better than the lover could, though this will depend partly on how intuitive the lover's appreciative state turns out to be. So, some differences

[20] Cf. Sebastian Watzl, "The Nature of Attention," *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 11 (November 2011): 842-853.

between the two appreciations (and also between the final appreciative states and the active appreciative process) appear to persist.[21]

Returning to Swanton then, it is clear that she recognizes this difference by acknowledging that appreciation may take on diverse dimensions when associated with the expression of different virtues.[22] However, it is not clear that they *are* different modes of the *same* psychological state or phenomenon, as Swanton's treatment suggests. In Swanton's account of appreciation, and generally in its virtue ethical uses, the differences between these two and their respective sorts of fundamentality in the virtuous life, are matters that stand in need of clarification.

Adams and Hurka: Two Appreciative Dimensions of Wisdom

In search of such clarity, it is helpful that Swanton is not the only virtue ethicist to have homed in on these two types of appreciation. In fact, the two are sometimes cited as antagonistic rivals, in much the same way that Stolnitz did in chapter two. For instance, Robert Adams, in *A Theory of Virtue*, takes appreciation to be a perceptual and intuitive part of practical wisdom that involves a concern for and evaluative perceptiveness with respect to things that "enrich or impoverish human lives."[23] In this sense it is an

[21] This is not to say such states are always radically different. Sometimes, for example, an 'expert' appreciation is every bit as direct, intuitive, and inexplicable as is that of an absorbed lover. Malcolm Gladwell relays a story of the J. Paul Getty Museum's acquisition, in 1986, of a well-preserved 6th century B.C. *kouros* statue from ancient Greece. The price was just under 10 million, and it was not acquired until after 14 months of detailed appreciative analyses were performed on it, using all of the latest scientific methods and geological data gathering. Three separate experts, however, had inarticulate hunches that it was a fake. One couldn't stop focusing on the fingernails. Another had the single thought that it looked "fresh," and the third simply felt an "intuitive repulsion," but couldn't say why. As it turns out, those three intuitive but inarticulate appreciations turned out to be right. Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 1-8.

[22] Ibid., 292-293.

[23] Robert M. Adams, *A Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 186, 21, & 26.

importance- or significance-grasping ability. If Adams's view that realism about agent-independent importance is true, then such appreciation would indeed be a fundamental mode of moral responsiveness. However, even if it were true that importance is grounded in human concerns, appreciation would be no less fundamental.[24] Thus far, then, Adams's view is quite compatible with Swanton's. However, unlike Swanton, Adams emphasizes a further dimension to this intuitive and wise version of appreciation, and the addition accentuates one key difference between it and the "analytic" or critically comparative version. With respect to things that are truly excellent, Adams states that "the deepest appreciation" one can have is "noncomparative," for "excellence is most truly appreciated for what *it* is, not for what something else isn't."[25] When it comes to full appreciation of excellence, the appreciated object is for us like the "Thou" of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" encounter. As Buber says, it "steps forth to confront us in its

[24] Harry Frankfurt, for instance, contends, "there is no rationally warranted criteria for establishing anything as inherently important." His argument is that things are important only if they make some kind of difference. But, their making a difference isn't enough to show their importance, for some differences are trivial (i.e. *unimportant*). Then, says Frankfurt, in order for something to be important it must make an *important* difference. So, he says, "we cannot know whether something is important until we already know how to tell whether the difference it makes is important," and this leads to an unsavory infinite regress. Since "importance is never inherent," says Frankfurt, we can only ground importance judgments in judgments concerning what people already care about. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Taking Ourselves Seriously," in *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right*, ed. Debra Satz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 22-23. This is a powerful argument. However, Frankfurt indulges in an unjustified inference. Even if it proves true that "there is no rationally warranted *criteria* for establishing anything as inherently important" (emphasis mine), it simply does not follow that "Importance is never inherent." So, I do not think Frankfurt's argument succeeds.

[25] Adams, 29. Adams does not say whether he thinks this sort of appreciation is *completely* noncomparative or not, in the sense that even nonreflective comparative categories fail to be involved in the appreciation. I think this would be a hard view to defend, for implicit comparison seems to happen all the time, often involuntarily and automatically. Since Adams's implicit view seems to invoke something like a sympathetic kind of *focus* (rather than a total exclusion of implicit comparison), it seems fair to say that he is ruling out, as unappreciative, only explicit, reflective comparisons.

uniqueness. It fills the firmament—not as if there were nothing else, but everything else lives in *its* light."[26]

In advancing this view, Adams registers his opposition to Thomas Hurka's proportionality thesis. Hurka holds, for instance, that "If *x* is intrinsically good, loving *x* (desiring, pursuing, or taking pleasure in *x*) for itself is also intrinsically good."[27] Moreover, for Hurka, virtuous appreciation (or "love") for goods is ideally proportioned to the degree of their actual (or possible) value. When it comes to appreciation and grounding what is excellent about it, this requires a fundamentally *comparative* posture, involving as it does a differential rank ordering of goods or values, much like Swanton's appreciative critic or connoisseur. However, says Adams, when it comes to appreciating the value of persons, the proportionality criterion has morally counterintuitive results. If one has two disproportionately talented children, should one really proportion one's appreciation for each according to the actual or greatest possible value each possesses or is capable of instantiating? As Adams notes, the rank ordering of goods is indeed often needed so that one avoids a disproportionate concern for trivial goods, but, he notes, "there is something unappreciative about the exercise."[28]

There is nothing unappreciative about the exercise. Rather, according to the some of the positions I defended in chapter two, there is simply a different type of appreciation in play. As Kamtekar rightly notes, "Adams should not deny that [a] thorough comparing and ranking [of] goods is important for virtue," for most ordinary cases of vice involve

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[26] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribner's, 1970), 126.

[27] Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13-14.

[28] Adams, 29.

choosing a lesser good over a greater one, and avoiding this involves wisdom.[29] Indeed, Adams himself links his notion of intuitive, non-comparative appreciation to practical wisdom, and in particular to what Aristotle characterizes as the acquired perceptual component of practical wisdom.[30] If he is right about this linkage, then he should also acknowledge, even if we formally reject Hurka's proportionality thesis, that something (roughly) like Hurka's rank ordering of excellences or goods can function as genuine appreciation, no less than the discursive-comparative appreciative state upon which such exercises terminate.

Indeed, other virtue ethical thinkers give a central place to this sort of appreciation, without endorsing Hurka's proportionality thesis at all. For example, in defending the view that the *phronimos* can be a standard of right action, Rosalind Hursthouse implicitly treats appreciation as a kind of conceptual understanding.[31] Because the virtuous person has a proficient grasp of general moral concepts like the noble, the important, the necessary, the useful, the (truly) pleasant, the right or correct, *eupraxia* (acting well), *eudaimonia*, and a mastery of all the virtue/vice concepts, says Hursthouse, he possesses uncodifiable "ranking rules" for different situations, allowing him to make correct practical decisions.[32] Moreover for Hursthouse, and somewhat

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[29] Rachana Kamtekar, "Comments on Robert Adams, A theory of virtue: Excellence in being *for* the good," *Philosophical Studies* 148 (January 2010): 152-153.

[30] Adams, *A Theory of Virtue*, 6.

[31] For a similar treatment of appreciation as conceptual understanding, see C. Stephen Evans, "Wisdom as Conceptual Understanding: A Christian Platonist Perspective," *Faith and Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (October 2010): 369-381.

[32] Hursthouse, "What does the Aristotelian *phronimos* know?" in *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lawrence Jost and Julian Wuerth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 45.

differently for virtue ethicists like McDowell and Wiggins, appreciation of the *particular* morally relevant features of a given situation is linked to the virtue-conditioned perceptual part of practical wisdom.[33]

Even if one thinks that having "the virtuous person" serve as a principle of right action is indefensible and misguided, an important point about appreciation remains valid here. Whether through evaluatively "sizing up" a situation and perceiving all of its particular moral considerations, or through applying one's appreciation (i.e. overall possessed understanding) of general moral concepts to such a situation, a comparative, rank-ordering sort of exercise is often not only unavoidable, but also precisely describes what constitutes wisdom. Inasmuch as Adams ties his intuitive and perceptual version of appreciation to practical wisdom, he ought to grant that, in many cases, there *is* something appreciative about the exercise of rank-ordering goods or values, and the achieved discursive state upon which the exercise terminates.

Nonetheless, Adams's version of appreciation possesses considerable plausibility in some cases for which Hurka will have trouble accounting. Interestingly, Adams's examples against Hurka derive their appeal from the fact that they involve appreciation of *persons*, rather than appreciation of situations or states of affairs. Adams is not alone in this. Brewer argues that we cannot fully apprehend the moral value of persons without appreciating them through the value-illuminating eyes of love.[34] This reiterates Swanton's and Velleman's view recounted above. That is, appreciation as an intuitive,

[33] For the source of this "intellectual perception" in Aristotle, see *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142a30.

[34] Brewer, 174-175.

evaluative grasp of significance or importance is a necessary condition for the love and respect of persons, which is so fundamental to the moral life.[35]

However this sort of appreciation is able to take other objects as well, as Adams notes.[36] There are aesthetic examples of what I have called phenomenal-affective appreciations, as in the child and waterfall case in chapter two. For such a child, the waterfall fills the phenomenal field and she is, at least at the level of explicit reflection, non-comparatively struck with wonder. Adams' Buberian comment is apt here: everything else lives in the light of that waterfall. Moreover, such appreciative impressions or intuitions need not be so strikingly vivid, as when one appreciates the elegance of a mathematical proof, without explicitly comparing the proof to others one has encountered, and yet without the proof's elegance filling the firmament of one's phenomenal and attentional field. In any case, appreciation that is (relatively) captivating and non-comparative is a deeply meaningful and fundamental sort of appreciation that Hurka needs to acknowledge.

Non-Wise Appreciations and Experiential Value

Now, at this point, one might grant that we have two very different types of appreciation (the analytic and the nonanalytic, perhaps). One might think that both of them can be united since they are two different aspects of wisdom: an intuitive perceptual dimension and a calculative appraising dimension. While this is sometimes the case, there are two problems with generalizing this view across all cases of appreciation. The first is that some moral appreciative experiences or intuitions are not conditioned by

[35] Swanton, "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," 246, and Velleman, 360.

[36] Adams, 21 and 37.

virtue or wisdom at all (or at least very little). Suppose, for example, that a Nazi commander witnesses a Gestapo officer's brutal treatment of a young Jewish girl, and suddenly feels an overwhelming sense of compassion, presumably because of his immediate appreciative apprehension of the girl's moral value as a person. Suppose then that the commander resists the compassionate urge mightily by reminding himself that the girl has no moral worth. This appreciative experience, while surely connected in some way to the commander's motivational framework and evaluative outlook, does not seem to be the product of virtue or wisdom. Some immediate appreciations are virtue-conditioned expressions of possessed wisdom, and some are not.

Second, some non-analytic appreciations are veridical, and some are not. For instance, appreciative *impressions* of value can exist where the impression could be mistaken, but nonetheless provides intrinsic first personal experiential value. A man who has spent years in the total darkness of solitary confinement with no genuine hope of release may be better off appreciating the hallucinatory presence of friends and fine food in his cell, than facing the suicidal despair of the unending darkness. Even more strongly, some appreciative impressions have experiential value *in virtue of* being mistaken. In the 2000 film *Castaway*, for example, the main character Chuck Noland (played by Tom Hanks) appreciates volleyball Wilson as a genuine person. Most viewers watching the film experience a deep sense of loss when Noland and Wilson are separated for good. The loss, of course, is that Wilson had filled part of Noland's need for friendship and community. Noland's sense of that need being satisfied is counterfactually dependent on his non-veridical appreciation of Wilson as a person. Some appreciations can possess an experiential value that is significantly independent of their epistemic value, and that is

also the central point of the experience, as I noted in chapter two.[37] Moreover, such appreciative experiences may not display or presuppose significant levels of wisdom or objectual understanding.

However, there *are* some intuitive appreciations that display deep wisdom, as the above discussion of fundamentality through Swanton might suggest. That is, some immediate appreciations involve appreciative *awareness* or *apprehension* of value, where the appreciation amounts to first-personal acquaintance knowledge. Roberts and Wood, for instance, contend that emotions are propositionally structured powers of appreciation that are capable of being more or less fitting to their objects. For Roberts and Wood, virtue-conditioned appreciation through such emotions, when veridical, constitutes direct non-inferential acquaintance knowledge. Such knowledge is not merely propositional, since it involves seeing, experiencing, or perceiving *for oneself* in a vivid and relatively unmediated way, the evaluative dimensions of objects or situations.[38] Often, such

[37] In "True Appreciation," Dominic McIver Lopes offers a similar example and a more formal defense, which trades on the ambiguity of appreciation between understanding and enjoyment. The boys at the corner Deli in New York appreciate Central Park as the last piece of natural Manhattan, untarnished by the urban madness surrounding it. To insist that they appreciate it rightly as an architectural work would be to ruin the experiential value of their appreciation. For, as Lopes notes, their appreciation counterfactually depends on *misunderstanding* the *kind* of thing Central Park is. However, Lopes points out that one can still preserve some epistemic standards for appreciation that are compatible with such misunderstandings about the nature of the appreciated object. As Lopes notes, "one adequately appreciates an O [object] as a K [natural kind] only if one's appreciation counterfactually depends on no belief inconsistent with the nature of K's." Insisting that one's appreciation must counterfactually depend on beliefs consistent with the nature of the object, produces odd results. It impugns, for instance, our appreciation of photographs *as* photographs, since, as Lopes says, documentation does not imply duplication, but we think photographs imply both. Dominic McIver Lopes, "True Appreciation," in *Photography and Philosophy: Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, ed. Scott Walden, 210-230 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010).

[38] Robert C. Roberts and William Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 51 and 72. For instance, the authors cite the Psalmist's words, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). Here the psalmist isn't talking about "knowing" in the sense of warranted true belief that he is a sinner. Rather, the authors claim, he has "acquaintance" knowledge: a "direct emotional acquaintance with its gravity or import. His knowledge is a deep *impression* of the heinousness of what he has done…" (102).

acquaintance knowledge is a product of a virtue and extended moral formation, and presupposes practical wisdom as well.[39]

For instance, suppose (with Roberts and Wood) that normatively rich emotions like anger have cognitive content. If two people witness an instance of racial injustice and possess the same propositional knowledge about its unjustness, the person who immediately appreciates the injustice through the emotion of anger (rather than amusement or indifference) is in a better *epistemic* position. He "'tastes' the injustice of the situation" in a way expressive of his virtue of justice, his understanding of and acquaintance with it, and his settled concern for just states of affairs.[40] So, sometimes appreciation is non-veridical but retains genuine experiential value, while other times appreciation is veridical, virtue-conditioned, epistemically valuable, and expressive of wisdom.[41]

Appreciating Some Distinctions

We can now summarize the different versions of appreciation discussed thus far. Initially, this exercise will help to clarify some of the ambiguous and equivocal uses of 'appreciation' in the virtue ethical literature. That is, drawing these distinctions will allow us to better understand the relationship between Swanton's "pre-analytic" and "post-analytic" appreciations (as she calls them), Adams's and Hurka's assumptions that

[39] Ibid., 51.

[40] Ibid., 53.

[41] This is not to say, of course, that mistaken appreciative impressions (*as* impressions) cannot also express virtues. If someone expresses a disposition to be kind, but the expressed kindness depends on a mistaken impression, there still seems to be *aretaic* value present, even if the epistemic value is minimal or absent.

only one counts as genuine appreciation, and also Swanton's claim that appreciation is a "fundamental mode of moral responsiveness" that operates in any given expression of virtue. In short, drawing some of these distinctions puts us in a better position to evaluate these claims about appreciation and its role in the virtuous life (both in this chapter and in the following chapter).

In the discussion of appreciation thus far, several different types or family resemblance members have emerged. First, appreciation can be an immediate, more or less phenomenologically vivid, *intuitive impression of value*, importance or significance.[42] Roughly, I intend for such vivid and intuitive impressions of value to correspond to the *phenomenal-affective* appreciations of chapter two.[43] As is evident from the solitary confinement and *Castaway* examples above, one primary distinguishing feature of such appreciative experiences is the low level of epistemic value combined with a high degree of experiential value. In the more purely phenomenal cases, an appreciative experience can simply evoke an undifferentiated mood or sense, as when listening to the first movement of Philip Glass's first violin concerto, and experiencing vaguely austere transcendence. Other features of such phenomenal-experiential appreciations might include qualia like complexity, a felt sense of coherence or unity, intensity, or a sense of belonging, where one or more of these dominate the appreciative experience. Unlike instances of vivid acquaintance knowledge, such appreciations may

[42] When I say it is immediate, I am not ruling out the possibility that such impressions can be conceptually mediated. Either these kinds of appreciations are genuinely immediate (not conceptually mediated) or they are *experienced as* immediate, but still conceptually mediated. I currently favor the latter view, but also hold that such first-personal experiences possess a character and value which, for the person undergoing it, is distinct from experiences mediated by explicit reflective activity.

[43] I say "in general" here because of the cases in which phenomenal-affective appreciations converge with engaged evaluative understanding, as I noted above, and in chapter one. The borders are porous between these two family resemblance members.

not give us a very good quality or specificity of cognitive contact with reality. This is also why I claimed, above, that such appreciative experiences do not typically express wisdom, at least *insofar as* wisdom involves getting things right.

However, I think we should avoid saying that appreciative impressions of value *always* fail to express wisdom, understanding, or have aretaic value. After all, even someone who appreciatively experiences his LSD trip as morally salutary in some way has a minimal sort of understanding, such as the basic kind involved in making sense of a representational array or in grasping coherence relations.[44] Further, both our solitary confinement man and the castaway seem to express some wisdom, despite the non-veridicality of their appreciative experience. Both seem to be partly wise, for instance, about the goods internal to communities and the goods of friendship. Finally, there seems to be aretaic value in cases of mistaken appreciations. Someone can appreciatively admire a generous act even if, unbeknownst to them, the act isn't generous at all. Such admiration still seems to have aretaic value. These three points are rather crucial because, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, a dialectically growing appreciation involves *movement* from less veridical and articulate appreciations to deeper and more mature varieties.

A second type of appreciation coming out of this analysis is that of an immediate, more or less phenomenologically vivid, *intuitive apprehension of value*, importance or significance. I mean for this type to correspond, roughly, to what I called appreciation as

[44] See Roberts and Wood, 48, for further discussion of this kind of minimal understanding, which appears to be a necessary condition for *any* intelligible perception. Relating this back to one of my examples, it appears that even the hallucinating man in solitary confinement is grasping the coherence relations involved in his mental representation of friends and food being present. So, even though the appreciative experience is totally illusory, the illusion itself requires a certain sort of understanding. The same could be said for someone on an LSD trip who, at minimum (in the most abstract sorts of "trips"), appears to grasp at least spatial relations, and likely color distinctions as well.

engaged evaluative understanding in chapter two, excepting the discursively articulate variety that may follow upon a process of critical appraisal. By *apprehension*, here, I mean that this sort of appreciation puts its subject into cognitive contact with reality, in a more robust way than is the case with the appreciative impressions just discussed. So, a primary distinguishing feature of such appreciative apprehensions is the *high* level of epistemic value combined with a *high* degree of experiential value.[45] Given its veridicality combined with the experiential quality, this variety can be an instance of first personal acquaintance knowledge, as in Roberts's and Woods's example above, and thereby is an instance of engaged ethical understanding.

In some cases, moreover, such appreciations may richly express long-acquired moral wisdom and deeply settled virtues. As Roberts and Wood describe their person angered by injustice, "he has mastery of the concept of justice, easily discriminates justice from injustice in many cases, and cares about just states of affairs. This complex of abilities and inclinations goes into what we might call his understanding of justice, and is his virtue."[46] However, as in the case of the Nazi commander, such immediate apprehension appreciations can also instance vivid acquaintance knowledge without being substantive expressions of wisdom or settled virtue. The same would appear to be true of sudden appreciative experiences that come upon us as a gift of grace or fortune, as I noted in chapter two while speaking of conversion experiences.

[45] This seems to be why I stated, several times earlier in this project, that phenomenal-affective appreciations and engaged evaluative understandings (as appreciation) sometimes converge. Since the difference between the two is a matter of degrees, phenomenal-affective appreciations with a higher degree of veridicality than other phenomenal-affective experiences "bleed into" the domain of engaged evaluative understandings.

[46] Roberts and Wood, 53.

Third, appreciation can be the activity of critical evaluative appraisal, or sizing things up in an attentive and discerning way, as I argued in the last chapter. This will be appreciation in the seeking mode (though perhaps with some findings along the way). Success at this type of appreciating may require experience, wisdom, and an already possessed factual or evaluative appreciation (as an overall understanding) of what one is discerning or appraising. Fourthly, as "possessed" appreciation would indicate, there is dispositional appreciation as an achieved, overall psychological state. As mentioned in chapter two, this is what a given agent brings to the table when any of the above three types occur, is expressed or revised amidst their occurrence, and names the overall appreciation that one *has* and walks away with at their finish.

Now, why make all of these laborious distinctions? If we fail to make them, then we can neither begin to assess how appreciation may play a "fundamental" role in the virtuous life, nor can we discern the proper relationship between different types of appreciation and moral wisdom. Moreover, we may narrowly privilege one type of appreciation, as Adams and Hurka seem to suggest, without fully acknowledging the important roles that other types may play. Having made such distinctions, however, we stand in a much better position to evaluate some of the claims made about appreciation and its role in the virtuous life. I will now examine just a few of these here.

The Moral 'Fundamentality' of Appreciation

Let us return to Swanton's claim that appreciation is a "fundamental [mode] of moral responsiveness" that plays a supportive role in the expression of all the virtues.[47] It should be clear by now that whether or how appreciation is fundamental, or even whether

[47] Swanton, 6, 99, and 292-293.

it is a mode of responsiveness at all, depends a great deal on *which* type of appreciation one is talking about. If one refers to a non-occurrent, possessed appreciation one *has* (say, for just states of affairs), then appreciation is a disposition to respond in virtuous ways to justice or its absence, rather than being the responsiveness mode itself. If appreciation refers to connoisseur-like appraisal and comparative rank ordering of merits, then, assuming that virtues entail wisdom, appreciation does indeed seem to play a basic role in the virtuous life by being a necessary condition for wisdom. However, if one is discussing appreciation as an immediate evaluative impression that is mistaken, then if the virtues and wisdom are mutually entailing, such appreciation *may* not play any role at all in the expression of a virtue, even though the appreciative experience may be constituted by genuine experiential value. Finally, if appreciation is an immediate evaluative *apprehension* of some moral fact or item of significance, it could express virtue and instance wise perception. Or, it could simply be a moral intuition that results from luck, one's circumstances, or divine providence, rather than being a product of one's settled virtuous character.

