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Abstract

In my dissertation I explore the nature of virtuous motivation. The output of this exploration is a novel account of virtuous motivation which I argue is preferable to approaches currently available within contemporary virtue ethics. More specifically, I aim to account for the kinds of reasons that motivate virtuous individuals when they act virtuously, which involves identifying the explicit reasons that motivate them when they act as well as implicit or deeper motives that are likewise operative, although in a different way. Throughout my work, I argue that there is a central concept or specific kind of motivating reason that consistently motivates virtuous persons when they act virtuously. This is the motive to exhibit excellence or virtue in some way whenever they act. I also refer to this as the concept of "agential excellence." Because of this I call my view the *excellence-based view of virtuous motivation*, since the motive for excellence is both present and sufficiently motivating in every case of virtuous motivation.

Although the excellence-based view is proposed as a novel approach to the topic of virtuous motivation, it borrows its conceptual framework from Aristotle's account of virtue. However, I depart from this framework in a significant way. Aristotle thought that because eudaimonia (or a flourishing life) was our ultimate end, all of our choices and actions were ultimately for the sake of this end. For our motives, this meant that whatever choices we made and the reasons motivating our actions, these were motivated by our ultimate desire to flourish: including the motive to be virtuous. Several contemporary virtue-ethicists reflect Aristotle's belief that eudaimonia plays a necessary role in the motivational structure of virtuous persons (I refer to these as *eudaimonist accounts of virtuous motivation*). One way they argue this is through the role eudaimonia must play in our practical rationality, specifically in terms of being the ultimate terminus within our reasoning. If eudaimonia is our ultimate end, then our choices

and motivating reasons for whatever we do are *rational* insofar as they are connected to or grounded in this desire to flourish. And if our motives are to be *virtuous*, they must be rational in this sense. Ultimately, when constructing an account of virtuous motivation, the default position for contemporary virtue-ethicists that follow in Aristotle's footsteps is to claim that eudaimonia is both central to and necessary for displaying virtuous motivation.

In chapter 1, I both challenge the eudaimonist view of virtuous motivation and motivate my excellence-based view. To do this, I use an example inspired by a collection of letters written by several men and women who opposed the Nazi regime and were subsequently imprisoned and executed for their resistance. I refer to this example as the Letter-Writers case. The example is intended to demonstrate how the flourishing life may not have been possible for these individuals, who I take to be virtuous, but they were still motivated to maintain their character and act nobly, despite the horrific nature of their circumstances. I argue that it is plausible that thoughts of flourishing were not decisive in motivating the Letter-Writers to act and live in a virtuous way within this situation. In other words, they exhibited virtuous motivation without being motivated by eudaimonia. This paves the way for an excellence-based view, which places "agential excellence" rather than eudaimonia, as the central concept for understanding virtuous motivation. The concept of agential excellence is inspired by Aristotle's view of virtue, according to which virtue is understood as the excellent functioning of human beings which makes them *good* human beings. Basically, humans can display excellence through cultivating and maintaining virtuous character traits, acting virtuously in consistent way, and through living excellent or virtuous lives. With this concept in hand, I go on to argue that the motivating reasons of the Letter-Writers can more plausibly be connected to and grounded in the concept of

agential excellence, or excellence-based reasons, rather than eudaimonia and eudaimonist reasons.

Chapter 2 extends the challenge against eudaimonist virtue ethics, specifically regarding their account of virtuous motivation *towards others*. Recall that the eudaimonist claims that all moral motivation ultimately traces back to a desire to flourish, which naturally extends to our motives to respect and act on behalf of others. However, much like in chapter 1, there are cases of individuals acting virtuously towards others who are not also motivated by their pursuit of their own eudaimonia. In other words, virtuous persons can act and be motivated in a virtuous way towards others without also considering their own flourishing. In light of this, I argue that the eudaimonist cannot account for such cases, insofar as they insist on a strong link between virtuous motivation and flourishing. I propose that the excellence-based view can better handle cases of virtuous motivation towards others. In such cases, virtuous actions towards others are motivated by a deep care and concern for them, combined with a desire to express that care excellently. Where deep other-concern and a desire to express that concern in a virtuous way are present, virtuous motivation emerges.