At this point we can categorically clarify, better than Swanton herself does, the relationship between appreciation (of one sort or another) and virtue expression and wisdom: all expressions of virtue or wisdom require appreciation, but not all instances of appreciation involve virtue or wisdom.[48] The distinctions between types of appreciation also help us to isolate, for the final sort of appreciation mentioned, a more fundamental role than Swanton herself entertains. Recall that Swanton takes appreciation to be one among several other fundamental modes of moral responsiveness, such as receptivity,

[48] This categorical claim remains true, even though all forms of appreciation can, as I argue in chapters three and four, make salutary contributions to holistic moral agency.

love, respect, creativity, receptivity, honoring (e.g. rules or value) and promotion (of good or value). At first blush, she appears to suggest this because she initially ties appreciation specifically to the virtues of connoisseurship. However, the moment we clarify a different sort of appreciation that is a direct, virtue-conditioned and intuitive responsiveness to persons, value or items of moral worth or significance, a possibility that Swanton never fully entertains emerges into view.

The possibility is this. Such appreciative apprehensions of value can play a distinctively fundamental role in nearly *all* of the modes of moral acknowledgment that Swanton identifies, including the other "fundamental" modes themselves. Moving beyond Swanton, then, it seems difficult to imagine a person honoring rules or something valuable, or indeed promoting good or value without at least *some* prior appreciative recognition of the importance or value of what is being honored or promoted, where the appreciation is constituted partly by an apt evaluative construal.[49] That is, while Swanton takes appreciation to be *one* fundamental mode of responsiveness alongside several others, I am suggesting that certain kinds of recognitional or engaged appreciative construals appear to be necessary ingredients in *all* of the other fundamental modes she identifies.

Such appreciation can play a fundamental role in the moral life, moreover, whether it directly expresses a settled virtue, or whether it is simply an intuitive recognitional responsiveness necessary for living a minimally good life. For instance, in her Postscript to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (as noted in chapter one), Hannah Arendt explains her notion of the "banality of evil" by arguing that Eichmann "*never realized*

[49] For my view on what counts as an evaluative construal, see chapter one, note 80.

what he was doing...this lack of imagination…[this] sheer thoughtlessness…can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together."[50] The example of Eichmann suggests that an ability to appreciate one's own activity and its causal role in diminishing or eradicating the moral value or flourishing of persons, is essential to being even minimally good, let alone virtuous.

Of course, however, appreciation in its richer dimensions moves well beyond such basic moral recognitions. For instance, many virtue-conditioned cases of promoting and honoring (as well as loving and respecting) involve more than mere notional assent, or wise recognition of importance or value. They also include personal investment in what one judges to be worthy of promotion or honor and therefore some degree of care, movement of one's will, or attention arresting attunement of one's whole self to the object of appreciation. All told, then, appreciation, as immediate apprehension of value, can be a "fundamental" mode of moral responsiveness *both* in the sense of being minimally necessary for the good life, and in the sense of marking an ideal standard of human excellence and holistic moral engagement that makes such minimal engagement morally intelligible to begin with.[51]

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[50] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, intro. by Amos Elon (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 287-288. Interestingly, Albert Camus's character Meursault in *The Stranger* seems to fit the character of Eichmann to a tee, even though Camus takes Meursault to be a new Christ and an existentialist hero. Cf. Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1942).

[51] In this comment I am registering my agreement with Daniel Russell's critique of Swanton's "threshold" conception of virtue, which is her way of getting by without a notion of "the virtuous person" as an ideal model. One of Russell's basic points, which seems right, is that one cannot even *have* a threshold conception of virtue without some ideal criterion that makes the threshold position on the scale of virtue intelligible to begin with. Similarly, I think that we can talk about ideal appreciations that make the moral value of its lesser instances intelligible, even if no perfect appreciator ever existed. Daniel C. Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 121.

Conclusion: The Dangers of Fragmentary Analysis

The foregoing discussion shows, I think, the value of isolating one specific type of appreciation and reflecting on its general role in the ethical and virtuous life. For example there is value, as the current virtue ethical literature shows, in analyzing appreciation as a distinctive ability to track factual or evaluative situational saliences giving rise to reasons for action. There is philosophical value, too, in examining appreciations as non-veridical impressions of value. For, this examination would (among other things) illumine the way that evaluative impressions are structured by thick concepts, clarify the nature of moral agency and motivation, and demonstrate the moral pedagogical power of vivid (but mistaken) appreciative impressions of value.

However, while there is undeniable value in analyzing each specific version of appreciation in isolation from its neighbors, there are several dangers as well. First, one might suppose that there is only one type of appreciation, and miss out on the moral possibilities latent in the other varieties. The fact that Swanton picks up on at least two different types of appreciation, and makes a beginning toward thinking through their roles in the good life, places her in a better position than Hurka or Adams. The latter two, perhaps motivated by theoretical concerns to align appreciation with the right (Hurka) or the good (Adams), run the risk of failing to appreciate fully the forms that do not fit well into their theoretical frameworks. Sometimes, after all, Adams' non-comparative and attentionally absorbed appreciations are morally illuminating, as when the admirable activity of a moral exemplar fills one's attentional field and motivates one to go and do likewise. Other times, however, one can be riveted by the non-comparative

excellence of a collegial conversation with one's friend, and then fail to arrive on time for the championship soccer match in which one's child is playing.

The greater danger, so far as my current project is concerned, is that in focusing narrowly on one type of appreciation or another, we will lose hold of our ability to picture fully the human capacity for holistic and narratively unified appreciative agency. One can profitably analyze appreciation as recognition of reasons for action in an isolated deliberative episode (McDowell, and many others), as a discrete moral intuition (Huemer),[52] as a particular instance of acquaintance knowledge (Roberts and Wood), as moral conceptual understanding (Hursthouse), as an ability of critical-comparative appraisal (Hurka; Kamtekar), or as the activity of appraising itself (Ziff). However, these discrete analyses of appreciation, often in service of a theoretical position or point, may also leave us with a piecemeal conception of appreciation and of holistic moral agency, as I argued in chapter two.

One way to incorporate the value of isolated analysis, while also avoiding the problem of analytic fragmentation, is to examine more closely appreciating as an extended activity of evaluative attention, as I began to do in chapter two. There I argued that this activity, as an unfolding stretch of attentive agency, is able to contain the other sorts of appreciation within it and perhaps confer narrative unity upon episodes of an agent's life. A full analysis of this sort of dialectical appreciating, moreover, may allow us to better picture engaged and interactive moral agency. With the exception of Talbot Brewer (in his recent work on "running appreciation"), no one in the current virtue ethical literature has attempted to bring this sort of appreciating fully into view. Thus, I

[52] Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

now turn to an examination of Brewer's account with a particular focus on the type of appreciation that perfects activities and renders them wholehearted.

CHAPTER FOUR

Appreciation and Virtuous Agency:
Against the Psychic Harmony Thesis

In the last chapter I tried to clarify several different types of appreciation at work in virtue ethics, and to demonstrate the philosophical value of distinguishing them and allowing for a plurality of appreciative contributions to virtue ethics. However, I concluded by arguing that in order to picture a certain type of holistic and narratively unified moral agency, we need to move beyond considering isolated varieties of appreciation, and toward a conception of how all of them can work together. A key *desideratum*, therefore, is the articulation of a dialectically unfolding picture of appreciating that plays a fundamental role in virtuous agency. However, there is a major obstacle standing in the way of developing this picture within standard neo-Aristotelian virtue ethical accounts of appreciative moral agency. The obstacle, broadly speaking, is the dominant view that motivationally harmonious pleasure or delight taken in virtuous activity is the distinguishing mark of virtuous persons. To say that a virtuous person *appreciates* his own virtuous activity, then, is often equivalent to saying that he enjoys it or takes pleasure in it with full motivational harmony. This view is particularly at odds with the unfolding, responsively plural and narratival appreciative attention that I want to bring into view. For, such appreciating will often contain stretches of deep and abiding pain, as well as virtuous desires that conflict with virtuous actions.

In this chapter, then, I begin with a brief exposition of Aristotle on pleasure and virtuous activity, along with several contemporary proponents of the thesis he inspires:

that excellently appreciating one's own virtuous activity involves (or typically involves) full motivational harmony with the activity and supervening pleasure taken in it. After raising the common objection that such psychic harmony is problematically idealized, even for mature moral agents, I turn my attention to Talbot Brewer's recent work on appreciation of excellent activity.[1] Brewer's treatment of appreciation is appealing, since he develops a dialectical conception of appreciating as an extended stretch of holistically unfolding agency. This is very close to the sort of picture of appreciative agency I want to advance. However, Brewer's treatment of appreciation suffers from a particularly acute case of idealized psychic harmony. My aim, then, is to retrieve Brewer's best insights on appreciation, while dispensing with its problematic features.

So, in what follows, I begin by giving an exposition of Brewer's psychically harmonious view of activity appreciation. Then, I argue that this view (1) creates axiological difficulties that threaten the first-personal intelligibility of moral agency, (2) possesses a limited scope of application, and (3) fails to handle common mixed cases of virtuous appreciation that involve motivational conflict and appreciative pain. I then contend that (4) Brewer's notion of "running appreciation" is internally inconsistent, for he identifies it with both "savoring" attentional pleasure and *zetetic* practical thinking. However, I also argue that the connection Brewer posits between appreciation of activity and the evaluative attentional component of practical thinking is more promising. For, it opens prospects for developing the dialectically unfolding, responsively plural, and holistic picture of appreciating that I want to bring into view, while also moving us

[1] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

toward a new, *concerned engagement* understanding of wholehearted appreciative agency.

The Received Aristotelian View[2]

Aristotle's own views on motivational harmony with and pleasure taken in virtuous activity have significantly influenced many contemporary virtue ethicists.[3] Broadly speaking, for Aristotle, virtuous agents possess motivational harmony in the sense that their desires and emotions are in harmony with their correct judgments about what to do and thus with the excellence of their actions. Hence, pleasure supervenes on such activity, completing and perfecting it.[4] When it comes to pleasure, at the heart of Aristotle's view is the claim that "someone who does not enjoy noble actions is not good; for no one would call a person just, for instance, if he did not enjoy doing just actions, or

[2] In this section I do not pretend to offer an exegetically rigorous, historically situated account of Aristotle's own views. Instead, my main concern is with several philosophically interesting theses on pleasure and motivational harmony that Aristotle is widely regarded to have generated, and which have influenced contemporary Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and moral psychology. For a particularly insightful historical (and philosophical) piece on pleasure and activity in Aristotle, see Gerd Van Riel, "Does a Perfect Activity Necessarily Yield Pleasure? An Evaluation of the Relation between Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII and X," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 7, no. 2 (1999): 211-224.

[3] Julia Annas aptly summarizes the influence of Aristotle and other ancient thinkers on this contemporary view: "It is important to respect in ethical theory the everyday contrast between someone who does the right thing, but has to battle with his feelings to do so, and thus acts reluctantly and with a sense of pain and loss, and the person who does the right thing and whose feelings endorse the action, and who thus acts gladly and with pleasure…What the ancients stress is just the common thought that conflict and stress are signs of something's failing or going wrong, and that a state where these are absent is preferable to a state where they are present. Virtue is not just different from self-control; the harmony in the virtuous between action and feeling makes it preferable to self-control." Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 53–54.

[4] In Aristotle, there is a lack of clarity between Books 7 and 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, regarding the role of pleasure with respect to virtuous activity. In Book 7 he seems to *equate* excellent and unimpeded human activity with pleasure (1153b7-12). In book 10, however, he takes pleasure to be something *more* than unimpeded activity in the sense that it supervenes on such activity, completing and perfecting it. I am taking the latter interpretation, and examine contemporary neo-Aristotelians who do so as well. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999). Hereafter cited as Aristotle, *NE*, followed by page number. Unless otherwise noted, all citations will be from the Irwin translation.

generous if he did not enjoy generous actions, and similarly for the other virtues."[5] Also well-known is the fact that, for Aristotle, pleasure necessarily (or characteristically) supervenes on proper human functioning, for "...actions in accord with virtue are pleasant by nature, so that they both please lovers of the fine and are pleasant in their own right."[6] In Books II-IV of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we find that actions in accord with virtue require not only correct judgment about what to do, but they also involve desires in accord with such judgment, whereby it follows that being good involves taking pleasure in virtuous activity.[7] Said differently, engaging in virtuous activity essentially involves *appreciating* the activity in a motivationally harmonious and engaged sort of way.

Finally, Aristotle's notion of taking pleasure in virtuous activity is properly called *appreciating* such activity, in the sense of delighting in it and understanding its excellence, and also in the sense of giving one's evaluative attention over to the activity. For, in Aristotle's view, such pleasure essentially includes an agent's virtue-conditioned conception of the good life.[8] Moreover, as Talbot Brewer has persuasively argued, the kind of pleasure Aristotle has in mind seems to be a form of evaluative attention, and

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[5] Ibid., 1099a18-20.

[6] Ibid., 1099a21-22. I have inserted "characteristically" to account for two oddities in Aristotle's treatment. On the one hand the passage just cited (and many others) suggest that an activity simply *cannot* be fully excellent without supervening pleasure, since such activities are intrinsically pleasurable. On the other hand, Aristotle cites exceptions to this in passages on properly painful courage (1117b1-6, 11-12, 15-17) and a regrettable throwing of ship cargo overboard in a storm (1110a9-12). He may also entertain the view that properly painful temperance is possible (cf. 1107b5-9 and 1117b25-27).

[7] It is not clear in Aristotle what type of pleasure this is. There are problems with treating it strictly as sensory pleasure on the one hand, or with treating it as propositional pleasure on the other. For these views and some challenges presented by both, see Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 91 and Erik Wielenberg, "Pleasure as a Sign of Moral Virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*," *The Journal of Philosophical Inquiry* 34 (2000): 439-449.

[8] For this interpretation see Dorothea Frede, "The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle," in *Essays on Aristotle's "De Anima,"* ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amelie Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 279-96.

neither a bodily sensation nor reducible to mere propositional pleasure.[9] Finally, pleasure also adds an epistemic dimension in its completion and perfection of the activity. For instance, Aristotle notes that "the proper pleasure increases the activity; for we judge each thing better and more exactly when our activity involves pleasure."[10] Thus, for Aristotle, failure to take pleasure in a virtuous (or other worthwhile) activity would involve a failure of appreciation in *both* the sense of understanding and the sense of enjoyment.[11]

This belief lies at the heart of an Aristotelian distinction between virtue and continence. A virtuous person (unlike the continent person) does not merely perform the virtuous action; instead, he *appreciates* such activity. Broadly, a continent (*enkratic)* person is one who both correctly judges what to do and acts in accord with virtue. However, such a person also contends against conflicting desires and emotions because of a moral defect within himself, thereby experiencing pain in carrying out the virtuous action. The continent person's emotions and desires fail to accord fully with his correct moral judgment about what he should do. He therefore does not take univocal pleasure in the activity, and exhibits a failure of appreciation.

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[9] Brewer, 115ff. Also, Gilbert Ryle has made this notion of activity pleasure compelling. He argues that taking pleasure in an activity need not involve feeling a specific sensation while doing it, but rather it seems to involve performing the activity in a particular way with wholehearted desire and undivided attention. See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 107-108.

[10] Aristotle, *NE*, 1175a31-33. For an excellent article focused on this issue, see Johan Brännmark, "Like the Bloom on Youths: How Pleasure Completes Our Lives," in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 226-238.

[11] Aristotle does think, of course, that mildly painful misfortunes are quite compatible with the good life. Some level of physical or attentional pain, then, can accompany virtuous activity at times. Cf. *NE* 1100b22-25.

Many contemporary virtue ethicists and theorists endorse some version of Aristotle's basic thesis, that what distinguishes the virtuous from the merely continent person is that the former possesses complete motivational harmony with the action and supervening pleasure taken in it. While some follow Aristotle in limiting the distinction to that of temperance versus continence, others hold a stronger and broader view. As a condition of action proceeding from virtue, this view requires an appreciation of virtuous activity with complete motivational harmony and supervening attentional pleasure.[12] Marcia Baron's comment is paradigmatic of the strong view. Aristotle's virtuous person, says Baron, "feels no regrets, no wish that the moral chips lay elsewhere," and "has no conflicting desires" at all.[13]

In recent decades, John McDowell has given the strong view an epistemic twist and in so doing, characterizes such motivational harmony as a form of appreciation. He argues that virtues are expressions of a unified, special sensitivity that is itself a virtuous person's uncodifiable conception of how to live well. This "second nature" sensitivity endows virtuous agents with a motivationally efficacious "ability to recognize requirements that situations impose on one's behavior," and so yields moral knowledge.[14] The agent not only grasps, but also *appreciates* the right reason for action. Such perception is also completely sufficient to "silence," not merely override, other

[12] Gregory Trianosky endorses the strong view and limits it to the difference between temperance and continence. Cf. Trianosky, "Rightly Ordered Appetites," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (January 1988): 1-12. Marcia Baron holds the strong view of the distinction, but seems to take it as a virtue-continence distinction. Marcia Baron, Philip Pettit, and Michael Slote, *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 44.

[13] Baron, *Three Methods of Ethics*, 44.

[14] John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 53.

considerations that might incline the agent to act differently.[15] Unlike a virtuous person, the merely continent person feels the tug of inclinations or prospective enjoyments that compete in his appreciative economy against (or alongside) his sensitivity to the virtuous action that the situation requires. If such competing attractions or prospective enjoyments "make themselves heard by one's will" in any way, says McDowell, then such an agent may be continent, but lacks virtue, for virtue requires a "vivid appreciation" of situational requirements on action.[16] As McDowell notes,

> In the absence of a requirement, the prospective enjoyment would constitute a reason for going ahead. But his clear perception of the requirement insulates the prospective enjoyment—of which, for a satisfying conception of the virtue, we should want him to have a vivid appreciation—from engaging his inclinations at all. Here and now, it does not count for him as any reason for acting in that way.[17]

Here, the vividness of one's appreciation for situational requirements is a function of motivational harmony, and this leads to an univocal conception of how the agent appreciates his or her own virtuous activity. Without competing inclinations or the appreciative pull of competing goods, virtuous action is carried off with complete conative harmony and consequently, with univocal supervening pleasure in the activity as well.[18]

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[15] McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?," in *Mind, Value, and Reality*, 90.

[16] McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 56. Another statement is similar: "If someone needs to overcome an inclination to act otherwise, in getting himself to act as, say, temperance or courage demand, then he shows not virtue but (mere) continence" (55).

[17] McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?," 91.

[18] McDowell is clear that the virtuous agent's whole motivational energy is absorbed in the thing to do. Assuming that supervening attentional pleasure wholly tracks motivational states, it would seem that McDowell's virtuous agent also takes univocal pleasure in the virtuous thing to do. Here is a quotation that supports this interpretation: "[His virtue] not only singles out just the right one of the potentially action-inviting features of a predicament, but does so in such a way that none of the agent's motivational energy is

In opposition to the strong view and in light of objections that it idealizes virtuous agency, other thinkers such as Hursthouse, Foot, and Drefcinski acknowledge that there may be some cases in which a virtuous person either need not or does not have such wholehearted harmony and pleasure. For instance, in commenting on the example in which a virtuous person must return a purse to a spendthrift, Hursthouse says there is "no reason why any Aristotelian should deny to the fully honest the thought that it is a damned shame that this had to be done."[19] Using a somewhat differently structured case, Drefcinski acknowledges that "a generous woman might feel pain in giving a substantial amount of money to a friend, not because she values money inordinately, but because it hurts her to see her friend in such need."[20] This example is less convincing than Hursthouse's, for the agent in this case is clearly pained not by the generous giving of money itself, but by the state of the world in which the money is given, perhaps because of her compassionate character. Still, the example does show one instance in which a virtuous action could be carried out without any pleasure taken in the virtuous activity, if (for example) the woman's pain at her friend's situation swamps any pleasure she might take in giving the money. However, while allowing for such examples, proponents of the

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enticed into operation by any of the others; he has no errant impulses that threaten to lead him astray…His…[virtue] is such as to insulate the attractions of competing courses of action from generating actual urges to pursue them." John McDowell, "Incontinence and Practical Wisdom in Aristotle," in *Essays for David Wiggins: Identity, Truth and Value*, ed. Sabina Lovibond and S. G. Williams (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 102.

[19] Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92-93; 97. For a more complicated view, which nonetheless still seems committed to the weak thesis about harmony, see Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices," in *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1–18. For a helpful discussion and critique of both Hursthouse's and Foot's views, see Karen Stohr, "Moral Cacophony: When Continence is a Virtue," *The Journal of Ethics* 7, no. 4 (2003): 339-363.

[20] Shane Drefcinski, "Aristotle's Fallible Phronimos," *Ancient Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 151.

weak view often hold (as all three of these thinkers do) that virtuous agents *typically* or characteristically take pleasure in virtuous activity, absent special circumstances.[21]

So, there are strong and weak versions of the Aristotle-inspired thesis that virtuous persons enact virtue with full motivational harmony and supervening activity pleasure. However, while the weak view follows Aristotle himself in acknowledging exceptional cases, there are common objections against both, on grounds that such inner harmony either idealizes or is harmful to moral agency.[22] Nancy Sherman, for instance, notes that while "*reducing* internal conflict may be a crucial part of moral development, an idealized characterization, even of a mature moral *psyche*, as one that *lacks* conflict seems superhuman…," and may blind mature agents to the deleterious influences of emotions.[23] Even where exceptions for difficult cases are acknowledged, Sherman suggests that Aristotle is too "sanguine about the possibilities for psychic harmony."[24] While I am skeptical about Sherman's own (broadly) Kantian solution to this problem, it is a real problem nonetheless, not least in light of the *ubiquity* of "mixed" difficult activities, as I will presently show.

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[21] Broadie seems to reject this weaker view by offering a far more defensible interpretation of Aristotle. She contends, for instance, that Aristotle's notion of virtuous persons taking pleasure in virtuous activity should "mean no more than that the agent acts wholeheartedly, which is compatible with not enjoying what he does." She says this partly in light of the fact that, for the courageous person in battle, *sensory* pain is virtually unavoidable. Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 91 and 318. Several thinkers have argued that a distinction between sensory and propositional pleasures or pains solves this problem, but these views have numerous problems of their own. For a defense of the propositionalist view, see Wielenberg, 439-449.

[22] Aristotle acknowledges, but does not sufficiently develop the implications of "mixed" virtuous actions that involve conflicted feelings in light of a tragic or hard situation, or in light of something harmful or bad that will result from virtuous activity. See *NE* 1117b1-20, and *NE* 1110a9-1110b1.

[23] Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 96.

[24] Ibid.

At the moment, I want to suggest that the problem of idealized psychic harmony (for the *mature* moral agent) may be mitigated if virtue ethicists can develop a more versatile conception of the dialectical appreciating that informs many virtuous activities. Now, Talbot Brewer is one virtue ethicist who has *already* developed a recent account of a dialectically unfolding "running appreciation" that completes virtuous actions, but as noted above, his account suffers from the idealized psychic harmony problem. Indeed, an exposition and thorough critique of his account of appreciation will provide good reasons to reject the strong and weak theses outlined above. However, the main goal of this chapter is not to articulate what is *wrong* with the strong and weak psychic harmony theses, but rather the goal is to obtain a workable and realistic conception of active, dialectically unfolding appreciation as it can figure in ideal cases of virtuous agency. In my view, the way forward to such an account must glean the best of Brewer's "running" appreciative agency, while leaving the deficits of his psychic idealism behind.

Now, since my treatment of Brewer is extensive, I will quickly recapitulate the path I will take. After a brief exposition of Brewer's views on desires, dialectical activities, and the wholehearted and pleasurable appreciating that accompanies such activities, I then advance three substantial problems for Brewer's account of activity appreciation. First, Brewer's view that appreciation only (or largely) takes the intrinsic value of activity as its object threatens either to render morally significant activity unintelligible to moral agents, or to induce moral blindness to morally important instrumental value or disvalue. Second, Brewer's equation of activity *appreciation* with motivationally harmonious activity *pleasure* is unable to account for a large class of painful and motivationally conflicted actions from virtue. This problem also motivates a

rejection of the strong and weak theses articulated above. Finally, I argue that Brewer's notion of "running [activity] appreciation" is internally inconsistent, since he equates it with both "savoring" attentional pleasure and *zetetic* evaluative practical thinking. The latter conception, however, reveals a very promising way forward for appreciative virtuous agency. With this summary in hand, I now turn to an exposition and critique of Brewer's recent and extensive work on appreciation.

Talbot Brewer on "Running" Activity Appreciation

In chapter four of his recent book, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, Brewer endorses the comprehensive eudaimonist interpretation of Aristotle, arguing that the right mix of fully actualized, characteristically human activities constitutes *eudaimonia*.[25] For Brewer (as for Aristotle), such intrinsically valuable activities are fully actualized or *completed* in the perfectionistic sense (thereby made fully excellent), only when they are accompanied by a wholeheartedness of engagement in the activity.[26] That is, they are perfectionistically completed when we have an unmixed desire to engage in them, and when they are thereby also accompanied by vivid attentional pleasure.[27] For Brewer, then, no human

[25] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 123, 125. For the difference between the comprehensive and the intellectualist interpretation of Aristotle on *eudaimonia*, see Thomas Nagel, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," in *Essays in Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 7-33.

[26] While Brewer uses 'intrinsic value,' it is clear that he has *final value* in mind, where final value is the value something has in virtue of its being sought by an agent as an end in itself. Intrinsic value, at least on Korsgaard's plausible (though contested) conception, is the value something has in virtue of its intrinsic, nonrelational properties. Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review* 92, no. 2 (April 1983): 169-195.

[27] Cf. Brewer, 122-123. Here Brewer follows Bostock, who notes that Aristotle distinguishes activities from processes by using the notion of complete (*teleion*) in both a temporal and a perfectionistic sense. In the temporal sense, something qualifies as an activity if it is fully actualized in each of its performative moments. Dancing would be an example of this, and as Brewer notes, such temporally complete activities could indeed be carried off without pleasure. Seeing a corpse is an example here (Brewer, 122). However, Aristotle also uses 'complete' (*teleion*) in a *perfectionistic* sense, according to

activity is complete or a perfect instance of its kind "unless it springs from and is guided by a vivid running awareness of its value."[28] On this picture, since "complete" excellent human activity is both wholehearted and pleasurable, then, there is an intuitive and tight connection between such virtuous activity, and a life that is not only *good*, but also good to or for the agent in being either beneficial or (at least) involving personal satisfaction.[29]

The unique character of such satisfaction becomes clearer when Brewer equates this wholehearted completing pleasure with a "running appreciation" of value. An ideal *appreciation* of one's activity in this pleasurable way requires that one engage in the activity with only a *single* occurrent desire "to engage in that activity for its own sake," and with total present absorption in it.[30] To appreciate an intrinsically valuable activity with such complete conative harmony and pleasure, says Brewer, is to "live a stretch of life unreservedly," for such appreciation provides "a valuable respite from the distractions and unwarranted doubts that so often leave us at odds with ourselves and alienate us from our own doings."[31] When our activities are genuinely valuable, says

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which an activity is complete if it is *also*, in addition to being temporally complete (as a necessary condition), a perfect instance of its kind. Bostock argues that when Aristotle claims that pleasure completes activities, he has only this perfectionistic sense in mind. David Bostock, "Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle's Ethics," *Phronesis* 33 (1988), 251-272 (esp. 257-260).

[28] Brewer, 123.

[29] It seems to me that we need a distinction between a life that is *good for* an agent in terms of being *beneficial*, and a life that is *good to* an agent in terms of being *personally satisfying* to him or her. Brewer seems to endorse the personal satisfaction view. The two views are different, of course, since what is beneficial need not be personally satisfying (like eating my broccoli), and what is personally satisfying need not be beneficial (like the personal satisfaction of the sadist). For the purposes of the remainder of this chapter, I will be focused on Brewer's satisfactionist view.

[30] Brewer, 119. Brewer's "evaluative attention" account of desires is very close to his "evaluative attention" account of pleasure, as will become presently evident.

[31] Ibid. The final portion of the quotation is from Talbot Brewer, "Savoring Time: Desire, Pleasure and Wholehearted Activity," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6 (2003): 143. Hereafter I will

Brewer, such "vivid running appreciation" *qua* attentional pleasure allows us to *savor* and be wholly present to our activities.

Now, Brewer ties this personally satisfying picture of appreciation as activity pleasure to his "evaluative outlook" view of desires, and we therefore need briefly to examine his take on desires. On Brewer's "evaluative outlook" view of desires, they are partly constituted by representational appearances of goodness or desirability, and sometimes have a mind-to-world direction of fit.[32] In advancing this conception of desire, Brewer aims to combat a "world-making" or "productive" conception of human agency and its propositionalist view of desires. On the propositionalist view, desires are simply attitudes toward propositions (abstracted from the representational content of the desire), which possess a strictly world-to-mind direction of fit, and are always aimed at *producing* some unrealized state of affairs.

The propositionalist view of desires, says Brewer, fails to account for desires that are not aimed at a state of affairs one might seek to produce (like *desires for* a person or for God). The view also cannot account for direct *desires to* engage in holistic, diachronically extended and intrinsically valuable "dialectical activities" like friendship,

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abbreviate this title as "Savoring Time," and Brewer's other text as *Retrieval*. Brewer is careful to note that one need not fulfill these appreciative attentional conditions *perfectly* in order to take pleasure in an activity, for activity pleasure comes in degrees. However, when these conditions are met, says Brewer, we are possessed of a "vivid and appreciative awareness of aspects of our activity that seem to make it intrinsically valuable. To appreciate our own activity in this way is to live a stretch of life unreservedly," and it is not difficult, he notes, to see why "relishing or savoring one's doings in this way deserves to be called pleasure" (*Retrieval*, 119).

[32] That is, something in the world is "lit up" for us in the representational content of the desire "as good," and such intimations of value can, of course, be true or false. Brewer's view of desires thus entails the view—no doubt odd to most modern ears—that desires, no less than beliefs, can be true or false. He argues that pre-modern thinkers such as Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and Aquinas share (roughly) the same view. Brewer, *Retrieval*, 56ff.

conversation, philosophical inquiry, or artistic creation.[33] For Brewer, desires to engage in these dialectical activities are neither desires to produce some future state of affairs nor desires aimed at *propositions*; rather, such "dialectical desires" are constituted by evaluative representational content, which draws us toward the internal goods and constitutive ideals of such activities. Moreover, Brewer adds that dialectical desires can be "self-augmenting," perpetually drawing us into deeper understanding and appreciation of the goods they are intimations of.[34] Not only is the productive conception of human agency (and propositionalism about desires) unable to account for these desires, says Brewer, but it also fragments our lives into episodic spasms, leaving us perpetually at odds with or *absent* from our own activities.[35] On such a conception of agency, then, we are never able to *savor* or dwell on the goods internal to our doings, and are thereby perpetually cut off from the kind of wholehearted and unimpeded activity that, for Brewer, constitutes the living of a flourishing life.

It is here, then, that we return to Brewer's conception of activity appreciation as a savoring attentional pleasure that renders human activities wholehearted and perfectionistically complete. Following Aristotle and Gilbert Ryle, Brewer

[33] Although Brewer does not develop this, the propositionalist view of activity pleasure runs into these same difficulties. For this view, see Wielenberg, 439-449.

[34] Brewer makes this augmenting character clearer in the following way. Dialectical desires, he notes, have depth as a synchronic aspect, and perfectability as a diachronic aspect. The depth of such a desire means that "its object exceeds the desirer's explicit articulation of it, and this affords the desirer with occasion to perfect the desires by arriving at a fuller articulation of them" (*Retrieval*, 51). One paradigmatic example of this, according to Brewer, is found in Augustine's desire for God. For Augustine, the discrete objects of his various desires (sex in brothels; fame as an excellent rhetorician; philosophical insight) were all iterations of the selfsame desire and longing for God (*Retrieval*, 50).

[35] Ibid., 35, 90, and 117-118.

acknowledges a basic connection between what we desire and what pleases us.[36] Moreover, he thinks that his dialectical conception of desires leads directly into his account of activity pleasure. This conception of desires, he argues, "…suggests that to take pleasure in an activity is to engage in that activity while being absorbed in it, where this absorption consists in single-minded and lively attention to whatever it is that seems to make the activity good or worth pursuing" and in particular, to what seems to make it intrinsically good.[37] For, of course, such absorbed attention to the activity's intrinsic goods (or apparent goods), if it involves a *single-minded* and unequivocal desire to engage in (and only in) the activity, works directly against deferring one's grasp of the point and value of the activity to another place or time, or to a state of affairs one might desire to produce over and above the activity itself.

Moreover, it is not difficult to see why Brewer selects the activities that he does, in order to illustrate such absorbed appreciative attention. His favored examples include philosophical inquiry, meaningful conversation, athletic competition, intimate sex, friendship, and artistic creation or appreciation. These are all dialectical activities, it seems, that not only possess a diachronic depth and perfectibility, but also, in being at least partly *telos*-containing, invite attentive absorbed appreciation of their intrinsic goods. Along with these favored examples, though, Brewer *also* claims that morally virtuous activities belong to this dialectical class.[38]

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[36] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 116; Aristotle, *NE* 1099a8-9; Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 107-108.

[37] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 116.

[38] Cf., for example, Ibid., 110 and 136.

Finally, says Brewer, such activities (and the pleasure taken in them) are "more or less complete *depending on* how thoroughly we are absorbed in our activities and how vividly we are impressed with their value,"[39] where value impression is as much desire as it is pleasure. He also claims that such complete activity pleasure requires not only that one possess a vivid awareness of the goodness of the activity; one must also "lack a vivid awareness of what is bad about it."[40] These comments seem to imply that, for Brewer, fully excellent, *unpleasant* activity is impossible. Full perfectionistic completeness and wholeheartedness requires, it seems, univocally vivid attentional pleasure and a single desire to engage in the activity for its own sake.[41]

Hence, Brewer would appear to endorse the strong Neo-Aristotelian view that I outlined above, namely, that excellent activity necessarily involves full motivational harmony and supervening pleasure. However, since he does allow for rare exceptions in which virtuous persons take no pleasure in their actions, Brewer falls at least partly within the weaker view.[42] Still, given his views as recounted above, it is difficult to see

[39] Ibid., 116, emphasis mine. Brewer thinks that to experience activity pleasure is to experience a positive evaluative construal of one's ongoing activity. This is an *impression* or experience of the activity's goodness and not merely judgment or knowledge *that* it is good. It is also different from the experience of sensory pleasures, as when we take pleasure in the taste and consistency of an excellent cup of espresso. Sensations like these are also impressions of goodness, but, according to Brewer, activity pleasure is not sensory in the way that tasting espresso is.

[40] Ibid., 117.

[41] Ibid., 119.

[42] For instance, Brewer states, "It would be a mistake to make the unqualified claim that the virtuous invariably take pleasure in their actions. Some duties require that we disregard deeply important values, as when one is obligated to turn in a family member who has committed a series of violent crimes. If one performed such a duty with unreserved relish, this might well raise questions about the adequacy of one's grasp of the value of family relations." Ibid., 132. This allowance is fine. However, given that an activity cannot, on Brewer's view, be wholehearted and thereby perfectly completed absent vivid attentional pleasure, it is difficult to see how enacting this duty *could* count as fully virtuous at all, which is the point I have raised in the main text. At best, such an action would have to be incomplete, and only quasi-virtuous, given Brewer's commitments above.

how an activity *could* be wholly virtuous, absent the pleasure and motivational harmony Brewer requires for an activity to be perfectionistically complete.

I will now summarize Brewer's overall account of the sort of appreciation that (in his view) completes and perfects intrinsically valuable activities, including virtuous activities and other dialectical ones. Such appreciating perfectionistically completes activities when we desire *solely* to engage in the activity for its own sake and thereby have vivid attentional awareness of and single-minded absorption in the real or apparent intrinsic value of the activity. A perfect and unimpeded instance of such appreciating will also lack a vivid awareness of what, if anything, is bad about the activity.[43] Finally, Brewer connects his "running appreciation" with features that support virtue ethical eudaimonism. The notions of pleasant and vivid absorption, the experience of holism and diachronic coherence, active engagement of one's capacities, and an immediate and non-deferred enjoyment of the activity and its value for its own sake, are all characteristics of Brewer's appreciating that make it consummately *good for* the appreciative agent and essential to *eudaimonia*.[44]

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[43] Ibid., 119; 117. One apt example of such appreciating is that of a child absorbed in imaginative play with his trains. This is an example Gibert Ryle uses, and Brewer's account of activity appreciation is, at numerous points, deeply influenced by Ryle. While absorbed in the activity of playing trains, says Ryle, the player has, "for the moment, sucked up, without resistance, every drop of himself that might have been on other business, or on no business at all." Ryle, "Pleasure," in *Collected Essays 1929-1968: Collected Papers Volume 2* (London: Routledge 2009), 333. This seems directly expressed in Brewer's notion of the kind of absorbed presence that renders our activities complete and wholehearted. Cf. Brewer, "Savoring Time," 144.

[44] Dewey's view of appreciation is similar, though he ties appreciative experience and judgment to the notion of enjoyment *as* consummation, rather than tying it to appreciation of genuine agent-independent or inquiry-independent value. That is, appreciation occurs whenever the object or event in question is experienced as a coherent, integrated consummation of a prior series of pursuits or inquiries. For instance, speaking of the quality of consummation, Dewey states, "Wherever there is appreciation there is the *heightened* quality produced by intrinsic connection of the object appreciated with its causal conditions," as when a desert wayfarer finally drinks water after a long and desperate search for it. John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1936), 175.

The Limitations of Positive Valence

Before moving on to more substantive objections against Brewer's account of ideal activity appreciation, I offer here an initial assessment of how his views fare as an overall account of appreciation, for this will later bear some fruit. Notably, Brewer treats appreciation in *general* as either a state or an activity that finds its objects appealing or valuable in some way. Just as attentional pleasure and desires involve an attractive representational impression or awareness of value, Brewer claims that "'Appreciation' is a success term—it involves palpable awareness of a genuine goodness or value."[45] As I have shown in chapter two, however, this is an exceedingly limited view of appreciation and its characteristic objects. Sometimes appreciation does not involve pleasure (or actively involves pain), and it is often directed at things other than goodness or value (let alone intrinsic value). In his focus on the positive emotional and hedonic dimensions of appreciation at the expense of its negative emotional and hedonic valences, Brewer almost entirely overlooks the deep connection between appreciation and pain, as well as its common directedness at objects or qualities that have a wholly negative value.[46]

[45] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 220. Brewer's general mistake here mirror's George Dickie's implausible view, noted in chapter one, that appreciation *simpliciter* requires taking the appreciative object as worthwhile or valuable in some way. George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1971). Here also is evidence of Brewer's identity claims with respect to appreciation, attentional pleasure, and (less tightly) desires. He claims, for instance, that "to take pleasure in an activity *amounts to* engaging in the activity with a vivid running awareness of its value" (144), where 'awareness' means vivid impression, and a stand in for 'appreciation'. Likewise, "all pleasures are vivid seemings of goodness" (135) and desires too involve "a vivid running sense of…non-instrumental goodness" (133).

[46] In a very rare moment, Brewer does acknowledge this connection, saying that the *eudaimon* life requires appropriate attentional pleasure *and* attentional pain whenever they are appropriate. Brewer, *Retrieval*, 149. What is at issue here, however, is whether attentional pain can play a constitutive role in rendering an activity fully excellent. Given that vivid attentional pleasure is for Brewer a *necessary condition* for any human activity to be completed in a perfectionistic sense, he cannot countenance a substantive place in virtuous activity for attentional pain. This is a huge shortcoming of his view, as I presently show.

Moreover, Brewer also treats commendatory qualial qualities that are only *sometimes* involved in appreciation as part of its essence. Much like John Dewey on appreciation and its constitutive role in "consummatory" experiences, Brewer continually highlights positively valenced qualial qualities like a sense of experiential wholeness and integration, and a non-deferred sense of deep satisfaction. As I have noted in previous chapters, however, not all appreciative experiences have these features; many involve a sense of alarm, disturbance or deep fragmentation as a condition of successful appreciation.[47] Neither Dewey nor Brewer seems to have anything constructive to say about deeply fragmentary, yet nonetheless experientially and epistemically valuable, instances of appreciation.[48]

Now, Brewer may rightly object that he is not attempting to give a full account of appreciation, but instead only advancing a limited view of the kind of running appreciation that completes and perfects *intrinsically valuable* dialectical activities, thus rendering them wholehearted and unimpeded. Such completion and wholeheartedness is achieved through "savoring," or giving one's "appreciative attention" (or "oneself") entirely over to what seems to make the activity intrinsically good.[49] *This* sort of

[47] Cf. chapter one pages 26-27, where I discuss disturbing or fragmentary appreciations.

[48] For example, one can appreciate the badness of a loved one's loss through a vivid sense of pain and the emotion of grief. Brewer does mention the fact that our life seems to go worse when we fail to be deeply grieved by the loss of a loved one, but this rare concession to deeply painful and (arguably) fragmentary appreciative experiences is stoutly at odds with the rest of his account. Brewer, *Retrieval*, 147.

[49] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 135. Brewer does uphold a difference between sensory and attentional pleasure in this "giving over" or "savoring" activity. Sensory pleasures are complete when our appreciative attention is wholly given over to the sensation or feeling itself, whereas activity pleasures are complete when our appreciative attention is wholly absorbed in the value of the activity. While I will not pursue this point, I wonder how well this distinction holds up in cases where sensory and attentional pleasures coincide, as in the experience of loving and intimate sex with one's partner. Is the activity completed by my focusing on the intensity of the sensations (in which case I am not wholly absorbed in the non-sensory goods internal to the activity), or is it completed by my absorption in the non-sensory goods of the activity?

appreciation, he might say, *is* a kind of vividly absorbed and wholehearted attentional pleasure, directed as it is, with single-minded and "unequivocal" desire, only at the intrinsic goods and constitutive ideals of the activities upon which it supervenes.[50]

This is a fair objection in the sense that we should narrow the scope of any critiques to just the sort of activity appreciation that renders its activities fully excellent and wholehearted. When we do narrow this scope, however, the above critiques of Brewer's general approach to appreciation still bear some critical fruit. For, there is reason to doubt that his version of appreciation really does play this perfecting role very often. It is precisely Brewer's reduction of appreciation to its positive psychological valences and his reduction of its characteristic objects to intrinsically valuable objects or properties, which makes its wide application to virtuous moral agency problematic or untenable. I now turn to some deep problems generated by his view.

Axiological Woes

The first problem is that Brewer's picture of activity appreciation is plagued by axiological difficulties that may undermine the first-personal intelligibility of moral agency. As we have seen, Brewer contends that an activity is fully perfect, complete, or wholehearted only when we have one (and only one) desire to engage in it for its own sake. For Brewer, this means that one's appreciative attention must be fixed upon and wholly absorbed in what seems to make the activity intrinsically valuable, which involves attending to its constitutive *telos* or point since this lends the activity its intrinsic value.[51] As I have noted, this is part of Brewer's general opposition to the world-making and

[50] Ibid., 117.

[51] Ibid., 117-118.

productive conception of human agency, which (generally) takes the point or value of human actions to lie entirely in their products. However, Brewer's picture of activity appreciation is not merely a well-conceived reaction against this prevalent view. It is also an overreaction, similar in kind to that of the late 19th and early 20th century autonomist movement in aesthetics. For, one glaring problem with Brewer's view is that fully excellent and wholehearted appreciation of activity must be thoroughly blind to instrumental value or disvalue.[52] This not only threatens the first-personal intelligibility of morally significant activity appreciation, but it may also be a recipe for moral disaster.

As I noted in discussing Robert Adams's absorbed view of appreciation in chapter three, there is surely little doubt that it is sometimes important and deeply valuable. I mentioned in chapter two, for instance, absorbed aesthetic experiences like an encounter with one's first waterfall or with the luminescent surface of a calm mountain lake. Such experiences (and correlative activities of looking and gazing) do seem to be sometimes desired for the sake of nothing else, and keep one's attention absorbed by their real or apparent intrinsic value. Moreover, lest we make the mistake of autonomist aesthetics, such appreciation can occur within the purview of *practical* concerns, as in Brewer's examples of love, engaging in a meaningful conversation with a friend, or having intimate sex with one's spouse. However, if we follow Brewer in *generalizing* this sort of appreciation as the kind that completes and perfects all dialectical and virtuous activities, then we run into substantial problems.

[52] Recall Brewer's comment that fully excellent activity requires not merely single-minded awareness of what makes the activity valuable, but one must also "lack vivid awareness of what is bad about it." Brewer also contends that ideal (perfectionistically complete and wholehearted) activity appreciation involves single-mindedly engaging in it for its own sake. Ibid., 117.