For chapter 3, we take a bit of a detour. In chapters 1 and 2, virtuous motivation was largely influenced by the exercise of one's practical rationality. And since there is a form of practical rationality or deliberation that is characteristic of virtuous persons and since both Aristotle and several contemporary virtue-ethicists claim that eudaimonia must guide this deliberation, the argument in chapter 3 challenges this view. I do this by considering cases where virtuous persons deliberate excellently about how to act and live but do not employ a conception of a flourishing life when doing so. Perhaps such individuals deliberate in accordance with what is virtuous to do, what expresses a virtuous character, or what is consistent with a virtuous life.

These considerations led me to propose an "excellence-based view of practical wisdom", which claims that practical wisdom can always be guided by the concept of agential excellence, whether this is situated within a broader desire to flourish. And when guided by agential excellence, one can deliberate effectively to determine what's best to do for any circumstance. Thus, the excellence-based view provides a plausible alternative to eudaimonist accounts of practical wisdom. I also argue that an excellence-based view is preferable to the eudaimonist view, since agential excellence can provide consistent deliberative guidance across different lives and when agential excellence guides practically wise deliberation, this still positions us well to attain a flourishing life.

In chapter 4, I return to the main discussion of virtuous motivation and consider alternative virtue-ethical approaches to the topic. The alternatives I have mind are Stoicism (in both ancient and contemporary form), Michael Slote's care-based ethics, and Christine Swanton's target-centered virtue ethics. The goal of this chapter was to illustrate how an excellence-based view of virtuous motivation fares better than these alternative views. To do this, I examine each alternative view to show what their account of virtuous motivation would look like alongside its merits and deficiencies. The upshot of considering these alternative views is that an excellence-based view can incorporate the attractive elements of each view, it can avoid the problems of such views, and, most importantly, can capture what can be found in every instance of virtuous motivation.

Chapter 1 - An Excellence-Based View of Virtuous Motivation

Introduction

Among contemporary virtue-ethical approaches, eudaimonist virtue ethics has been the default starting point for understanding virtuous motivation. For these approaches, *eudaimonia*, or a happy and flourishing life, is central to understanding the virtues and this centrality also carries over to constructing an account of virtuous motivation. What follows is that the motivating reasons involved in virtuous motivation would be connected to and partly justified by one's motive to attain the flourishing life. And so, virtuous motivation is best explained by the central concept of eudaimonia and how all other motivating reasons trace back to it as their foundation.

However, there are specific kinds of cases that are problematic for the eudaimonist view of virtuous motivation. For example, one case that is particularly puzzling is what I'll refer to as the Letter-Writers case.[1] This historical case involved a number of young men and women who were imprisoned and then executed for their opposition to the Nazis. These individuals behaved admirably despite the fact that a happy and flourishing life, certainly any life that would reflect eudaimonia as it is typically described, was denied them. Let us say for the sake of discussion, as does not seem unreasonable, that at least some of these individuals were demonstrating their virtuous character, defying the Nazi regime fully knowing what that meant for the future course of their lives. These individuals exhibit virtuous motivation without being able to flourish. Rather than achieving a complete and fulfilled life, the Letter-Writers' lives were prematurely cut short and deprived of goods and opportunities that are essential to living well overall. The

[1] This example was first put to philosophical use in Foot (2001).

question this case raises is whether eudaimonia, or considerations of flourishing generally, is the best concept for explaining virtuous motivation.