One problem is that, on any plausible view, many virtuous activities have constitutive *tele* that are mixed between intrinsic and instrumental value. On Aristotle's view, for instance, the *telos* of courageous activity is the noble, which is sought for its own sake, but also the protection of one's state, which makes courage instrumentally valuable.[53] Likewise, magnificence aims at self-expansion, but also at public benefit, while justice aims at producing just states of affairs. Again, the *point* of many virtuous activities, no less than Brewer's broader dialectical activities, partly involves the *production* of some state of affairs, and the virtues thereby have (partly) instrumental value in virtue of producing such states of affairs. If so, then a 'perfect' and wholehearted Brewerian appreciation of all and only the intrinsic value of such activities, is a *failure* of appreciation. If one fails to grasp the instrumental value of such activities, one has partly failed to grasp their point. Moreover, virtuous activities like generosity, courage and justice would be *unintelligible* to those engaged in them as such, without a future-directed appreciation of them (at least partly) *as* having the instrumental value of producing states of affairs in which a gift is given, a city is defended, and a just state of affairs is attained.

Tellingly, the same is true of many of Brewer's dialectical examples like philosophical inquiry and a conversation between a parent and an alienated teenager. Such activities often *cannot* be complete, perfected or rendered wholehearted, let alone remain first-personally intelligible, through pleasantly absorbed appreciative attention to intrinsic value alone. So, we have ample reasons to reject Brewer's strong claim that

[53] See Aristotle, *NE* III.6-9.

fully excellent and wholehearted activities *require* totally absorbed and single-minded appreciative attention to intrinsic value.[54]

While this strong view is Brewer's dominant one, he does acknowledge that fully excellent and wholehearted activities could involve future-directed implicit awareness of instrumental value, so long as one does not appreciate the activity *wholly* in terms of the instrumental value of the state of affairs it is meant to produce.[55] A composer can be absorbed in writing the score, even if he remembers that such activity aims at a completed symphony. Likewise, says Brewer, a surgeon can "take a vivid running pleasure in the active use of his surgical skill without forgetting that surgery has value only as a means to good health."[56] This is far different than engaging in brute manual labor *only* in order to avoid a beating or receive a subsistence wage, for in this case the point of the activity lies "entirely in the future" and attending to such a point makes one absent from the activity itself.[57]

Brewer uses this weaker, modified view to acknowledge that we often appreciate dialectical and other valuable activities as parts of a larger unfolding narrative; we implicitly carry our past and future with us as we engage in them in a way that lends intelligibility to what we are doing.[58] This weaker view allows for the fact that we can

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[54] Cf., for instance, Brewer, *Retrieval,* 116.

[55] Ibid., 125.

[56] Ibid., 118.

[57] Ibid. In these examples, Brewer needs to distinguish activities that have some measure of intrinsic value *and* are also *telos*-containing, from activities that have some intrinsic value but are *not telos*-containing. For, both the manual labor and the surgery do not seem to have an intrinsic point, and yet Brewer thinks that one can be completed by appreciative pleasure while the other cannot.

[58] Ibid., 125.

(and often unavoidably must) possess a tacit future-directed awareness of our activities' instrumental value, and Brewer contends that such awareness does not prevent us from wholehearted appreciative absorption in our activities' intrinsically appealing features.

This weaker view is problematic. For, it leaves untouched the notion that human activities are "more or less complete depending on how thoroughly we are absorbed in our activities and how vividly we are impressed with their [intrinsic] value."[59] Such a view cannot account for the strong intuition that (say) a surgeon's appreciation can be more excellent and wholehearted *in virtue of* actively and explicitly dwelling on the instrumental value his surgical skill has in producing health. Likewise, it is difficult to deny that a generous person could explicitly dwell on the good state of affairs her gift will produce in a way that makes the gift-giving activity more wholehearted *in virtue of* such explicit, future-directed dwelling. Both examples point out the same flaw. Brewer's weaker view still eliminates the frequent and constitutive contribution that appreciation of instrumental value can make to the excellence and wholeheartedness of an activity.

Scope of Application and the Problem of Mixed Activities

For Brewer, the sort of unfolding or monitoring appreciation that makes activities fully excellent is motivationally harmonious and constituted by absorbed attentional pleasure, which is directed at such activities' intrinsically attractive features. The foregoing discussion starts to show some of the problems generated when we link our view of wholehearted, unimpeded, or fully excellent activity to one narrow type of appreciation, and especially when we think about the role appreciation plays in moral

[59] Ibid., 116, emphasis mine.

agency. Two further problems are related to the narrow scope of application Brewer's model possesses with respect to appreciated activities in general, and morally virtuous agency in particular.

First, it is hard to deny that there *is* a kind of running appreciation that sometimes completes intrinsically (or finally) valuable activities generally, and renders them also wholehearted in Brewer's sense of univocal desire and attentional pleasure. In a great deal of recent empirical work in psychology, the phenomenon of "flow experiences" seems to capture the form of appreciation Brewer identifies. In her recent review of Brewer's work, Besser-Jones summarizes much of this research.[60] "Flow experiences," she notes, "tap into an individual's propensity to seek out complex and challenging activities" that test, develop and fulfill one's capacities.[61] The activities that such experiences accompany are typically intrinsically appealing, as when a student stops thinking of a desired grade (an extrinsic motivation) and becomes caught up in the appealing experience of learning for its own sake.

However, the dialectical appreciating that carries forward such activities is likely to have a far narrower scope of application than Brewer would like, particularly when it comes to the active appreciating that carries forward virtuous activity. According to Besser-Jones and Csikszentmihalyi, research on flow experiences shows that they are limited to a fairly narrow class of goal-directed, rule-governed activities that present specific challenges, require special skill sets, and give distinct cues as to how well one is

[60] Lorraine Besser-Jones, "Drawn to the Good? Brewer on Dialectical Activity," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (2011): 621-631.

[61] Besser-Jones, 628. Cf. also Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

performing. Flow experiences thus attach to activities such as surgery, rock-climbing, artistic creation or performance, and certain kinds of religious rituals.[62] They also seem quite similar to some cases of what I have called phenomenal-affective appreciations, in chapters one and two. Csikszentmihalyi continues, saying that the human capacity to be appreciatively riveted and deeply motivated by the goods internal to such activities is exceedingly limited. On average, the absorbed appreciative pleasure Brewer cites is sustained, at most, for about five minutes.[63] These considerations may lead us to suspect that, while such experiences are vividly appealing, they are also quite rare.

Of course, Brewer could simply note that fully excellent and wholehearted virtuous activity is also rare. We cannot infer a great deal about *ideal* virtuous agency from empirical results gleaned from a random sampling of the population.[64] However, further considerations limit the effectiveness of such a reply. Csikszentmihalyi observes that often, flow experiences (such as "joy in battle and butchery") are had at the *expense* of moral virtue. And, Besser-Jones rightly points out Brewer's concession that the appreciation accompanying virtuous activity is not always so vividly pleasant, as when one must turn in a deeply loved, but criminally guilty family member to the authorities. So, flow experiences are rare and narrow in scope, but also the appreciation involved in virtuous activities is sometimes not like flow at all. Both considerations taken together

[62] Besser-Jones, 629. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 71.

[63] Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow*, 58.

[64] Of course, Aristotle thought that such activity was rare and hard to attain (though attainable), so the mere *rarity* of flow experiences need not count against a view that takes such appreciative flow as characteristic of morally virtuous agency. Julia Annas has recently argued that flow experience is indeed strikingly similar to Aristotle's understanding of the phenomenology of virtuous agency. Cf. Julia Annas, "The Phenomenology of Virtue," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2008): 21-34.

give us *prima facie* reasons to be skeptical about Brewer's broad application of flow phenomenology to the appreciation of virtuous activities.

With this narrow scope problem in mind, I will now raise the problem of mixed activities. This problem gives us strong reasons to reject Brewer's view that the running appreciation which completes dialectical or virtuous activities and renders them wholehearted is always (or even typically) marked by flow-like features and vivid attentional pleasure. The problem of mixed activities therefore also provides robust reasons to reject the strong and weak theses with which I began this chapter, that virtuous persons either invariably (the strong view) or typically (the weak view) appreciate virtuous activity with motivational harmony and attentional pleasure.

A mixed activity is one in which its intrinsic and instrumental value come apart in some way, due to the circumstances of its operation. In mixed activity cases, an activity is *both* intrinsically valuable and instrumentally disvaluable due to competing goods in a situation, important goods precluded by the virtuous activity, or disvalue directly caused by the activity. Consider the following case. A virtuous judge finds himself having to sentence a single mother of five young children to ten years of imprisonment.[65] He knows that no other family members will take the children in, and that the foster care situation in that state is exceedingly bad. One outcome of his just activity is quite bad, and for the judge to be emotionally impervious to this aspect of his activity seems like a failure to appreciate it fully. He will be less than excellent if he fails to be emotionally pained not only by the sad *situation*, but also by his own *activity* insofar as it brings the

[65] I am indebted to a conversation with Robert C. Roberts for this example, though I take it in a very different direction than he does.

situation about, and by the fact that he *himself* caused it.[66] He would also be less than fully virtuous were he not motivationally conflicted about and pained by the activity. Unlike cases of continence, here the source of the motivational conflict and difficulty lies not *merely* in the circumstances, nor is it a function of a character flaw in the agent; it is an expression of the judge's virtue.[67] *In* his inclinations to avoid undue suffering for the children and *in* being pained by doing so (and not just pained by the circumstances), he properly appreciates the value of their well-being even in a situation in which he cannot (and should not) promote it by letting the mother off the hook.[68]

On Brewer's view, the judge's experience of emotional pain in the instrumental badness of the activity makes his activity appreciation less than perfect; he certainly isn't wholly relishing or savoring it for its own sake, and he is indeed actively pained by it. Moreover, on Brewer's view, the judge is *absent* from his just activity to the extent that

[66] Others have brought up this kind of case. Bernard Williams identifies this phenomenon as a first-personal kind of "agent-regret," and he points out that such regret is not limited to voluntary cases, like the judge example here. This is regret over the fact not just *that* something happened, but that it was *I* who did it, whether voluntarily or not. Williams illustrated this with the case of a truck driver who, without negligence or fault of his own, runs over a child. We do not hold such a person responsible and may try to talk him out of his feelings of regret. But, if this driver had no sense of sadness or regret that it was *he* who was the driver when this happened, we would typically think there was something ethically amiss in his capacity to appreciate what happened. Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 27. Cf. also Patricia Greenspan on the emotional "remainder" in dilemma cases in *Practical Guilt: Moral Dilemmas, Emotions, and Social Norms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13.

[67] For a similar point see Stohr, 347.

[68] Of course, the activity is partly intrinsically valuable, and carrying it out excellently in this situation may involve some modicum of appreciative attunement to such value. While this could be something like a moment of monitoring pleasure, it could also be simply a matter of caring about it or acknowledging its value in some way. Just as Aristotle's temperate man feels pleasure at the *thought* of eating moderately and healthfully (*NE* 1104b-5-6), the judge here might feel momentary pleasure at the thought of justice having been served, especially for those who had been wronged by the mother. However, *caring* about and *acknowledging* its value, seems like a better route to take, specifically in stronger cases in which the painful thoughts or emotions should effectively *swamp* any pleasurable ones.

he fails vividly to savor it for its own sake. Perhaps, he is distracted from the goods internal to acting justly by the unfortunate circumstances or by regret over his own role.

However, both of these seem like precisely the wrong view to have about this case, and countless others that are structurally like it. First, it does not seem morally ideal for the judge to be completely absorbed in the activity's intrinsic value; rather, such absorption seems like moral insensitivity or blindness. Moreover, if he delights in the intrinsic *and* instrumental value of the just activity, he will *still* fail to appreciate fully what he is doing. Moreover, it is difficult to see why vividly pleasant absorption would perfect this particular activity, if it involves moral blindness and obstructs the operation of other situationally relevant virtues. In being deeply attentive to this badness, our judge is also exhibiting the excellence of compassion, and this would be quite missing were he wholly absorbed in the just activity's intrinsic and instrumental value.[69] Second, is the judge absent from his just activity to the degree that he does not absorbedly savor it? He is not. Rather, he seems intimately and vividly present to one of *its* causal outcomes through his attentive emotional pain. There is, then, good reason to think that being wholly present to and vividly absorbed in one's excellent doings has no necessary

[69] Here, one might object that, insofar as the agent's pain results from the intrinsically painful virtue of compassion, I am using a case that unfairly stacks the deck in my favor. For, a defining feature of compassion is that one takes on the pain of others, at least in thought and emotion, and "suffers with" them. Actually being pained by the suffering, pain, or calamitous situation of others is intrinsic to the very response that *constitutes* the virtue of compassion. As Lisa Tessman notes, the virtue of being sensitive and attentive to the suffering of others is a "burdened virtue;" it is intrinsically painful (95). In this sense pity or compassion has a structure that is not typical for an Aristotelian virtue. Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 92-95. Even though it is not structurally typical, however, the phenomenon of having to cope with others' suffering that is directly caused by our own actions is so widespread and common in our lives that it must be accounted for in a coherent way. That is what I am trying to do here.

connection with pleasure.[70] This is not least in light of the commonplace complexity of the situations in which such activities unfold.

Mixed cases like these show that Brewer's model of "running appreciation" as motivationally harmonious attentional pleasure, has a quite limited scope of application when it comes to properly appreciating virtuous activity. Limited too are the views claiming that virtuous agents invariably or typically appreciate excellent activity through motivational harmony or pleasure. These models might be quite serviceable if mixed activity cases were rare, as in Aristotle's example of the courageous man who must give up his life, or Brewer's example in which virtue requires one to turn in a guilty family member.[71] However, one look at the formal structure of cases like these reveals just how common they are.

Structurally, such cases involve at least two genuine and competing goods (or potential goods) in a given situation, at least one of which is given up or undermined as a direct result of virtuous action. In such cases, the intrinsic excellence or value of the virtuous activity (say, as a stretch of proper human functioning) is thus mixed with its extrinsic (or instrumental) disvalue. A medical doctor might decide that he should move to a rural town that desperately needs his services, even though doing so will mean giving up the goods of his home community. A man might see that spending the last of his discretionary money on a single birthday gift for his daughter, which is here and now the generous and right thing to do, will mean forgoing the chance to surprise his wife with the small anniversary gift she was hoping for. A couple might mutually decide to end a

[70] For a defense of this view, see Ryle, "Pleasure," 330-332.

[71] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 131.

budding romantic relationship because it is all things considered the best thing for them to do, while doing so inevitably means the loss of genuine and healthy relational goods they have shared.[72] In all of these cases, the intrinsic excellence of the activity is mixed with some extrinsic or instrumental loss of genuine value. And a *mixed* appreciative responsiveness to both features of the activity, often including motivational conflict and (or) emotional pain taken in it, seems to indicate a virtuous appreciation of valuable things precluded, causally or instrumentally, by the virtuous action.

Such situations are the *common stock* of moral experience, and in each case the virtuous action itself includes giving up (temporarily or permanently) something genuinely *kalon*, as Aristotle would say. In fact, against his dominant motivational harmony and pleasure thesis, as outlined above, Aristotle himself allows for a more complex form of appreciating that may accompany virtuous activity. As I noted above, he acknowledges that the courageous man who knows he will die because of his activity is genuinely pained by the prospect of losing his life, because this will involve the loss of something truly and deeply *kalon.* In fact, says Aristotle, the *more* virtuous such a person is, the "more he will be pained at the thought of death." Thus he adds, notably, "It is not the case, then, with all the virtues that the exercise of them is pleasant, except in so far as it reaches its end."[73] However, *even insofar as* the courageous action reaches its end, Aristotle acknowledges that it may not "appear" pleasant to the agent at the time of

[72] Stohr uses a different panoply of examples, and they raise many of the same issues: "People should find it difficult to deliver bad news to their friends. Parents should find it hard to punish their children. Teachers should find it hard to give low grades to students who are genuinely trying to do well. Lovers should find it hard to break off relationships when doing so is likely to cause the other person to suffer. In each case, if an agent finds the action easy or painless, then she lacks virtue" (344).

[73] *NE* 1117b11-12; 1117b15-17.

action. This is no small concession. For, many such actions that achieve their proper ends—like the just state of affairs achieved by the judge's verdict—are enacted amidst conditions that call for a more nimble and mixed sort of running activity appreciation.[74]

Mixed cases like these, as well as non-dilemma cases that simply involve *some* bad outcome worthy of agential appreciation, are exceedingly common in moral experience. Brewer's idealized version of running appreciation is too narrow to handle these cases. One reason for this is that in his focus on *activity* appreciating, Brewer frequently ignores the experiential convergence between activities and circumstances. For instance, he notes that running activity appreciation grows deeper "not primarily through attention to one's circumstances," but rather through "attention to the nature and point of what one is doing."[75] The danger, however, is that this may not only collapse into appreciative solipsism, but we may also diminish our picture of what wholeheartedly engaged and excellent agency can be. This danger is especially acute when the circumstances are not merely propitious conditions or backdrops allowing one's activity to surge forth, but when our activities bring morally significant (and sometimes lamentable) circumstantial features into being.

Of course, denying the occurrence, value and genuine (if limited) applicability of Brewer's flow-like appreciations would be a mistake, for this is sometimes exactly what unimpeded excellent activity looks like. However, we would do well to try to articulate a more *responsively plural* form of running appreciation that allows for conative conflict

[74] Aristotle seems to suggest that, *to* the courageous person, the action will not be pleasant as he enacts it. For, in comparing the courageous man with boxers, he says that the end they aim at is pleasant—"the crown and the honors"—but "because the blows and the exertions are many the end, which is but small, *appears to have nothing pleasant in it"* (1117b1-6; emphasis mine).

[75] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 85.

and draws upon both positive and negative hedonic and emotional valences. Whatever this looks like, it will be a sort of appreciating that is not merely absorbed in the intrinsically appealing features of our activities. Rather, it will involve an unfolding appreciation of our valuable activities *within* the unfolding narrative of their operational context. In this sense, such a conception would preserve a tight *activity-circumstance tie* in which the psychological content of an agent's appreciation is mutually enriched by appreciative attention to both activity and circumstance.

From Absorbed Pleasure to Evaluative Attention

While Brewer's treatment of ideal activity appreciation as attentional pleasure is overly reductive and cannot handle mixed appreciative cases, he does indicate some resources for overcoming these limitations. The key to this lies in his notion that our isolated activities (such as handing down a just verdict) are in fact narrative activities situated within a larger time-extended whole that may have an overall meaning, value, and unfolding perspicuity to us.[76] We might imagine that as our judge hands down his verdict and appreciatively laments the goods of maternal care that the children lose thereby, he may find himself reading his life like a book. He may find himself in the middle of things, straining to appreciate better what it would mean to carry such a life forward excellently in light of his present experience. Our judge, then, is not merely pained by his contribution to the diminishment of the children's flourishing, here and now. Through this isolated appreciative experience, he may open toward an incrementally clarified appreciation for what it means to be a good judge, to value the welfare of those under his juridical care, and to make the most of the relational goods

[76] Ibid., 124-125.

internal to the justice system in which he practices. All of this could happen as he is handing down the verdict itself and trying to appreciate better what he is doing *right then*. Of course, this sort of extended dialectical appreciating of our activities in their circumstances is something quite different than merely absorbed attentional activity pleasure.

As it happens, however, a glaring inconsistency in Brewer's use of 'appreciation' opens the way forward to this holistic and narratival conception, even as it provides further reasons to reject the reduction of activity appreciation to attentional pleasure. Interestingly, Brewer inconsistently characterizes "running appreciation" not only as attentional pleasure, but also as the *evaluative attention* that can seamlessly accompany (but is not reducible to) practical thinking. For Brewer, this latter sort of appreciation initiates and sustains dialectical activities through a continuous clarification and actualization of their ideal form and constitutive ends.[77] In opposition to the "received view" of practical reasoning—according to which its task is to discern the justificatory links between generically describable circumstances (premises) and an action (conclusion)—Brewer envisions this dimension of practical thinking as a continuous and evaluative *straining* to see and actualize the constitutive goods of an activity already underway.[78] Such evaluative attention is an exploratory and diachronic absorption in dialectical activities that strains to bring their inchoately perceived internal goods and

[77] Ibid., 85.

[78] Ibid., 73ff.

constitutive ideals into better focus, through the mutually adjusting interplay of thought, desire, intention, memory, imagination and action.[79]

Brewer's memorable illustration of this is that of a blues singer who, possessing elusive intimations both of excellence and *telos,* continuously searches for just the right vocal intonation of a musical phrase. A second example is that of a conversation between a parent and an alienated teenager, in which the parent engages in a thoughtful "running" or "dawning appreciation" as he or she attempts to actualize the highest possible goods internal to the conversation.[80] Such engagements require, says Brewer, "continuous practical thought about the evaluative properties of one's unfolding activities—properties that cannot be reduced to justificatory relations between circumstances and actions."[81] Moreover, says Brewer, the appreciative thinking required by such dialectical activities aims not merely at producing some discrete unrealized state of affairs; such activities require appreciative focus on the unfolding evaluative properties of the activity itself.[82]

So, where is the problem or inconsistency in Brewer's conception of appreciation? The problem is that running appreciation as the evaluative attention component of practical thinking, and running appreciation as absorbed attentional pleasure, are substantially different from one another, and often incompatible.[83] As we have seen, the evaluative attentional pleasure that completes activities and renders them

[79] Ibid., 85, 87.

[80] Ibid., 92-94.

[81] Ibid., 47-48, 73, 84, and 92.

[82] Ibid., 73.

[83] Aristotle, for one, rejects the conflation of thought and pleasure. Cf. *NE*, 1175b34-36.

wholehearted, according to Brewer, is characterized chiefly by vivid appreciative absorption in the real or apparent goods internal to the activity. It involves "giving oneself over" to the activity by "savoring" it for its own sake.[84] Such appreciation is therefore marked by a high degree of *possessed* awareness of (and only of) the activity's constitutive goods. It is perhaps *one* aspect of appreciation in the mode of having found value, as noted in chapter two.

Evaluative attention as a supervening element of practical thinking, on the other hand, is significantly *zetetic* and *revisionary* in character.[85] It is appreciating in an appraising or seeking mode, poised for discovery of value. In short, while both attentional pleasure and the appreciative dimension of practical thinking involve giving one's evaluative attention wholly over to the activity with an absorbed attention and presence, activity pleasure is a matter of vividly savoring the good, while the appreciating related to practical thinking *also* involves straining, seeking and trying to bring the good into view. It also (at times) involves frustration and disappointment, both of which seem epistemically necessary for appreciating one's activity.[86] This last point suggests an incompatibility (at least sometimes) between the appreciative modes of seeking and dwelling.

However, Brewer treats these two types of "running appreciation" coextensively, and even characterizes activity pleasure in a seeking mode as "a continuous straining to

[84] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 135.

[85] Brewer's language betrays this feature, as he characterizes "running appreciation" *qua* practical thinking as a "struggle to deepen one's understanding of the meaning of one's activities" (77) and a "straining to see and to actualize the highest possibilities" latent in them (93). This running appreciation involves a continuous attempt to see and clarify "the point and value of activities that are already underway" (196).

[86] I am grateful to reader Robert Roberts for this insight.

apprehend an intimation of goodness in whose light one's activities are unfolding."[87] So, perhaps our seeking and dwelling distinction is not enough. Well, here is an argument that further strengthens the possibility of their incompatibility. As Brewer notes, the running appreciation involved in practical thinking includes continuous thought about and absorbed attentiveness to "the evaluative properties of one's unfolding activities."[88] Now, either such thought, in its ideal and wholehearted form, attends only to the good or apparently good properties of the activity, or it does not. If it attends only to the good or apparently good properties, then such thought can never correct or deepen our evaluative outlook on the activity itself. That is, if such practical thought only reinforces the good that we *already* see in our doings, then it cannot perform the crucial function Brewer claims it does, of revising the *phantasmata* that inform our desires and pleasures with respect to the activity.[89] On this option, the appreciative practical thinking remains identified with (or essentially connected to) activity pleasure, but it thereby loses its most distinctive and normatively transformational feature. If, on the other hand, such thinking does not attend only to the good or apparently good properties of our activities, then it cannot be a complete and wholehearted version of Brewer's activity pleasure. For, as he tells us, such appreciatively absorbed pleasure is single-mindedly absorbed in the

[87] Ibid., 137. Cf. especially 136-37, where Brewer equates activity pleasure with "evaluative thinking in its active and awake form." Here and elsewhere he characterizes *both* practical thinking and activity pleasure in terms of straining to see better the value of one's unfolding activities (37). But, this characterization is at odds with his definition of ideal activity pleasure as involving absorbed attentional attunement to the intrinsically valuable properties of the activity in question.

[88] Ibid., 73.

[89] One might object that an intimation of the constitutive ideal could perform this function on its own. That is, even if we are unaware of what is *bad* or *wrong* with the activity, could we not *still* see how it could be better, given our intimation of what a perfect engagement might be? This seems right, but it sidesteps the fact that the evaluative attention involved in practical thinking just does, in its standard mode of operating, pick up on both good and bad features of one's activities.

intrinsic value of the activity, and lacking in awareness of what is bad about it.[90] So, either Brewer's running appreciation *qua* attentional part of practical thinking remains identified with pleasure and loses its most distinctive *zetetic* and transformational feature, or it cannot be identified with activity pleasure. Upon pain of adopting a normatively impotent conception of practical thinking, the latter option seems best.

Brewer's two notions of running appreciation are indeed quite different, and sometimes appear incompatible. Why should this inconsistency and difference matter? It matters because the running appreciative attention involved in practical thinking is capable of playing a far more fundamental role in a much wider variety of virtuous and dialectical activities. Which sort of running appreciation, for example, appears to perfect and fuel the advance of Brewer's dialectical activities? Take his example of the blues singer.[91] As she concludes one of her musically interpretive takes, but remains unsatisfied with it, she must be *aware* of how the take has fallen short in some way. She has an awareness of some lack of excellence in the current take, and seeks to instantiate the good that was missing in her next one. Consider the appreciative attention that carries forward a successful conversation between an alienated teen and his mother. If the mother is wholly absorbed in attentional pleasure (as Brewer's wholehearted attentional pleasure requires) and *unaware* of what is bad about the activity as it unfolds, she will quite literally be blind to small moments in the conversation that might further alienate

[90] Brewer, *Retrieval*, 117. Brewer says one must "lack a *vivid* awareness of what is bad about it," so this would seem to allow that *some* monitoring awareness would be accounted for. The problem here is that we are considering Brewer's notion of *ideal* activity appreciating, whose perfection is a function of a completely vivid impression of goodness. An appreciation involving some minimal awareness of what is bad would, for Brewer, not be ideal.

[91] Ibid., 47-48 and 84.

her teenager. If she sees these moments, on the other hand, she can gently correct course and wisely steer it in the best direction possible. Running appreciation as a "savoring" sort of activity pleasure, attuned only (or even chiefly) to the intrinsic positive value of the activity, does not typically complete or carry forward such activities in a very articulate way, or render them perfectly excellent engagements.

By contrast, the running appreciation involved in Brewer's practical thinking requires attention to ways the activity falls short or could be better. That is, it can attend to *all* of (but not only) the "evaluative properties of one's unfolding activities," discerning the good and bad dimensions of the activity, its intrinsic or instrumental value or lack thereof. Such appreciative attention, when ideal, can also involve *correction* of heretofore vividly compelling goods that may be nonetheless delusional. Brewer's evaluative attentional activity pleasure, by contrast, is less articulate. In its ideal and wholehearted form, it only picks up on and "savors" the good properties that are *present*, and perhaps only on the intrinsically good ones at that.

Indeed, Brewer's own "narrative" characterization of both dialectical and morally virtuous activities makes it implausible to think that, *ideally*, those engaging in them should experience a total absence of activity pain (or emotional pain).[92] Brewer characterizes his dialectical activities as diachronically unfolding and goal-directed in being governed by a constitutive ideal. But, it is precisely the diachronicity and infinite perfectibility of such activities that makes his thesis of univocal pleasure completion implausible, at least in a great many instances. A good stretch of parenting, philosophical inquiry, artistic creation, athletic competition and mountain climbing may involve

[92] Ibid., 123-24.

moments of absorbed supervening pleasure, but any realistic portrayal of good engagement in them will also involve struggle, the straining and seeking out that includes moments of emotional, physical and activity pain.[93] To say that such moments *impede* the activities or render them less than perfect is to ignore the very nature of what it means for human beings to engage in them diachronically. Imagine an "unimpeded" engagement in good parenting without at all responding to the very different will and evaluative outlook of one's child. Think of an unimpeded athletic contest without the contest, or unimpeded philosophical reflection without the fresh insights that counterfactually depend on a frustrating dead end. Brewer's "running appreciation" *qua* activity pleasure may figure into *some* appreciative moments of such wholehearted engagements, but it is rarely the overall engagement itself.

Given the diachronicity and infinite perfectibility of such activities, the sort of appreciation that perfects and renders their engagement wholehearted *in medias res* will more typically be, like the appreciating involved in reading a novel, a matter of plural responsiveness within the absorbed engagement.[94] As such, the "absorption" involved will not be limited to the "savoring" of intrinsic value that sometimes occurs, but will also include seeing, seeking, clarifying, pursuing, overcoming and, importantly, attending

[93] These are all Brewer's examples of dialectical activities. The only exceptions to the picture I am offering here, perhaps, are Brewer's examples of intimate conversation among friends or lovers, or the activity of intimate sex. Even these have the potential for involving activity or emotional pain, but when ideally carried out, typically they do not. There may be a distinction, here, between *goal-directed* dialectical activities, and dialectical activities that we immerse ourselves in, solely in virtue of their real or apparent intrinsic value. The appreciating of the singer and the parent seems like the former variety, while a child playing with his trains, intimate conversation with a friend, and my aesthetic absorption in a vista at Glacier National park (chapter one) seem like the latter.

[94] I will develop this conception of appreciation, in greater detail, in the next chapter. There, I will return again to Christine Swanton's plural modes of moral responsiveness, and expand upon them and their role in dialectical appreciating.

in thought, emotion and imagination to the value that is missing. Notably, *all* of these are quasi-contemplative, attentive forms of "giving oneself over" and being present to the activities in question *in* their circumstances, also lending cross-temporal unity to them. So they need not instance the fragmentation, lack of presence, and value-deferral that, as Brewer notes, are underwritten by the productive conception of human agency. One can wholeheartedly dwell on the important aspects of one's doings in these various ways, without reducing one's dwelling to Brewer's aestheticized activity appreciation *qua* absorbed attentional pleasure.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that in order to uncover a more holistic and dialectically unfolding understanding of moral agency, we need to expose the limitations of the traditional neo-Aristotelian entailment between motivational harmony, attentional pleasure and virtuous activity. With respect to appreciation, in the previous chapter I also suggested the need to move beyond fragmentary analyses of its different types in order to bring a unitive and unfolding conception of active appreciating into view. While Talbot Brewer's recent treatment makes substantial progress toward such a conception, his notion of appreciating remains locked within the motivational harmony and supervening pleasure model. In addition to flirting with the implausible view that fully excellent unpleasant activity is exceedingly rare, Brewer's view is plagued by axiological problems, possesses a very narrow scope of application, and cannot appropriately handle widespread cases of mixed activities and the virtuous appreciating that attends them.

However, I also argued that Brewer's different view of running appreciation, as the attentional dimension of practical thinking, is far more promising. It is a more realistic and articulate notion of appreciating and the fundamental role it can play in virtuous agency. For, it begins to move us toward a view of appreciating as a wisely attentive, responsively plural and caring engagement, with prospects for a much broader scope of application. This conception may also offer a more compelling alternative picture of the way appreciation can render virtuous activity wholehearted and perfectionistically complete. In the next chapter, with the help of Iris Murdoch's notion of moral attention, I will attempt to develop just such an alternative picture.

CHAPTER FIVE

Toward a Picture of Dialectical Appreciation

Throughout this project, I have suggested that while appreciation can be an achieved insight, it may also be a particular kind of attunement to value or disvalue. I have called such an attunement evaluative attention, and in the last chapter I argued that it might be an activity that completes and perfects various *telos*-containing or goal directed activities, including virtuous ones. I also argued, against Brewer, that equating such attunement with absorbed activity pleasure was too narrow, and that we need a more articulate conception that affords a plurality of responses and allies more closely with practical thought, if it is to inform and complete virtuous activities in a wide enough way. In chapters one and two, I made a preliminary suggestion that evaluative attention may play a central role in initiating, uniting, and sustaining an overall dialectic of appreciating, and that it may give us greater insight into moral agency.

In this chapter, then, I want to examine evaluative attention more closely, with the ultimate goal of articulating some of the central features of an appreciative dialectic with such attention at its core. I focus on Iris Murdoch's work in particular, because she makes attention absolutely central to moral agency itself, treats consciousness as the "fundamental…form of moral being," and emphasizes the link between evaluative attention and (what I will call appreciative) moral imagination.[1] So, in what follows, I offer a critical rereading of Iris Murdoch's treatment of moral attention, and argue that

[1] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 171.

Neo-Aristotelian particularists and recent virtue ethicists have either vaguely or insufficiently appropriated it. Murdoch's claims that the whole activity of consciousness is moral, on the one hand, and her refusal to reduce evaluative attention to quandary situations, on the other, are insights that stand in need of fuller appreciation, and have a direct bearing on the kind of dialectical appreciating I want to bring into view.

In what follows, I contend that if we appropriate Murdoch more fully (but not uncritically), and draw upon and expand Christine Swanton's plural modes of moral responsiveness, we can then sketch the basic elements of dialectical appreciation with evaluative attention as the central unitive element. I argue that this dialectic is genuinely interactive, perennially unfinished, responsively plural, and an authentic source of formal and personal unity. After clarifying the concepts of holism and unity, I conclude the chapter, using Primo Levi's memoirs from Auschwitz, with a protracted illustration of such extended appreciative agency, together with reflections on why it offers a particularly illuminating picture of the narratival phenomenology of many important episodes of virtuous agency.

Iris Murdoch on Attention

My first task is to clarify Iris Murdoch's notion of moral attention, and I will follow this exposition with an initial sketch of the dialectical appreciating her views might inspire. Then, after examining her under-appropriation, we will be in a position to move beyond Murdoch to a more robust picture of dialectical appreciation. Murdoch defines "attention," a concept borrowed from Simone Weil, as "a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality," which she takes to be "the characteristic mark

of…the active moral agent."[2] Such attention is for Murdoch a *via media* between total freedom and total determinism, since "we can only choose within the world we can see," and such moral vision is "a result of moral imagination and moral effort."[3] For Murdoch, the value of this attention is, in part, that it counteracts our typical human habits of uncritically imbibing social conventions and constructing a self-serving, egoistic and delusional evaluative picture of reality. Thus does Murdoch conceive of attention as the anti-egoistic work of moral agency that operates continuously, always imperceptibly building "structures of value round about us."[4] Hence, while drawing out the connection between Murdoch's attention and her appeal to Kant's concept of *Achtung*, Velleman notes that Murdochian attention is both a mode of valuation and of vision; it is thus a mode of *evaluative* attention.[5]

Unpacking this evaluative attention even more, Murdoch describes it as "a patient, loving regard, directed upon a thing" or "situation" in which will and reason are both in play. It is a free movement of moral agency that is nonetheless an act of willful struggle that involves constrained "obedience to reality" as one finds it, through truth-directed exercises of moral imagination and love.[6] These references to love, respect, imagination and self-appraisal underscore the fact that, for Murdoch, attention is

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[2] Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection" in *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1971), 34.

[3] Ibid., 37.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Velleman takes Murdoch's particularist emphases in a decidedly Kantian direction, in a way that is quite incompatible with her views. J. David Velleman, "Love as a Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (January 1999): 338-374.

[6] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 216, and "The Idea of Perfection," 22 and 40.

genuinely interactive, but also (in light of my claims in this project) a form of appreciation. The subject of attention is not merely registering moral facts or values by attending longer and harder to persons or situations. Indeed, Murdoch continually emphasizes the conscious, appreciative *activity* of the subject—loving, imagining, self-appraising, and so on—as the dynamic and transformative core of evaluative attention.[7]

However, while evaluative attention is an act of imagination and love (no less than respect), it is also in Murdoch's view an experience of tragedy, or "tragic freedom." Analogous to Kant's *Achtung* (respect for the moral law), attention is a painful exercise, since it involves overcoming one's own egoistic fantasies. For, in Murdoch's view, "the tragic freedom implied by love" is that "we all have an indefinitely extended capacity to imagine the being of others."[8] Moreover, there is tragedy in our exercise of freedom because, for Murdoch, Kant's notion of a prefabricated harmony to which freedom aspires, simply does not exist. The others to whom we must attend will never cease, in their particularity, to be different from ourselves and thereby indefinitely beckon us toward further and deeper modes of appreciative attention. It is in this sense that appreciative attention is an always unfinished task on the one hand, and the vehicle for continual refinement of our sense of how best to live, on the other.

Now, we can more readily grasp how Murdoch's notion of attention is appreciative activity, and connected to the other forms of appreciation outlined throughout this project, by examining her famous thought experiment about a mother-in-law ('M') and the daughter-in-law ('D') toward whom M feels hostility:

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

> M finds D quite a good-hearted girl, but while not exactly common yet certainly unpolished and lacking in dignity and refinement. D is inclined to be pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile. M does not like D's accent or the way D dresses. M feels that her son has married beneath him. Let us assume for the purposes of the example that the mother, who is a very 'correct' person, behaves beautifully to the girl throughout, not allowing her real opinion to appear in any way. We might underline this aspect of the example by supposing that the young couple have emigrated or that D is now dead: the point being to ensure that whatever is in question as *happening* happens entirely in M's mind.
>
> Thus much for M's first thoughts about D. Time passes, and it could be that M settles down with a hardened sense of grievance and a fixed picture of D, imprisoned…by the cliché: my poor son has married a silly vulgar girl. However, the M of the example is an intelligent well-intentioned person, capable of self-criticism, capable of giving careful and just *attention* to an object, which confronts her. M tells herself: 'I am old-fashioned and conventional. I may be prejudiced and narrow-minded. I may be snobbish. I am certainly jealous. Let me look again.' Here I assume that M observes D or at least reflects deliberately about D, until gradually her vision of D alters. If we take D to be now absent or dead this can make it clear that the change is not in D's behaviour but in M's mind. D is discovered to be not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous….[9]

Murdoch indicates that what "*happens*" in this story takes place entirely in M's mind, and she also describes the episode "in terms of the substitution of one set of normative epithets for another."[10] The evaluative attention is an extended effort to move from the first (less apt) evaluative construal to the second more apt overall construal of D. However, is the evaluative attention here a kind of appreciative activity? One might think that the picture simply involves (a) the initial appreciative construal (of the bad qualities), (b) the final appreciative construal (*of* the good qualities), and (c) the attention that connects the two to one another, but is not itself any sort of appreciative activity or construal. This thought seems mistaken. For, it ignores Murdoch's view that consciousness is perpetually "soaked in value," that the moral life "goes on continually"

[9] Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," 17-18.

[10] Ibid., 18.

at the level of consciousness, and that attention itself involves other-directed *loving* (an evaluative posture, at least).[11] Once we account for these things, then the activity of evaluative attention, which happens *between* the first and the second set of normative epithets or construals, emerges as a mode of active appreciating within a larger developmental dialectic.

An Initial Sketch of Dialectical Appreciating

Now, the above little episode affords us an initial (if limited) sketch of the dialectical appreciating I will articulate and refine more clearly below. For starters, we can frame what is happening in this episode in terms of the forms of appreciation I have discussed in previous chapters. Prior to the episode M will have an overall (non-occurrent) disposition to appreciate D in various (negative) ways. Then, if we assume that M's first set of normative epithets is less apt than it should be, M begins her exploration of D with an engaged evaluative *impression* of D's bad character qualities and therefore a (partly false) impression of her value as a person. Then, once D is "discovered" to have the second set of traits, M's moment of discovery will be an engaged appreciative *apprehension* of D's value and the value of her qualities. She is in better cognitive contact with reality than she previously was, and her appreciative construal here amounts to a better kind of moral understanding. Moreover, in making the discovery, M also possesses an *overall* appreciation of D, or a newly possessed (let us say veridical) evaluative understanding of D that she walks away with.

However, Murdoch claims that conscious moral activity is continuously at work. If this is so, then in between and sustaining each of these initial and end product

[11] Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide*, 167 and 171; "The Idea of Perfection," 37.

appreciations lies the meta-activity of evaluative attention, an unfolding attunement that involves thinking, imagining, feeling, moments of self-scrutiny, moments of phenomenal-affective appreciation, and the like. Much like the unfolding evaluative attention I discussed in the last chapter, M might be disappointed when noticing her efforts are not as fruitful as they might be, or feel appreciative moments of satisfaction when she makes some progress. These *reflexive* evaluative impressions and apprehensions involve truthful and narratively unfolding self-appraisal, and the appreciative activity as a whole sustains a movement away from a falsifying ego, and toward a more articulate moral vision of reality.

Such an overall appreciative engagement seems to be *transformative*, *contemplative* no less than *active*, and *holistic* as an engagement. First, the activity is neither merely an appreciative culling of situational or personal facts, nor merely an appreciative and comparative rank-ordering of goods. It is neither merely a set of static moral intuitions or evaluative construals, nor is it simply an exercise of theoretical reason governed strictly by epistemic norms. It is a morally transformative activity. Second, the activity is *contemplative* because the mother-in-law is contemplating her own limited vision and the daughter-in-law's true qualities. However it is also *zetetic* because she is seeking to uncover some of the latter's qualities (or aspects of them) that she may have overlooked.

Third, such contemplative seeking is also *agency* because, on Murdoch's view, the mother-in-law's moral activity is as much an act of thinking as it is a movement of her will; the mother-in-law appears to be *doing* something. It is an act of love no less than respect, of "imaginative understanding," and it is an active obedience to a dimension

of reality that makes claims upon her.[12] Finally, while it is true that we have to supply narrative details about the mother-in-law's appreciative agency, here, it is not difficult to sketch how such appreciative activity may be holistic moral engagement. It may call forth a large portion of her personality and faculties: her history with the daughter-in-law, her self-understanding and her pre-reflective normative commitments, no less than her memory, imagination, thought, emotions, and desires.[13] Amidst the activity of appreciating in the seeking mode (and thus attempting to reach a state of appreciation in the found mode), numerous elements of the mother-in-law's personality and faculties are ultimately attuned in an engaged way to one particular dimension of reality as a focal point, even if total direct absorption is absent.[14]

Now, this overall interpretive sketch of a dialectical appreciating that can be found in Murdoch, makes good sense in light of the fact that the M and D thought experiment is designed to demonstrate several points related to Murdoch's Plato-inspired philosophy of consciousness. That is, she holds that consciousness is the "fundamental

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[12] Cf. for instance, Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," 215.

[13] Here, it should be obvious that I reject the reduction of appreciative attention to the sub-personal level of natural kinds, like a natural kind of neuronal or computational processes. De Brigard and Prinz defend this view. Felipe de Brigard and Jesse Prinz, "Attention and consciousness," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews* 1, no. 1 (2010): 51-59. If this view is correct, then it cannot account for why it is that many morally significant stretches of enacted attention are treated as praiseworthy or blameworthy. This objection is the result of a larger problem for reductivist views, which is that no single view can account for the variety or contrasting sets of features attention seems to have. These features include (1) focal versus global attention, (2) on-off versus degrees of attention, (3) voluntary versus involuntary attention (which is relevant to moral praise and blame), (4) exogenous versus endogenous attention, (5) perceptual versus executive attention, and finally (6) the *process* of attending versus the *event* of shifting attention from one thing to another, versus the overall *state* in which the process results. For a brief account of each of these contrasting sets, see Sebastian Watzl, "The Nature of Attention," *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 11 (November 2011), 10.

[14] For instance, M can be attuned to D, or the evaluative truth about D, partly *by* turning her focus to her own memories or her own bad qualities. Such cases of time-consciousness and self-scrutiny can be a form of attunement to D, since (in this case) their evaluative *point* is to acquire a just overall appreciation of D.

mode or form of moral being," that reason and will are bound together in a mutually shaping circuit, that consciousness itself is inescapably "soaked in value," and that reflective discernment of truth from falsehood is a moral (rather than merely theoretical) activity.[15]

Moreover, partly in light of these commitments, it would be a mistake to attribute to Murdoch the view that morally significant activities can be broken down *without remainder* into discrete deliberative episodes or acts, such as sizing things up and choosing to act in the face of a trolley problem.[16] For, as Murdoch notes, the background work of attention goes on continuously, "imperceptibly" building up "structures of value round about us." It is only when we ignore the role of such appreciative attention, says Murdoch, that we begin to equate the human self with freedom and the empty moment of choice.[17] It fact, the reductive application of Murdoch's views to the context of deliberative episodes, is one feature of a larger under-appropriation of her thought by some virtue ethicists and moral particularists. In order to more fully appropriate her insights and move beyond them to a more articulate and appealing picture of holistic appreciative agency, I will now examine and dispense with some of these narrow appropriations.