In what follows, I argue that eudaimonia or eudaimonist reasons do not play a role in the virtuous motivation exhibited by the individuals in the Letter-Writers case. And if this is so, then we have reason to doubt that eudaimonia should be the central concept for understanding virtuous motivation, since it does not explain the virtuous person's motivating reasons in every case.[2] Moreover, the Letter-Writers case is not a fringe scenario, but is, rather, a clear example of a familiar phenomenon. I propose a plausible alternative to the eudaimonist view that I call the excellence-based view of virtuous motivation. For the sake of this chapter, I am targeting the Aristotelian camp of virtue-ethical approaches and am merely suggesting that the role eudaimonia has played in such views be replaced with a different part of Aristotle's system. This alternative view places "agential excellence" as the central concept for understanding virtuous motivation. By agential excellence, I have in mind Aristotle's view of virtue, according to which virtue is understood as the excellent functioning of human beings which makes them *good* human beings. Agential excellence can be displayed in one's actions, character, and in how they live their life as a whole. In all cases of virtuous motivation, one's motivating reasons can be traced to the concept of agential excellence. And if this is true, then agential excellence is a better central concept for understanding virtuous motivation.

As a reminder, for the purpose of this chapter I limit the scope of the discussion to virtue-ethical approaches that fall within the Aristotelian tradition, but a similar argument could be given within other virtue traditions. Since this discussion focuses on the kinds of reasons, or

[2] Motivating reasons are of particular interest in the subsequent discussion. For similar discussions involving motivating reasons, see also: Audi (1995); Williams (1995); Hursthouse (1995; 1999, Ch. 6); Korsgaard (2008); Markovitz (2010); Miller (2008, 2020); Fearnley (2022).

motivating reasons, that constitute virtuous motivation, any virtue-ethical approach that would similarly construct an account of virtuous motivation could draw insight from this discussion. In chapter 4, I engage with other virtue-ethical approaches outside the Aristotelian tradition and demonstrate how discussing virtuous motivation in terms of motivating reasons enables different virtue traditions to engage in fruitful dialogue on this topic.[3] Thus, the present discussion is also relevant to virtue-ethical approaches outside the Aristotelian tradition that seek to give an account of what virtuous motivation looks like.

In section 1, I begin by discussing the Letter-Writers case and its implications for understanding virtuous motivation. In section 2, I develop two views for understanding virtuous motivation, the eudaimonist view and the excellence-based view, both of which fall within the Aristotelian tradition. The first part of section 3 will examine problems for the eudaimonist view in its attempt to explain virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case. Section 3 will conclude with a look at how the excellence-based view provides a more plausible understanding of virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case and how it can generalize to all cases of virtuous motivation.

1. The Letter-Writers Case

To get a clearer picture of what virtuous motivation involves, it will be useful to examine it through a specific kind of situation. Cases of tragic circumstances prove to be particularly illuminating for understanding virtuous motives. This is because such circumstances can be detrimental to a flourishing life, and so, they are apt for investigating the question of whether flourishing necessarily motivates virtuous persons in such circumstances. Examining such cases,

[3] See also footnote 2 on the use of 'motivating reasons.'

especially real-life ones, side-by-side with our moral theories better equips the latter to guide our moral lives and avoid theoretical pitfalls. In framing the present discussion around a probative case of this sort, we thereby prioritize this direct communication between accounts of virtuous motivation and those cases they ought to assimilate and be able to explain.

A particularly vivid example of the kind of case I have in mind is based on a collection of letters written by men and women who were imprisoned and executed for their resistance to the Nazi regime.[4] We may refer to this as the Letter-Writers case. With regards to this case, Philippa Foot (2001) provides insightful remarks, especially in terms of what was at stake for these individuals.[5] She writes:

> At the time when the letters were written, the die was already cast: probably no one of them could have escaped death whatever he might have said or done…The letters give the impression that those who wrote them were especially well fitted for the enjoyment of the best things in life: for great happiness. So one may very naturally think that they knowingly sacrificed their happiness in making their choice. And yet this does not seem to be the only thing we could say. One may think that there was a sense in which the Letter-Writers did, *but also a sense in which they did not*, sacrifice their happiness in refusing to go along with the Nazis. In the abstract what they so longed for—to get back to their families—was of course wholly good. But as they were placed it was impossible to pursue this end by just and honourable means. And this, I suggest, explains the sense in which they did not see as their happiness what they have got by giving in. Happiness in life, they might have said, was not something possible for them (2001, 95).