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[15] Murdoch, *Metaphysics*, 167, 171. Cf. also Murdoch's comments in "The Idea of Perfection": "will and reason then are not entirely separate faculties in the moral agent. Will continually influences belief, for better or worse, and is ideally able to influence it through a sustained attention to reality" (40).

[16] Brewer is one other thinker who has pointed out the same issue. Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72-73.

[17] Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," 37. Here, I should note that, perhaps in disagreement with Murdoch, I do think that it is possible to isolate stretches of appreciative agency that stand out, as it were, from the ordinary background of our daily implicit awareness of value where, says Murdoch, "the moral life" is going on "continually" (37). There is surely a difference, after all, between focusing one's appreciative attention on some object or person (as M does for herself and for D), and humming along unreflectively amidst our ordinary moral intuitional experience.

The Under-Appropriation of Murdoch

Murdoch's notion of attention, which I have claimed is an important form of active appreciating, remains insufficiently developed and unclear in some areas of contemporary virtue ethics and moral particularism. This obscures some of the resources Murdoch offers for a more robustly developed notion of dialectical appreciative agency. While I will not present an exhaustive case for this lack of development, I will at least strongly motivate the problem through a brief examination of Christine Swanton (once again), followed by some comments on several particularists' appropriation of Murdoch.

Under-Appreciating Murdochian Attention

As discussed in chapter three, we may recall that for Swanton, appreciation is both a "pre-analytic" evaluative intuition, and "post-analytic" evaluative discernment related to the connoisseur. Additionally, however, there is in Swanton's *Virtue Ethics* a third, ambiguous notion of appreciation as *attention*, which she connects directly to Murdoch.[18] Now, whether or not attentiveness *is* a type of appreciation remains unclear in Swanton's *Virtue Ethics*. For, she builds on Murdoch's notion of loving attention, and calls it a "pre-analytic" openness and receptivity to an object. Moreover, Swanton lists "receptivity" alongside "appreciation" as a *different* fundamental mode of moral responsiveness, thereby claiming that receptive attention and appreciation are different

[18] While I am working with the notion of "evaluative attention," Swanton herself is obscure about whether there really *is* agent-neutral value, independent of virtue, at which such attention could be directed. She explicitly denies it in some of her treatment in *Virtue Ethics*, but affirms it through other things she says, and in other publications. See Swanton's "Profiles of the Virtues," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (1995): 47-72, and "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," in *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lawrence Jost and Julian Wuerth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 241-259.

phenomena.[19] Receptive attention is for Swanton like Nell Noddings's concept of "engrossment." It is not itself appreciation, but only a necessary condition for the "post-analytic" sort of connoisseur-like appreciation.[20]

Elsewhere, however, Swanton *equates* pre-analytic attention with "*appreciation* with a loving gaze," and this causes some confusion.[21] In a more recent article things are clearer, since she seems to adopt the view that both "pre-analytic" attentiveness and "post-analytic" discernment are types of appreciation. For instance, there she says that the loving dimension of appreciation is an attentiveness that involves "really looking," so that the ends and happiness of others can be understood and our interaction with them appropriately non-invasive and sensitive.[22] Having clarified things a bit, we can justly conclude that, in Swanton's work, there is a form of appreciating that is something other than a discrete evaluative impression or apprehension, critical comparative appraisal, or an overall moral understanding. Whatever this appreciating is, Swanton seems to suggest that it involves the twin features of receptivity and openness, together with the activity of "really looking."

Unfortunately, Swanton does not clearly unpack what is involved in this Murdochian notion of attention, or develop it as a rich, holistic appreciative activity in its

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[19] Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 292. Receptivity is fundamental, says Swanton, because it allows for the world and its demands to be properly registered. It includes the kind of 'attention' that seems essential to many (if not all) the virtues.

[20] Ibid., 23, 292-93.

[21] Ibid., 52.

[22] It is instructive to note Swanton's use of the phrase "so that." It is a subtle moment that shows the relationship and difference between the *attentive activity* and the *understanding* that sometimes accompanies it, or upon which it terminates. My contention in in chapters one and two, once again, is that these indicate two different kinds of appreciation. Swanton, "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," 242.

own right. Moreover, while she borrows the notion from Murdoch, she does not delve deeply into why Murdoch would call this "just and loving" attention "the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent," as I noted above.[23] Neither does Swanton give voice to Murdoch's contention that such attentiveness involves "the whole activity of our consciousness," including the active exercise of moral imagination, rather than being merely a passive (but sometimes admirable) posture of "receptivity" or "openness."[24] Indeed, Swanton's aligning of Murdoch's attention on the side of "pre-analytic" appreciation indicates that she has yet to grasp one of Murdoch's central points: attentive appreciating, as contemplative agency, brings the whole morally active person into engagement, where the appreciating may be constituted by pre-analytic emotional construals no less than post-analytic, critically appraising scrutiny. This is quite evident, for instance, in the mother-in-law's own self-appraisal. Receptivity and openness may be important postures that ebb and flow within the work of appreciative attending, but they are not to be equated with the appreciating itself. The overall point, however, is that Swanton's treatment illustrates the need, at least in some virtue ethicists, for a clearer and more rigorous appropriation of Murdoch's notion of moral attention, where (I am suggesting) it amounts to holistic and morally active appreciating.

Constraining Appreciation to the Deliberative Episode

However, a second way in which potential insights from Murdoch are left untapped lies in the typical representation of the role that moral attention plays in practical thinking, constrained by the deliberative context. A predominant number of

[23] Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," 34.

[24] Cf. Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," 216.

ethicists endorse the generalist framework that the sole task of practical reasoning is to move from a theoretical representation of the facts of one's circumstances to a justified conclusion about what is to be done in them.[25] When it comes to an overall practical situation, then, the role of appreciation (as evaluative attention) will be restricted to either a discerning exercise of theoretical reason (appreciating the facts in the sense of coming up with an accurate representation of what is the case), or of practical reason (appreciating reasons for action), or both, and the appreciating will terminate upon the adoption of an intention to act or an intentional action. On this picture, appreciating will play a largely *instrumental* role in helping an agent discern such justificatory links between his or her circumstances and the action called for by them, and theoretical appreciation of facts is kept neatly separate from appreciation (perhaps as a subjective pro-attitude) of values.[26]

Several philosophers with particularist sympathies have justly challenged this basic conception of the task of practical thinking, and thereby the role and character of appreciating in it, by appealing to Murdoch's notion of moral attention. For example, Elijah Millgram takes Murdoch's central point to be that the task of fully illuminating our circumstances and uncovering the action they make apt, is a thoroughly difficult task.[27]

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[25] Cf., for example, John Rawls, "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy," in *John Rawls: Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 497-499. See also Brewer, 73-80, where he argues that this picture of the task of practical reason is the dominant view amongst contemporary Kantians.

[26] Cf. Brewer, 72 ff., for an excellent summary of this picture of practical thinking. While Brewer is focused on the task of practical thought itself, I am focusing more on appreciative attention that often constitutes or accompanies practical thinking, but is not reducible to it, and that includes hedonic, emotional and conative dimensions in addition to the thinking involved.

[27] Elijah Millgram, "Murdoch, Practical Reasoning, and Particularism," in *Ethics Done Right: Practical Reasoning as a Foundation for Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 168-97.

After all, Murdoch does indeed emphasize the particularity, inexhaustibility and obscurity of the practical situation. However, as Brewer has rightly noted, this way of appropriating Murdoch turns out to be simply a modification of the generalist view sketched above, for the task of practical thinking (and thus the instrumental role of appreciating in it) is still "to discern the justificatory links between circumstances and actions."[28]

Another group of philosophers with Aristotelian and particularist sympathies, such as McDowell, Wiggins and Williams, makes some advancement on this issue. Generally, they sought to advance Murdoch's pioneering work against the fact/value division, according to which the norms of theoretical and practical rationality are thoroughly entangled within the *moral* activity of appreciative attention. All three thinkers, in varying ways, make the point that our ability to use "thick" ethical concepts at all, prior to any deployment in a stretch of practical thinking, depends on our having *already* acquired the evaluative point of view that makes such concepts (like 'cruel' or 'courageous') meaningful to begin with.[29] When it comes to practical thinking, then, Wiggins and McDowell (for instance) seem to incorporate elements of Murdoch's view by reiterating Millgram's point: discerning what to do and making our circumstances utterly clear is a ceaseless and difficult task. However, they add that discerning the justificatory links between circumstances and actions requires an uncodifiable and

[28] Brewer, 72.

[29] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 141. John McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule Following," in *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, ed. S. Holtzman and C. Leich, 141-162 (London: Routledge, 1981). David Wiggins, "Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life," in David Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, 87-138 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). For an excellent overall treatment of twentieth century attacks on the fact/value division, see Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

inescapably *evaluative* sensibility, or a kind of acquired appreciation, and thereby foreground Murdoch's commitment to the factual/evaluative entanglement of conscious moral experience.[30]

Wiggins, for instance, famously invokes his notion of "situational appreciation" in order to stress that without it, an agent cannot rightly perceive the contingent and particular moral demands that a situation imposes. For complex or difficult situations, Wiggins in fact does not describe such appreciation as a form of immediate appreciative intuition. For, he notes, the relevant situational features may not "jump to the eye." He continues, saying, "To see what [the demands] are, to prompt the imagination to play upon the question and let it activate in reflection and thought-experiment whatever concerns and passions it should activate, may require a higher order of situational appreciation, or as Aristotle would say perception (*aisthesis*)."[31]

This quotation shows significant alignment with Murdoch, who *also* takes the work of thinking, imagining, and engaging in thought-experiments (mentioned by Wiggins) to be *constitutive* of evaluative attention (which I've argued above, is for

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[30]As noted in chapter three, John McDowell's 'appreciation'—as the uncodifiable virtue-conditioned sensibility of the *phronimos*—functions epistemically in an explanation of why and how 'the virtuous person' can serve as a standard of right action. In light of his virtue-conditioned moral sensibility, 'the virtuous person' is able to appreciate contextually relevant and situationally sensitive reasons for action, and correctly *perceives* the singular overriding reason for action; that is, he perceives what is the right thing to do. John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998), 53.

[31] David Wiggins, "Deliberation and Practical Reason," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76 (1975-1976): 43. Aristotle's notion of *aisthesis*, notes Achtenberg, is a cognition that involves unmediated, evaluative apprehension of particulars. Specifically, such "perception" or "insight" (*ennoia*), as Aristotle sometimes calls it, is an "awareness of particulars as instances of ends or goods." Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics: Promise of Enrichment, Threat of Destruction*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 179. For the final point on awareness of ends or goods, Cf. *De Motu Animalium* 6 700b19-22 (cited also by Achtenberg). Such insight or perception, as part of practical wisdom, only occurs when awareness of some particular good, pleasant, or beautiful thing is indeed good, pleasant or beautiful. Cf., for instance, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 10.9 1179b15-16. For the link between *aisthesis* and *phronesis*, see *NE* 6.9 114b32-33 and 6.9 114a26-27.

Murdoch a form of appreciating). Moreover, in speaking of appreciation as a sensitivity or ability so to appreciate, Wiggins supports Murdoch's (in this instance Aristotelian) view that factual or evaluative appearances (including situational appearances) are cognitively shaped and reshaped by one's achieved dispositional appreciation of the good.[32] Such appreciative understanding is activated in one's occurrent appreciation of the situation and its most salient moral demands.

Now, I claimed earlier that Murdoch's best insights on attention (and appreciation) remain under-appropriated, but Wiggins (and McDowell) seem to avoid this charge quite well. In fact, however, the avoidance is only partial. For, their under-appropriation is pinpointed by the Murdochian thought that morally significant activity, including the moral activity of appreciative thinking, cannot be wholly captured by deliberative episodes.[33] Wiggins and McDowell both invoke the notion of appreciation, or the uncodifiable ethical outlook and sensitivity of the virtuous person, in order to show how such a person reliably perceives the right thing to do in a situation, and so serves as a standard of right action. Here, appreciation *continues* largely to play an instrumental and epistemic role in such an agent's reliable perception of what to do.

Now, Wiggins and McDowell are right to emphasize this role. For, appreciative activity is most certainly at home in and crucial to deliberative contexts, and such uses of appreciation are of course morally illuminating and theoretically defensible.[34] However,

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[32] See, for instance, Dorothea Frede, "The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle," in *Essays on Aristotle's "De Anima,"* ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amelie Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 279-296.

[33] Brewer notes these two under-appreciated insights as well. Brewer, 73.

[34] However, for a compelling critique of this family of views, and of McDowell's views in particular, see Daniel Jacobsen, "Seeing by Feeling: Virtues, Skills, and Moral Perfection," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 8 (2005): 387-409.

restricting appreciation to the deliberative context fails to capture its full contemplative dimensions and their contribution to moral agency, which Murdoch rightly emphasizes. Indeed, the contemplative dimensions of appreciating frequently carry such activity well beyond normative quandary questions of what to do. Hence, in the story of M and D, the mother-in-law (M) is not, like Wiggins's possessor of situational appreciation, asking "*what should I do*?" Rather, she is a *practically* thoughtful moral agent in reflecting on herself, her daughter-in-law, and ultimately on how she should *see* the world. In short, the mother-in-law is trying to become a better person.

It is worth noting, however, that even if the mother-in-law's appreciative activity *were* situated within a deliberative context, its character and significance as a genuine kind of moral agency, together with the practical thinking that partly constitutes it, could not be wholly captured by restricting it to an auxiliary role in discerning justificatory links between circumstances and actions. Cora Diamond, for instance, illumines the character and value of appreciative moral attention through Socrates' moral thinking in the *Crito*, which does occur within a deliberative episode. After a stretch of practical thinking, Socrates concludes that he should not flee Athens to escape punishment, since this would be indistinguishable from breaking a promise or disobeying one's parent.[35] As Diamond notes, in contrast to Frankena's "wild misunderstanding" of Socrates' moral activity, Socrates' moral thinking is not exhausted by his application of general moral principles or rules to the particular facts of the case, nor is his moral agency restricted to the moment of choice.[36] In particular, Frankena misses the extended deployment of

[35] Plato, *Crito* in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 49e-54d.

[36] William Frankena, *Ethics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1973), 2-4.

Socrates' moral imagination, an activity enabling him creatively to personify the Laws of Athens in order to perceive them as relevantly similar to (or identical with) his parents. For Diamond, Socrates's imaginative activity involves creative improvisation that allows him to see possibilities he would have otherwise missed. Such possibilities, says Diamond, often yield only under the "pressure" of attentive struggle to make evaluative sense of a situation and of one's own activity in it.[37] This, notes Diamond, is "as much a significant moral *doing* as is his choosing to stay rather than to escape," and without discussing this work of moral attention, one has not fully characterized "*what* Socrates is doing in staying."[38]

A thought experiment that situates Socrates' imaginative activity in terms of the unfolding activity of appreciating, as I have construed it, further illumines the point Diamond makes. While Socrates is far more argumentatively focused in the actual dialogue, one could imagine him casting about for a metaphor that fits his particular situation. This may be similar to the "dawning appreciation" of Brewer's parent-child conversation, mentioned in the previous chapter.[39] Perhaps he imaginatively seeks for and consecutively considers several metaphors, retaining some while rejecting others, until he finally alights on the one that is most fitting. The *considering* of various metaphors is a kind of appreciating (appraising, contemplating), as is the search for new ones. He achieves moments of appreciation along the way as well, appreciating some of

[37] Hence, Diamond claims that the possibilities in one's circumstances (or one's activities) are not lying logically on the surface, readily grasped by anyone, but often require moral creativity to uncover them: the activity of creative moral thought. Diamond, "Missing the Adventure: Reply to Martha Nussbaum," in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 312-13.

[38] Ibid., 311.

[39] Brewer, 92-94.

the metaphors as inadequate, perhaps by simply sensing or feeling their inadequacy. When he finally alights on the fitting metaphor, he will have achieved *an* overall appreciation not only of which *metaphor* is proper, but also a new appreciative vision of the situation and his own activity in light of that metaphor. This kind of unfolding appreciative thinking does indeed appear to be a morally significant *doing*.[40]

However, once we grant that creatively imagining and attending to the highest possibilities latent in our situation or our own activities counts as a morally significant doing (as it indeed seems), then we have now moved with Murdoch into an open space for appreciative attention as an unfolding form of practical thought and responsiveness, which is *not* wholly constrained by the context of deliberative episodes, or wholly oriented toward the formation of an isolated intention or action. For, the diachronic struggle toward a deeper understanding of the point and value of one's life situations and activities is a characteristically human, but also *ubiquitous* activity.[41] If Diamond and Murdoch are correct, then such moral attention is a morally significant doing in its own right, even when we are not, like Socrates, deciding what to do, here and now.

Part of Murdoch's view is that an agent cannot excellently perform the difficult task of obtaining a maximally perspicuous evaluative description of one's circumstances without also possessing a dexterous and discerning evaluative sensitivity. Millgram, Wiggins, and McDowell each in their own way ably appropriate this view. However, in restricting active appreciation to the deliberative context of determinate practical

[40] I am grateful to Robert Roberts for the initial sketch of this thought experiment, in light of having read the chapter through.

[41] This does not mean, however, that we cannot meaningfully analyze and discuss discrete episodes of appreciative attention. What it does mean, perhaps, is that such analyses are always incomplete, or at least possess porous boundaries at their 'beginning' and 'end.'

problems, these thinkers risk obscuring Murdoch's more expansive role for appreciation and the incrementally unfolding thought that sometimes constitutes it, which also opens up a more holistic understanding of what moral agency can be.[42]

Structural Elements of Dialectical Appreciative Agency

The Interactivity of Dialectical Appreciative Agency

If we appropriate Murdoch's views more fully, but not uncritically, we can begin to picture the key elements of evaluative attention as a unitive activity of appreciating, within a larger dialectic of appreciative moral agency. A first feature that stands out is genuine subject-object *interactivity*, which is a feature that Susan Feagin also emphasized for film appreciating, in chapter two.[43] Now, Murdoch's emphasis on the extended work of describing reality aright, no less than the use of the word 'attention,' can invite the starkly realist view that the appreciation she inspires is wholly a matter of focusing on what is *there* in the particular reality that confronts us.[44] Swanton's discussion of appreciation as a kind of responsiveness to what is *there* in the field of a virtue, invites a

[42] There is a sense in which an implicit, non-conscious question of what to do is ubiquitous, as recent empirical work on attention has shown, but of course this has little bearing on the deliberative and reflective question of what to do. See Wayne Wu, "Confronting Many-Many Problems: Attention and Agentive Control," *Noûs* 45, no. 1 (2011): 50-76, and "Attention as Selection for Action," in *Attention: Philosophical and Psychological Essays*, ed. Christopher Mole, Declan Smithies, and Wayne Wu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 97-116. The view in contemporary empirical work on attention that comes closest to Murdoch's own, is what Watzl has call *the structuring view*, according to which attention structures our stream of consciousness, making some things more phenomenally salient than others. Watzl, "The Nature of Attention," 16.

[43] Susan Feagin, *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 42-58

[44] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," 91.

similar view.[45] There is no question that, at least in Murdoch, *whatever is the case* about agent-independent reality functions as an overriding epistemic and erotic norm for moral attention. The metaphor of correct vision and Murdoch's worries about the gravity of egoism only underscore this emphasis. It would be a mistake, however, to miss the genuine interactivity built into Murdoch's notion of attention, particularly in her claim that attention involves self-reflexive appreciation and the working of moral imagination.

Regarding self-reflexive appreciation, Murdoch's mother-in-law transitions from hostile to loving gaze by virtue of actively attending to the daughter-in-law's qualities, but also by virtue of appreciatively dwelling on her own flaws of jealousy, conventionality, and narrow-mindedness. This is something missed by Swanton's notion of appreciating as mere openness and receptivity, and perhaps something Murdoch herself does not sufficiently develop outside of her novels. So, in her recent article on Murdoch, Nancy Snow is quite right to develop this in more detail. She argues that in order for the mother-in-law to move from a "hostile" to a "loving" gaze, she may need not only the brief self-scrutiny Murdoch mentions, but also an emotional change from resentment to forgiveness.[46] This only serves to underscore the point that the activity of appreciatively attending (and its allied dialectic) is often interactive in a salutary way, requiring a focus not merely on the *other*, whether a person or situation. Rather, it

[45] Christine Swanton, "Kant's Impartial Virtues of Love," 242 and *Virtue Ethics*, 292-293. Even though Swanton at times invites the view I am criticizing, she is not wholly committed to it. For, the items in the "field" of a virtue (i.e. its sphere of concern) can be things within the agent, no less than things in the external world to which the agent responds (e.g. *Virtue Ethics*, 20-21).

[46] Nancy E. Snow, "Iris Murdoch's Notion of a Loving Gaze," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 39 (2005): 489-490. Snow is right to say that the "emotional odyssey" tracking the movement from M's hostile gaze to a loving one is missing in Swanton and Murdoch. However, in fairness to Murdoch, such emotional odysseys are given rich and detailed treatment throughout her fictional corpus. The M & D episode is limited, in that Murdoch only invokes it to make a point about her philosophy of mind and its link to moral agency.

requires a focus on one's self-in-relation to the other, where a perspicuous vision of the other remains the primary object and *telos* of the appreciating.

The interactivity of appreciative attention is deepened, moreover, by Murdoch's (somewhat vague) appeal to the moral imagination, which is wholly missing from Swanton's treatment of appreciation, but better developed by Diamond.[47] The native link between the imagination and *possibilia*, and the notion that such imagining can be carried off with more or less creativity, insight, and sympathetic attention, allows not only robust interactivity, but also the possibility of achieving revelatory insight that one would miss, absent the imaginative work.[48] Consider, for instance, one's appreciation of the following story, allegedly composed by Hemingway: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."[49] If an appreciator were to "size up" this story in terms of present semantic meaning, historical considerations, and attend strictly to the more obvious descriptive and expressive properties *there* in the work (e.g. minimalist, elegant, austere), and then attentively view the work as a complex whole, the richest dimensions of appreciation would be absent. The minimalism invites the appreciator to *amplify* and fill in narrative

[47] Murdoch's appeal to imagination is vague on several scores. For instance, she contends that genuine *love* for the other cannot be had apart from working to expand our capacity to imagine the being of the other ("The Sublime and the Good," 216). Elsewhere, however, she *equates* love with the "infinitely extensible work of imaginative understanding," where this also amounts to "respect" for otherness. While there are some ways in which love and respect can be linked to one another, it is not the case that they are the same thing. Moreover, the work of imagination can *issue* in an understanding of the other, but Murdoch seems to equate imagination with understanding. It seems to me that these are, once again, distinct. Whereas imagination primarily entertains possibilities, for instance, understanding primarily is about grasping actualities.

[48] Emily Brady, "Adam Smith's 'Sympathetic Imagination' and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Environment," *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9, no.1 (2011): 95-109.

[49] Literary legend has it that early in his career, Hemingway composed this story to win a bet in a bar in Algonquin. However, there is no entirely reliable account of this having occurred. The best source appears to be Arthur C. Clarke's Reader's Digest essay, "The Power of Compression," though Clarke does not cite his source for the story. Arthur C. Clarke, *Greetings, Carbon-Based Bipeds!: Collected Essays, 1934-1998*, ed. Ian T. Macauley (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 354.

context imaginatively, perhaps from a variety of perspectives (e.g. that of the father or mother), or even projectively to imagine oneself putting out such an ad.[50]

There are moral cases, also, as when a privileged white male strains toward a full appreciation of the badness involved the rape of a local teen girl, whom he does not know. Without his imagination appreciatively tuned in to the disvalue of the rape victim's experience, consequent ruined state, and her moral worth as a person, such a man would be appreciating the badness of her experience less fully than he otherwise could. The imaginative work involved in appreciative agency can thus be revelatory, opening intimate insight into truths about (say) human finitude and value, regret, and deeply tragic loss.[51] While the robust interactivity of appreciating can involve far more elements than self-reflection and imaginative work in being partly constituted (say) by any number of virtues the appreciator possesses, an examination of these two features offers us an illuminating start.

The Unfinished Character of Dialectical Appreciative Agency

A second feature emerging from a Murdoch-inspired conception of appreciating is its perpetually *unfinished* character. There is of course an obvious sense in which appreciative attention directed upon some object can be "finished" in an episodic way; it

[50] In her work in aesthetics on imagination and appreciation, Emily Brady offers excellent examples of how imaginative work can promote a richer appreciation by opening up new horizons of meaning and intimacy between appreciator and object. For example, she says, "…to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of an alpine flower, I might somatically imagine what it is like to live and grow under harsh conditions. Without imagining such conditions I would be unable to appreciate the remarkable strength hidden so beautifully in the delicate quality of the flower." Brady, "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56, no. 2 (1998): 143-44.

[51] Adam Smith, among others, has of course argued that the creative and constructive powers of imagination make possible these sorts of insights. For a recent article that shows application of Smith's thought to both moral and aesthetic appreciation, see Emily Brady, "Adam Smith's 'Sympathetic Imagination,'" 95-109.

ends at some time *t*, even if that moment is hard to pin down. However, Murdoch's point about unfinished appreciating seems to be that regardless of how excellently one enacts a given stretch of appreciating, and regardless of how sensitive and refined the state of appreciation (as an overall understanding) one attains at its close, the appreciation is always capable of being better, richer, and more perspicuous. For Murdoch, this is partly a function of the dialectical relation between human finitude and the ineradicable idea of perfection that guides our engagement with others, our dynamic self-conception, and our meaningful activities. With respect to the moral domain, moreover, the unfinished character of appreciation is partly a function of the fugitive and perfectionistic character of the notion of *the good* for human beings. As MacIntyre (and many others) have noted, our overall appreciation of that good perennially informs and is informed by our attentive appreciating of particular goods like the value of persons, morally significant actions or states of affairs, or the goods internal to valuable activities.[52]

Murdoch's emphasis on the unfinished character of the work of attention, its holistic rootedness in developing moral consciousness, and on the fugitivity of its objects, provides a needed counterbalance to treatments of appreciation that stress (rightly) its more immediate and episodic instances. If one directly appreciates the goodness of an isolated generous act through the virtue-conditioned emotion of admiration, there is a sense in which one's appreciation happens and is finished, once the situation is over and the admiration is defused. This type of appreciation, as a bit of acquaintance knowledge, enters one's inner moral history and is installed there, so to speak. Of course, however,

[52] Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), chapter fifteen.

one's overall appreciation of the goodness of generous actions is not finished, nor is one's capacity to attend to it in ever more perspicuous and morally illuminating ways.

The Responsiveness Pluralism of Dialectical Appreciative Agency

Now, Murdoch implicitly raises a third element of active appreciating and its allied dialectic, but it is one that she tends to obscure. The element I have in mind is the *responsiveness pluralism* involved in extended episodes of appreciating. That is, in many significant stretches of appreciating, multiple moral responses—like desiring the good for another in distress, feeling compassion for them, and also feeling regret that one cannot do more—as well as multiple *modes* of moral responsiveness, are often (but *not* always) in play.[53] This is part of my corrective to Brewer's view of appreciation in chapter four, and Murdoch's emphasis on interactivity and on moral attention to the particular (persons or situations), seems to invite this view. Unfortunately, Murdoch tends in her philosophical work (unlike in her novels) to reduce appreciative moral responsiveness especially to love but also respect, where all other responses terminate on one or another of these two.[54] This may be a function of her broadly erotic conception of consciousness, but in characterizing appreciative moral agency, this reduction produces very counterintuitive results.

For example, it is not clear to me that attending to the badness of a brutally cruel act against a defenseless child through anger, indignation, and a desire that the

[53] I say not always, for responsiveness pluralism need not always be in play, for the appreciating to be apt or excellent. Sometimes, for instance, a single, one faceted and isolated response to an appreciated object is quite called for, depending on the circumstances. For instance, in a fairly uncomplicated situation in which generosity is called for, an agent might simply appreciate the importance of gift giving through the emotion of delight.

[54] Cf. for instance, "The Sublime and the Good," 216, though this view is ubiquitous throughout her corpus.

perpetrator be punished, is a stretch of appreciating that simply amounts to either love or respect, at the psychological level. The psychic states that dominate this appreciation are simply anger and a sensitivity to injustice. In cases like these, love or respect are perhaps sometimes necessary conditions for the attention to be enacted in a morally apt way, but aren't typically psychological ingredients in the occurrent appreciating itself. Often, moreover, simple *concern* (rather than full-fledged respect or love) for just states of affairs, the flourishing of children, and for the value of human persons, will form the necessary backdrop for this sort of appreciating. In any case, Murdoch seems to hold the view that attentive appreciating is *itself*, in its performance, a love-infused activity, and this seems false in cases of deep appreciations of badness.

If interactivity and attention to particularity are important dimensions of appreciative agency, and they often entail responsiveness pluralism, we need to move beyond Murdoch to something like Swanton's plural modes of moral responsiveness, as discussed in chapter three. Once again, these include promoting or actualizing value, honoring value or other things (such as rules), producing, loving, respecting, creating, being receptive, appropriately handling and appreciating. However, there seem to be other modes of moral responsiveness that Swanton fails to include, and we should add those here. These will include *thinking, discerning* and, a notable omission on Swanton's part, *enjoying.* Further, Swanton misses a host of apt modes of responsiveness to *disvalue* such as dismantling (instead of producing or creating), dishonoring (instead of honoring), shaming or disrespecting (rather than respecting), discouraging and impeding (rather than promoting), being close-minded to (rather than receptive), and anathematizing. In chapter three I argued that appreciation, considered as an apt

evaluative construal or an engaged moment of moral recognition, is a mode of responsiveness that is fundamentally necessary for all of Swanton's modes, and this seems true of such appreciation with respect to the others I have added here. Moreover, inasmuch as the extended activity of evaluative attention is (often) partly constituted by such apt appreciative construals, it, too, will play a deeply fundamental role.

When it comes to appreciating (as an activity), why should *responsiveness pluralism* matter at all? It matters a great deal when it comes to picturing the full richness of many cases of moral agency in a realistic and illuminating way. For instance, it is tempting to follow the common practice, illustrated by McDowell's approach, of expending all of one's philosophical energy in demonstrating how 'the virtuous person' can serve as a standard of right action. As the typical story goes, the *phronimos* perceives or registers all of the appropriate moral considerations through virtue-conditioned sensibility, sizes up all the relevant reasons for action these considerations generate, perceives the right thing to do among them and acts upon it with full motivational harmony.[55]

As I suggested in the previous chapter, this picture either downplays or misses the moral significance of the many modes of response (or responses) attuned to ethical considerations that do not generate an overriding reason for action. This is especially true in situations in which there is only one good or end worthy of promotion through overt action, but other goods (or bads) that require other sorts of appreciative responses, perhaps expressed in conflicting desires, appreciative pain and mixed emotions. Second,

[55] John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason," 53. See also John McDowell, "Incontinence and Practical Wisdom in Aristotle," in *Essays for David Wiggins: Identity, Truth and Value*, ed. Sabina Lovibond and S. G. Williams (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 102. Both of these texts were discussed at some length in chapter three.

in speaking of the way virtuous people "register" moral goods or demands, this approach obscures the moral *agency* involved in the plurally responsive appreciating of ethical considerations, an obscurity aptly summarized by the passive word "register" itself. If responsiveness pluralism is taken seriously, then we can begin to uncover new dimensions of appropriately responsive agency—even to features of moral situations that are not action-inviting—that have significant bearing on how it is good to live.

The Unity of Dialectical Appreciative Agency

A final element of appreciative agency that Murdoch implies, but does not develop deeply, is *unity*. Throughout this chapter I have gestured toward a desired conception of moral agency using mysterious words like "holism," "unity" and "narrative unity." Here, I will try to illumine what these mean, while also attempting to show that the unity or holism of appreciative attention remains compatible with the responsiveness pluralism often involved in larger dialectical episodes.

First, there is the possibility of some formal unity in the phenomenon of attending itself. While the nature of attention is currently a hotly debated subject in philosophy of mind, cognitive science and psychology, some of the most intuitively plausible and defensible views conceive of it as a unified, personal-level phenomenon that cannot be wholly reduced to any sub-personal neurological or cognitive processes.[56] On Watzl's

[56] The problems of disunity associated with sub-personal reductionist approaches are well documented in the history of empirical and scientific study on attention. Alan Allport famously summarized the situation as follows: "Even a brief survey of the heterogeneity and functional separability of different components of spatial and nonspatial attentional control prompts the conclusion that, qua causal mechanism, *there can be no such thing as attention*. There is no one uniform computational function, or mental operation (in general no one causal mechanism) to which all so-called attentional phenomena can be attributed." Allport, "Attention and Control: Have We Been Asking the Wrong Questions? A Critical Review of Twenty-Five Years," in *Attention and Performance XIV*, ed. David E. Meyer and Sylvan Kornblum (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 183-218.

recent structural view, for instance, "consciously attending to something consists in the conscious mental process of structuring one's stream of consciousness so that some parts of it are more central than others."[57] For Watzl, such attention is contrastive, and structures our consciousness so that some things are focalized in the foreground, while others remain in the periphery. Since the contrast requires the periphery, the periphery remains essential to the process of attending, and this view thus retains phenomenal holism. Attention as the focalizing or structuring of consciousness also entails holism about our mental life, in that the focalized relation of different mental states to each other is as important (for attention) as are the differing intrinsic features of those states.[58] Moreover, as Watzl notes, by identifying attention with its formal focalizing process, we have a unified account of attention, regardless of its varied intentional objects. Whether one's attention is focused on material objects, situations, qualial states, mental images or on one's conscious desires, says Watzl, one is always engaged in the conscious mental process of structuring one's stream of consciousness focally around some object.[59]

The merits of Watzl's view are several. First, the view makes it clearer how attention is connected with agency, for such structural focalizing is not only something one does, it is something that one can do intentionally. This makes good sense of the fact that Murdoch's mother in law (no less than Socrates) was actively initiating and guiding her attentional work. Second, this view clarifies how the responsiveness pluralism I

[57] Watzl, "Attention as Structuring the Stream of Consciousness," in *Attention: Philosophical and Psychological Essays*, ed. Christopher Mole, Declan Smithies and Wayne Wu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 158.

[58] Watzl, "The Nature of Attention," 17.

[59] Watzl, "Attention as Structuring the Stream of Consciousness," 163.

examined above can nonetheless be unified formally and instantiate holism amongst our mental, passional and emotional states and faculties. Such formal unity, located in the focalizing work of attention, allows us to explain how an extended period of attentive moral agency that involves manifold mental, emotional and conative shifts, can nonetheless be justly identified as a unified stretch of appreciative agency.

However, Waltz's account does have some problems, for he seems to have identified only a necessary but not sufficient condition for attention. For instance, one can focally structure one's stream of consciousness on ten different and random things in the space of ten seconds. This fails to be a case of attention (or attending) and, when habitual and somewhat involuntary, a chief marker of attention-*deficit* disorder. In other words, one needs something more than a mere focalizing process, especially when one wants to account for a unified, extended activity of appreciative attention. For that, one also needs something like Murdoch's patient obedience of will turned toward an object, intellectual fortitude, and also a single (even if progressively clarified) *telos* at which one's attention aims. Many cases of attention, it seems, require and express moral and intellectual virtues. Waltz's focalizing view is also insufficient for *appreciation* construed as an extended activity of attending. For, appreciating is often concern-based attending, and the inescapable *aboutness* (and thus representational content) that concerns require, makes Waltz's neat separation of attentional form from attentional content highly implausible. His conception of attentional form does help us to grasp how stretches of attention can be unified amidst responsiveness pluralism. However, it seems more plausible and promising to conceive of appreciative attention as (partly) constituted by the desires, thoughts, emotions and imaginings that drive it forward, (partly) unified by

the *telos* at which such attention aims, and as insufficiently characterized apart from the representational content of its intentional objects.

This leads us to several other sources of unity and holism, aside from the merely formal, which may be involved in evaluative attention, when situated within the larger dialectic of appreciation. First, there is the holism involved in the wholeheartedness that marks many stretches of appreciating. Such wholeheartedness need not be reduced to reflective endorsement or the volitional unanimity of first and second order desires, as Christine Korsgaard and Harry Frankfurt would have it.[60] For, it can also mean that one's whole self, amidst a working harmony and engaged interplay of one's faculties and modes of response, is *given over* to what is being appreciated. As I argued against Brewer in chapter three, such wholeheartedness is not always a function of psychic harmony construed as conative and hedonic unanimity with one's activities in their context. The view of wholeheartedness I envision, it seems, is a function of a fundamental posture of *care* for things that genuinely matter, even when appreciative engagement involves divergent emotional responses (or modes of response), motivational ambivalence, or forms of psychic pain.

However, there is perhaps a different kind of psychic harmony implied by such a view, in the sense that reason and will may be unified by the attentive and interactive posture *itself*, which involves giving ones' whole self over to, caring for, and being appropriately (and sometimes unexpectedly) moved by the appreciable things that confront us. There seems to be *some* kind of basic psychic unity or harmony necessary

[60] See for instance "reflective endorsement" in Christine M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, ed. Onora O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See also the notion of "volitional unanimity" and wholeheartedness in Harry Frankfurt, *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting it Right*, ed. Deborah Satz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 15-18.

for this posture of interactive, concern-based obedience to reality to be carried off in a coherent way. The unity and holism of appreciative attention involved in the reading of a good novel is a helpful image here. The varied and often unexpected responses involved in reading one's own life activities, situations, and the characters that are in them, can be united in a wholehearted way by the appreciative posture of evaluative attention and the sense that one's reading genuinely matters.

This brings up a third source of unity, inspired by Alasdair MacIntyre's notion that human lives can be enacted narratives that possess greater or lesser degrees of unity.[61] Episodes of appreciative attention within its allied dialectic, may confer unity upon stretches of one's life, but may also play a role in helping an agent uncover or discern sources of evaluative dissonance in his or her unfolding story. For instance, appreciatively attending to the goods internal to one's practice of being a mother may lend intelligibility and unity to a day's worth of parenting, either amidst the performance or after the day is done. However, the *zetetic* and discerning character of appreciating can spur a mother to seek an ever increasing and perspicuous understanding of the point and value of being the mother that she is, as well as the place her parenting activities have (or should have) in a life that is well lived, overall. Appreciative attention to one's activities (or one's situations) may, in the performance or in hindsight, lend narrative unity to one's life, especially when it generates new appreciative *grasps* of the point and value of the larger unfolding story.

Now, there may be additional structural elements of dialectical appreciating, but those recounted above give us a substantial starting point. In the dialectical picture,

[61] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chapter fifteen.

appreciating as evaluative attention is a meta-activity that unites and sustains developmental episodes of appreciative agency, and it can carry and be partly constituted by appreciative states occurring within it. These may include sudden affective experiences, appreciative states of insight, evaluative appraisings, and the overall state of appreciation achieved at the end of the episode. Such a conception may allow for a greater holism and thereby phenomenological *realism* in the way that we picture important stretches of moral agency, as something that can diachronically unfold in human experience while being carried along by progressive states of insight. And, the structural elements I have sketched may help to make that picture a little bit more determinate. Appreciatively attending to one's life, circumstances or activities is analogous to appreciating a novel as it unfolds: It is genuinely interactive, broadly unfinished and advanced by degrees, often marked by responsiveness pluralism, but nonetheless an authentic source of formal and personal unity.

Dialectical Appreciating: A Case from Auschwitz

With so many distinctions and structural elements in play, we now have need of an image, or rather an image-infused story, which invites reflection on the kind of dialectical appreciative agency I have in mind. The story comes from the recollections of Primo Levi, a well-known Holocaust survivor, of his time spent as a prisoner in Auschwitz. The events related in the story occurred, Levi notes, at a time when the war was only weeks away from ending and the sound of Russian artillery in the distance had given the prisoners a renewed sense of hope.

> Ladmaker, in the bunk next to mine, was a poor wreck of a man. He was (or had been) a Dutch Jew, seventeen years old, tall, thin and gentle. He had been in bed for three months; I had no idea how he managed to survive the selections. He had

had typhus and scarlet fever successively; at the same time a serious cardiac illness had shown itself, while he was smothered with bedsores, so much so that by now he could only lie on his stomach. Despite all this, he had a ferocious appetite. He only spoke Dutch, and none of us could understand him.

Perhaps the cause of it all was the cabbage and turnip soup, of which Ladmaker had wanted two helpings. In the middle of the night he groaned and then threw himself from his bed. He tried to reach the latrine, but he was too weak and fell to the ground crying and shouting loudly.

Charles lit the lamp (the battery showed itself providential) and we were able to ascertain the gravity of the incident. The boy's bed and the floor were filthy. The smell in the small area was rapidly becoming insupportable. We had but a minimum supply of water and neither blankets nor straw mattress to spare. And the poor wretch, suffering as he was from typhus, formed a terrible source of infection, while he certainly could not be left all night to groan and shiver in the cold in the middle of the filth.

Charles climbed down from his bed and dressed in silence. While I held the lamp, he cut all the dirty patches from the straw mattress and the blankets with a knife. He lifted Ladmaker from the ground with the tenderness of a mother, cleaned him as best as possible with straw taken from the mattress and lifted him into the remade bed in the only position in which the unfortunate fellow could lie. He scraped the floor with a scrap of tin plate, diluted a little chloramines and finally spread disinfectant over everything, including himself.[62]

How does one respond to such a story? There are a number of ways to do so, and each way is a way of *reading* or interpreting the story, or picturing the character of the moral agency in it, and then telling further stories about it. One way of responding to the story involves classifying the central action in it, and then drawing general conclusions about such classification. In this way, one might classify the act as supererogatory, which it indeed seems to be. If one conceives of the moral life as being primarily about duties and obligations, rules, principles, and conditions that justify praise or blame, one might retell the story as an instance of an admirably heroic or saintly deed, but a deed that tells us nothing important about the nature of morality. Charles has been a Good Samaritan in risking his life and well-being for the sake of Ladmaker and his fellow

[62] Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, trans. Giulio Einaudi (NY: Touchstone, 1996), 166-167. This text is a translation of Levi's 1945 work originally titled *Se questo e un uomo* (*If This is a Man).*

prisoners, but he is not required to do so. We may then generalize. All that is required, morally speaking, is that one be a Minimally Decent Samaritan, as Judith Jarvis Thomson says, and minimal decency certainly doesn't require putting oneself in harm's way in the manner that Charles did.[63] If one reads and retells the story in this way, one's (fairly impoverished) picture of Charles' moral agency may end here.

There are of course other ways of reading and retelling the story that may focus specifically on what *makes* Charles' action admirable. If one is a non-consequentialist, one might seize upon the story as an excellent example of Williams' "one thought too many" objection. Charles is admirable and praiseworthy in this instance partly because he is not alienated from his personal relationship with Ladmaker by having inappropriately impartial motivational states. In a related vein, those who deny that the deliberative standpoint is normatively privileged may point to the story as a particularly poignant example of excellent and praiseworthy non-deliberative agency, whose praiseworthiness is partly derived from its spontaneity.[64]

Of course, the consequentialist might reply that what makes the action admirable, at the end of the day, is the aggregate good of the state of affairs produced by it: the threat of infection for all the prisoners is eliminated, and Ladmaker himself has been restored to (relative) comfort in his bunk. On the other hand, virtue ethicists or sensibility theorists

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[63] Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1971): 47-66.

[64] For some good examples of non-deliberative agency that are nonetheless subject to moral evaluation, see Neil Levy and Tim Bayne, "Doing Without Deliberation: Automatism, Automaticity, and Moral Accountability," *International Review of Psychiatry* 16, no. 3 (August 2004): 209-15. See also Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue: An Inquiry into Moral Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

seeking to illumine how the *phronimos* can serve as a standard of right action, might emphasize that Charles immediately *sees* what do to; his virtue-conditioned perception allows him to spot not only the potential infection and its threat to his fellows' well-being, but also Ladmaker's need for compassion. Admirability may attach to the excellence of Charles' situational appreciation and the wisdom and compassion that flow from it. Finally, if one is a generalist, one might dilate the story by focusing on Charles' implicit acceptance of general moral principles related to beneficence and welfare-maximization, and on the admirable way he accurately applies those principles to the case at hand.

These sorts of theoretically motivated approaches to Charles' agency, and countless others, are indeed philosophically illuminating ways of attending to the story. However, there is something unappreciative and incomplete about the way each story pictures not only Charles' action, but also Charles himself. In these approaches there is, I suggest, a theoretically induced insensitivity to the depth of reflection on moral agency into which this brief story invites us. Raymond Gaita and Talbot Brewer provide some insights that open the way toward such deeper reflection. Gaita notes, for instance, that while the act is indeed supererogatory, one might instead be struck by the *spirit* (and not merely the motive or intention) with which Charles performs the act. One might "*wonder* at its *goodness*," a wonder informed by Charles' responsiveness to Ladmaker with "the tenderness of a mother."[65] Extending Gaita's reading, Brewer adds that what makes the

[65] Raimond Gaita, "Altruism: Seeing What is Invisible," 5. Speech delivered at Philanthropy Australia's Annual General Meeting, Melbourne Australia, April 27, 2005.

act morally admirable is the fact that Charles' tenderness "emerges from and expresses one human being's vivid appreciation of the preciousness of another human life."[66]

While this way of reading the story is on the right track, it threatens to leave us in much that same position in which the other readings do. We may simply walk away with the theoretical insight (or view) that the admirability of Charles' act is primarily grounded in his appreciation, expressed in his tenderness, of Ladmaker's preciousness as a human being. Now, such an insight is no small thing, but the story invites even deeper reflection on what Charles' moral agency amounts to. As I have said, however, Gaita and Brewer are on the right track, because they point us to Charles himself and his inner life, and they provoke us to *wonder* about the spirit or appreciation with which he acts. Amidst an otherwise prosaically recounted story, true to Levi's style generally, the phrase "the tenderness of a mother" confronts us, and beckons us onto an interrogative pathway of reflection about Charles himself.[67]

First, we may wonder at the astonishing presence of the tenderness itself, given the fact that it occurs in Auschwitz. After all, upon hearing that the Russians' proximity meant the imminent German abandonment of Auschwitz, Levi himself comments in this way: "The news excited no direct emotion in me. Already for many months I had no

[66] Brewer, 63-164. Brewer also suggests that the tenderness is *apt*, given that it is "called for" by Ladmaker's human preciousness. This reading coheres with Brewer's view, articulated earlier in his work, that there are myriad forms of appreciation, that are or must be *attuned* to what their objects call for, or the value they "bring to light" (157-158).

[67] Much the same thing happens when one views the look on Bathsheba's face in Rembrandt's painting *Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter* (1654, Louvre, Paris). Unlike his less adept colleagues, Rembrandt's depiction of Bathsheba's face upon receiving the king's summons, *invites* the viewer into an extended reflection on her whole life as a person. The look on her face at once contains a sense of longing, sadness, resigned entrapment, and suggests that she is thinking of the life she has shared with Uriah. For a perceptive set of essays on this painting and the appreciation it invites, see *Rembrandt's 'Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter'*, ed. Ann Jensen Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

longer felt any pain, joy or fear, except in that detached and distant manner characteristic of the Lager, which might be described as conditional: if I still had my former sensitivity, I thought, this would be an extremely moving moment."[68] Charles' tenderness in Auschwitz is, in itself, staggering. However, it beckons us to wonder not merely at the act itself, or the immediate spirit of tenderness with which it is performed, but also to wonder about where such a spirit came from, how it was sustained in the camp, how it developed in those brief minutes of washing, and indeed where it is going. Such wonder opens up the thought that this story conveys but one brief episode, selectively constrained by Levi's memory and purposes, in Charles' life and moral agency, and that even *this* episode is so constrained. Suppose, then, that we imagine Charles as a whole person amidst this activity, a person whose spirit and appreciative agency may extend farther and run reflectively deeper than a momentary compassionate attunement to Ladmaker's preciousness as a human being. If we do this, our capacity for picturing holistic moral agency takes a quantum leap, and it is this leap that I will try to illustrate.

As Charles lit the lamp, he ascertained "the gravity" of the situation, just like Levi and the others. Unlike the others, however, perhaps Charles appreciated its gravity not merely in terms of its potential for rampant infection, or in its being an "ugly surprise" in the night (as Levi earlier describes the episode). His appreciation of its gravity gives special weight to Ladmaker's predicament, suffering, and humanity. As stated above, Charles has a possessed appreciation for the value of persons, and we may add a standing appreciative concern for the suffering of others, and therefore a possessed disposition to be compassionate. By feeling pity or compassion for Ladmaker in that moment, Charles

[68] Levi, *Survival*, 152-53.

is appreciating the situation, as well as Ladmaker's humanity, in a more engaged and attuned way than the others present in the room. Through the emotions of pity and compassion, he uniquely understands and *tastes* the gravity of the situation, and so possesses a bit of appreciative acquaintance knowledge. However, there is more to be imagined about Charles' appreciative agency.

Suppose that while he cleans Ladmaker's body, Charles' evaluative attunement is focally anchored in a compassionate construal of the man as a person worthy of care, simply in virtue of the fact that he is a human being and in need. While attuned in this way, Charles may find himself thinking and feeling ashamed about the many nights that he had to ignore the cries for food from the people in the adjoining dysentery ward, followed by the thought and a sense of gratitude that, here and now, he could attend to at least one. As he continues to clean Ladmaker's filth, then, his mind and emotions may turn in indignation and anger toward the Nazis, their dehumanizing injustices and insensitivity to the evils they had wrought. He indulges in a moment of profound longing, straining to imagine a future that could be different and to conceive of the part that he, and Ladmaker, might play. Then, he remembers his own similarly insensitive treatment of his son the night before they were all taken, and with a pang of remorse tempered with renewed determination he meticulously cleans the remaining bits of vomit from behind Ladmaker's ears. Perhaps things could be different, at least right now. In that determined moment he may find himself suddenly saddened by Ladmaker's inability, as a Dutchman, to be understood by anyone in the room amidst his suffering. Suppose then that Ladmaker catches Charles' eye. Charles realizes with a smile that, just now, the two of them are enjoying a brief moment of communion, despite the language barrier.

This may be something he hadn't imagined just a few moments ago. He remembers the joys of his family again, and as he lays Ladmaker back into the bunk, wonders if the boy will live through the night. It mattered a great deal, more than he had appreciated even minutes before. Perhaps as he crawled into his own bunk, Charles thought that he would not soon forget what he *did* that night, partly because somehow, through his activity, he felt he had gained a vivid and more articulate sense of why it, and why Ladmaker, mattered so much. It was this more vivid sense, perhaps, toward which his first tender response to Ladmaker was straining from the very start.

Of course, Charles' appreciating does not *have* to go this way. In particular, it does not have to be marked by responsiveness pluralism or extended reflection, on pain of being subject to Williams-style "one thought too many" objections.[69] For instance, Ladmaker was in no immediate danger that might require a more decisive and one-faceted response. Moreover, even without his immediate danger, Charles may simply feel compassion and extend it to Ladmaker for a few moments, and that may be the whole appreciative story to tell. I can consistently countenance such prospects. For, throughout this project I have noted the genuine integrity and independent importance of instant or momentary appreciations like recognitions, classifications, immediate evaluative construals, phenomenal-affective moments of wonder, and the like. My only implicit claim, then, is that the dialectical appreciative agency I have described is *possible*, and that it can constitute a particularly rich and wholehearted engagement. Moreover, this way of thinking about moral engagement is able to justly picture

[69] Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality", in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18.

ubiquitous cases that involve increasing maturity of insight, unlike the more atomistic and theoretically driven approaches outlined above.

Conclusion

If Charles' appreciating goes something like what I have conjectured above, the features of extended appreciating that I discussed in theory—interactivity, unfinishedness, responsiveness pluralism, and formal or narrative unity—stand out as familiar and intuitively plausible. Such familiarity and plausibility derives, I suggest, from the fact that dialectical appreciation of this sort is a commonplace experience. From this familiar descriptive and narratively unfolding vantage, it begins to seem very odd to think that every practical appreciative episode is structured by a theoretical moment of stasis prior to action in which one gleans (or appreciates) all the situational facts and evaluative considerations, weighs all of that information critically, and then forms an intention upon which to act. On this picture (and its close relatives), *agency* is restricted to voluntary formation of an intention followed by an action.

In the common sort of extended appreciating of the case I have described, by contrast, all of these elements and more are simply thrown into the activity together, and yet united by a focalized center and an incrementally clarified sense of the activity's evaluative point. Indeed, if my representation of Charles' inner life were true, then one is hard pressed to characterize what he is *doing* in responding to Ladmaker without such a representation. This representation underscores Aristotle's insight, noted here by Carr, that unlike technical agency, moral agency is an interactive "two-way street: agents themselves are no less objects of change than the world upon which they act—and the

effectiveness of moral agency is itself dependent upon such personal transformations of heart and soul."[70]

However, the picture I have offered also lends plausibility to the Murdochian (and non-Aristotelian) view that our theoretical and practical lives are integrated in an inescapable moral holism. As Murdoch might say, the whole activity of Charles' consciousness—his thoughts, beliefs, imaginings, feelings, desires, self-scrutinies, hope and memories—has a constitutive and morally illumining role to play in his agency, even the parts of it that are aimed at acquiring truth. Moreover, the picture I've offered provides a way to conceive of the unity of such agency. We cannot make sense of the way the activity is, *for Charles*, marked by unity and increasing maturity of insight, unless we refer to both the meta-activity of appreciative attention that ties his many states of understanding and emotional appreciations together, and to his incrementally clarified sense of the moral *point* of his activity. In my representation of his activity, the whole of Charles' being is given over to what he is doing in a concerned, wholehearted and dialectically transformative way.

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[70] David Carr, "Rival Conceptions of Practice in Education and Teaching," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37, no. 2 (2003), 258.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

I began this project with a twofold set of concerns. First, it seemed to me crucially important to try to understand the nature of appreciation. What was involved in Adolph Eichmann's failure to appreciate what he was doing, including failures of recognition, imagination, and thoughtfulness?[1] What, by contrast, was involved in Stephen Kumalo's sudden appreciative experience of shame over his cruel actions?[2] In the virtue ethical literature, impressive claims are being made about appreciation. As I noted in chapter one, Robert Adams claims that wisdom requires a just appreciation for things that matter, a deep perceptiveness with respect to things that enrich or impoverish human lives, and Christine Swanton suggests that appreciation is a necessary condition for any virtue.[3] What, however, *is* the precise relationship between appreciation and wisdom, or between appreciation and the expression of various virtues? These questions became more pressing when, upon closer inspection, it was not clear to me that various virtue ethicists themselves were clear on the nature of appreciation.

As it happens, in the course of my investigation into the first concern, a second concern slowly emerged. Investigating the nature of appreciation led me to believe that it

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[1] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 287-288.

[2] Alan Paton, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 103-104

[3] Robert M. Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being For the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21, 186.

played a rather central role in moral experience and agency. Yet, many philosophically dominant pictures of these things—framed by practical quandaries, a neat division between theoretical and practical reason, and a productivist relation to the good—seemed to offer a very stunted place for appreciation, if any. For, appreciation appears to come in degrees of maturity and insight that unfold over time, involves seeking for the appreciable no less than contemplating it, and extends well beyond the limited quandary question of what to do, thereby possessing more than a purely productivist relation to the good. Since many of these features seem rather central to moral experience and agency, I saw the need for greater attention to appreciation, particularly in its potential to offer a more phenomenologically realistic or alternative conception of such experience and agency.

With these twin concerns in hand, I began in chapter two to investigate the nature of appreciation, drawing upon a number of views in aesthetics. I began with the ordinary appearances of 'appreciation' as either understanding ("I didn't appreciate what I had until it was gone") or enjoyment ("I appreciate a good merlot"). Through examination of a great variety of cases, I showed how the understanding-enjoyment schematic was far too restrictive. Some appreciative experiences involve states other than enjoyment (such as care or felt intensity), some are positively painful (such as appreciative grief or a sense of fragmentation), while still others seem to involve only a minimal level of understanding. Moreover, some appreciations require little comparative experience or cognitive mastery of an object and possess fairly permissive epistemic standards, while others seem to require exactly the opposite. Most surprising, however, was the thought that appreciating is sometimes an activity, closely related to logistical 'sizing up,'

evaluative appraisal or contemplation. I argued in chapter two that the most plausible candidate for appreciation, considered as an activity, is evaluative attention, which includes appraising and contemplative deployments. All told, I distinguished three broadly different (but related) varieties of appreciation, and tried to conceive of how all three could work together in a single dialectic, united (in some sense) by the activity of evaluative attention.[4] I concluded with the initial suggestion that such a dialectic may be a promising way to picture holistic and wholehearted moral agency.

In chapter three I turned to some discussions of appreciation in virtue ethics, and argued, in light of the cases and distinctions brought out in chapter two, that appreciation is used in either vague or overly narrow ways. This state of affairs, I argued, obscures our ability to evaluate claims about the nature of appreciation and its role in the virtuous life. With some clarifications made, I suggested that appreciation, as a veridical and engaged moment of evaluative understanding, plays a fundamental role in the expression of all the virtues. I also argued that appreciations involving critical comparative appraisal on the one hand, and those that involve (relative) noncomparative wonder, on the other, both make important contributions to our ability to live well. However, I also demonstrated how some sorts of appreciation are only distantly related to wisdom or ethical understanding, and some do not seem to express virtue at all. Toward the end of this effort to clarify and broaden 'appreciation' in the virtue ethical discussion, however, I argued that in light of the prospect of analytic fragmentation in the way we talk about appreciation in ethics, there is a need to work toward developing the dialectical appreciating I outlined in chapter two.

[4] See Figure 1, chapter two, page 62.

Talbot Brewer is the only virtue ethicist I am aware of who has begun developing a conception of appreciative agency as an unfolding activity, so chapter four was devoted to an examination of his work. In many ways, chapter three's task of clarifying and expanding the role of appreciation in virtue ethics carries over into this chapter as well (and into chapter five). For, the crux of my argument in this chapter relies on a more pluralistic and diverse understanding of appreciation than Brewer seems to give us. In chapter four I noted how Brewer advances a tradition of virtue ethical eudaimonism that emphasizes the roles of both pleasure and psychic harmony in the ethical life. Against this view, I argued that Brewer's appreciative idealization of mature moral agency threatens to induce moral blindness, is too narrow in its scope of application, is internally inconsistent, and cannot handle cases of virtuous appreciation that involve motivational conflict and emotional or other appreciative sorts of pain. However, I argued that Brewer's "running appreciation," as an engaged evaluative attention component of practical thinking, is more promising. For, it not only encompasses both positive and negative response valences, but also provides a more articulate principle of subjective unity that can figure in a dialectical, holistic, and more realistic picture of appreciative moral agency. Such a picture, I suggested, may help us to conceive of *wholehearted* moral agency as a function of concerned engagement, rather than as the sort of psychic harmony envisioned by Brewer.

Finally, after examining the nature of appreciation and its various types (chapter two), clarifying and expanding its role in virtue ethical discussions (chapter three) and moral agency (chapter four), my aim in chapter five was to reach for a constructive account of appreciative moral agency that unites the various forms I had uncovered

throughout the project. Since I argued that appreciation as an activity of evaluative attention was a key principle of unity for an overall dialectic of appreciation, I began the chapter with an investigation of Iris Murdoch's work on moral attention. Here, I engaged in additional clarifying work in order to bring out some of Murdoch's more radical insights. Included among these are the notions that evaluative attention is "the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent," that it involves a holism of personal engagement, and that it cannot be wholly constrained by quandary episodes or the deliberative context.[5] Moving beyond Murdoch, I concluded the chapter by articulating the key features of dialectical appreciating as interactive, perennially unfinished, plurally responsive, and a source of formal and personal unity. In this sense I sought to give more specificity to the dialectical appreciation that I sketched at the end of chapter two, in which evaluative attention unites together other versions of appreciation like immediate apprehensions, critical evaluative appraisals and overall appreciative understandings, within a single stretch of wholeheartedly engaged and progressively maturing moral agency.

Further Work on Appreciation

I will now suggest some new directions this initial inquiry might take, since its present form involves a great deal of ground clearing and clarification. First, as I noted in chapter two, 'appreciation' sometimes refers to different sorts of understanding, including discursive and purely cognitive understanding, evaluative understanding, and engaged evaluative understanding. In this project I stressed the importance of the last variety, in

[5] Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection" in *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1971), 34.

which one does not merely grasp factual and evaluative properties in a detached way, but in a way that vividly engages one's desires, emotions or affects. I also noted that this type of appreciation could be either appreciation as an instance of intuitive acquaintance knowledge, or a discursive-consequent appreciation. A promising line of inquiry would be to explore more deeply the particular epistemic value of discursive-consequent appreciation within contemporary epistemological discussions on understanding. Many epistemologists currently treat understanding as kind of a causal and logical connection-making ability, which includes an ability to grasp kind-relative coherence relations.[6] A promising line of inquiry might be to accept this treatment, but critique its neglect of the affective and emotional engagement so crucial to appreciation, where such an engagement amounts to a *better* kind of understanding than the mere cognitive grasp.

A second promising line of inquiry would be to spell out more fully the implications of the current project for a defensible virtue ethical eudaimonism. Since I have made appreciation so central to virtuous agency, and yet deny the necessary link between such agency and pleasure as well as robust psychic harmony, how could my view possibly support eudaimonism? After all, as Brännmark argues, pleasure appears to be a "master prudential value" that fully actualizes the value of other independent goods in our lives.[7] My response (implied by various parts of this project) seems to be that wholehearted appreciative engagement involves deeply *caring* about what really matters

[6] For example, see Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Also, see Ayca Boylu, "How Understanding Makes Knowledge Valuable." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40, no. 4 (December 2010): 591-610.

[7] Johan Brännmark, "Like the Bloom on Youths: How Pleasure Completes Our Lives," in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

in human life, even when the appreciative engagement involves motivational conflict, fragmentation, or emotional pain. The case of the judge in chapter four looks very much like this. There is, perhaps, something about the first-personal meaningfulness of such caring that may ground significant levels of personal flourishing, even in the absence of the typical link between virtuous action, pleasure, and robust psychic harmony.

To follow this thought a bit more, Christine Swanton, who rejects eudaimonism, notes that the eudaimonist needs not just a connection between virtue and 'goods' being good *for* one, but also a connection between virtue and 'bads' not really being bad *for* one or *to* one, personally.[8] Against McDowell and in line with my own treatment in chapter four, she argues that many losses resulting from virtue really do seem like personal losses to the agent herself. One of Swanton's counterexamples to eudaimonism is that of a non-religious humanitarian, who prematurely dies of a virus after her tireless life's work of aiding a jungle village.[9] Unlike religious moral saints, she does not benefit from religious joy, and her virtuous work turns out to be consummately *bad* for her personally, even though she leads a (partly) successful and admirable life.

One possible reply, in light of my project, might be that a life of meaningful suffering, in which a subjective appreciation of worth and objective worth are connected in the right way, can indeed be a flourishing life. Given the connection between certain types of appreciation and increasing understanding and wisdom, such a life may contain a progressively unfolding first-personal sense of why one's activities *matter*, as in my representation above of Charles's inner life. That is, if an agent genuinely appreciates

[8] Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 88.

[9] Ibid., 82.

(rather than merely judges) her genuinely worthwhile projects as worthwhile, then even when they involve a significant measure of sacrifice or personal pain, they could remain first-personally attractive and satisfying, all things considered.[10] It is not difficult to imagine Swanton's humanitarian flourishing in this sense. If her appreciative engagement with things that truly matter is rich enough, one can imagine her repeating the dying words of Wittgenstein, who inhabited a rather tortured existence: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life."[11] In any case, the compatibility between eudaimonia and a life marked by frequent appreciative pain, is something that needs to be further examined.

Finally, and related to the eudaimonism issue, the project needs to delve more deeply into the relationship between a notion of appreciating that allows for volitional or psychic conflict (and pain) on the one hand, and the notion of wholeheartedness on the other. Several times in the project I appeal to the notion of wholeheartedness, but do not develop it in sufficient depth. Moreover, I do not develop the potential incompatibility between psychic pain or conflict on the one hand, and wholeheartedness on the other. Harry Frankfurt, for example, thinks wholeheartedness just *is* an absence of volitional conflict, for he identifies wholeheartedness with a state of full volitional psychic

[10] Swanton raises precisely the reply to her counterexamples that I propose. However, her reply to the "meaningfulness" objection is this: "A life [that is] meaningful because one *thinks* it worthwhile need not be *attractive* to one and thereby personally satisfying" (Ibid., 85). Here, Swanton clearly imagines someone who merely *judges* (in the notional sense) that her life is worthwhile, and so need not be attracted to it. However, for all of Swanton's counterexamples, it seems implausible in the extreme to think that each person in the cases experience no engaged *appreciation* of their lives as, on the whole, worthwhile. Where there is such appreciation, one's life first-personally matters, and when it matters in this way, it carries an intrinsic appeal of being worth living in a richer-than-notional sense. An appeal to appreciation can thereby secure a reply that Swanton herself admits would be effective against her view: "If the woman of my first example found her life meaningful and *therefore* attractive, there might be a temptation to think her life happy" (Ibid., 85).

[11] Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 80-81.

unanimity between first and second order desires.[12] Moreover, there is an intrinsic link between Frankfurt's notion of volitional unanimity, and the notion of giving to one's life an overall narrative unity organized around a set of essential life-defining commitments.

Especially in light of chapter four, I clearly agree with those who criticize Frankfurt for "over-estimating the danger of internal civil war."[13] I am also sympathetic to Lippitt's critique of Frankfurtian volitional unity. He argues that it may induce moral blindness or routinize our patterns of moral imagination, while making us immune to things (such as love) that may suddenly disrupt, shatter, and so transform our incumbent volitional unanimities. In line with these thoughts, there is something in my view of appreciation that invites *improvisation*, the prospect of inexplicable appreciative gifts or unexpected discoveries. My view mirrors Martha Nussbaum's when she says "it is the job of the adult agent to approach a complex situation responsively, with keen vision and alert feelings, prepared, if need be, to alter his or her prima facie conception of the good in the light of the new experience."[14]

In light of my general resistance to Frankfurt, then, some questions remain unanswered. How are volitional conflict and appreciative responsiveness pluralism compatible with wholeheartedness? How can the two possibly go together, and what precisely do I mean when I say that wholeheartedness is a function of full appreciative

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[12] Frankfurt, Harry G. Frankfurt, "Taking Ourselves Seriously." In *Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right*, ed. Debra Satz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 15.

[13] Marya Schechtman, "Self-expression and self-control." *Ratio* 17 no. 4 (2004), 425-426.

[14] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Flawed Crystals: James's *The Golden Bowl* and Literature as Moral Philosophy," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 141.

(or concern-based) *engagement* in one's doings within the world? In my development of appreciative responsiveness pluralism, I imply that sometimes the integrated engagement of a greater number of our faculties and facts of personality amounts to such a wholehearted engagement, but this requires further analysis and defense.

A number of related issues in the dissertation also invite further inquiry. What, precisely, is the place of agential unity in the appreciative life, and how does the notion of an "unfolding narrative" function in my account? Moreover, if some kinds of appreciative agency are praiseworthy, how should we understand the place of appreciative *gifts* that happen upon us amidst the unfolding narrative? Under what conditions, specifically, *is* appreciation a "gift," and why? When one combines these questions with the need to examine the role of appreciation in the expression of individual virtues, in contrast with the role that illusory and non-wise appreciative experiences can play, the prospects of further inquiry are substantial indeed. However, I must save these issues for another day.

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