[4] The letters I am referring to are collected in Gollwitzer, Kuhn, and Schneider's *Dying We Live: The Final Messages and Records of Some Germans who Defied Hitler* (2009).
[5] Foot is also drawing on the same work by Gollwitzer, Kuhn, and Schneider (2009). LeBar also refers to this case; see LeBar (2013, 29, 106-107).

Though I will focus on this case, there are many others that could have served in its place. Situations like that of the Letter-Writers are not rare in the human experience.[6] Less drastic cases that nonetheless involve choosing to act morally and well despite certain costs to one's flourishing are also rather common.

A question that arises from the Letter-Writers case is whether such individuals were, in fact, virtuous. I take it that at least some of them were virtuous, given that they remained firm in their opposition, despite the threat of imprisonment and death, to an unjust and oppressive Nazi regime. If this is the case, then we have reason to believe that their motives, likewise, were virtuous.

Another issue Foot directs our attention to is that "Happiness in life…was not something possible for them" (2001, 95). Happiness in the sense of eudaimonia was no longer available for them. In the case, it was the circumstances, and not those individuals' choices, which prohibited the attainment of a happy life. In this and other cases like it, tragic or difficult circumstances are clearly detrimental to attaining happiness for the virtuous and non-virtuous alike. Despite being virtuous, the lives of the Letter Writers included the loss of things or opportunities that would have made their life a happy one. Nevertheless, what stands out is that these individuals did not fail in character. They remained virtuous even though happiness was no longer 'on the table.'

Some clarification, however, is needed regarding the relationship between a virtuous life and the eudaemon life. For Aristotle and some contemporary eudaimonists, a eudaemon life consists of virtuous activity as its central and dominant good but also includes other external

[6] Aristotle uses Priam as an example of a good man coming to a tragic end as a case that prohibits any rational observer from calling his life a happy one (*NE* 1100a6-9). Bloomfield proposes a similar thought-experiment: "Imagine a war in which all humans on the planet were killed except one, who happened to be perfectly virtuous. Are we really to imagine this person going on to happily live the Good Life?" (2014, 203).

goods (see *NE* 1100a4-5, 1101a14-22).[7] However, virtuous activity or living a virtuous life, although necessary and the most important of goods, is not sufficient for the life of eudaimonia.[8] This is because living one's life virtuously does not guarantee the best kind of life we can live all things considered. Rather, the best kind of life, or the eudaemon life, is a virtuous life within favorable external circumstances. And so, the main difference in whether one lives a virtuous life or a eudaemon life comes down to whether external goods and circumstances proved favorable for them. But if one lives a virtuous life and does not flourish, it is likely that external circumstances were not favorable. Simply put, a virtuous life and eudaemon life can come apart and are not identical. [9] This is what we see in the Letter-Writers case, since their virtuous lives were cut off from several things that were needed for them to attain eudaimonia.

So, there are two obvious takeaways from the Letter-Writers case. One is that the Letter-Writers displayed virtuous motivation in their circumstances. And the second is that if happiness played a role among their motivating reasons, it is unclear how it did so. At minimum, the Letter-Writers case forces us to pose the question of what all went into the reasons that motivated these individuals to be and act as they did, given that they appear to exhibit virtuous motivation without reasonable hope of eudaimonia.

Since I will proceed under the assumption that they were virtuously motivated, my focus will be on the other issue: what was it that motivated these individuals, in terms of motivating

[7] There is a major debate that looms in the background regarding what eudaimonia specifically consists of. For instance, some argue that eudaimonia in its fullest specification is a life characterized by philosophical contemplation (see for example Kraut 1988). Others, in response, have taken a more inclusive view of eudaimonia (see for example Irwin 1991, Charles and Scott 1999, Reeve 2014). This is an important and related debate but takes us far beyond what is necessary for the present discussion. What is important is that amidst disagreement regarding the correct specification of eudaimonia, there is general agreement that it at least involves virtuous activity throughout one's life and external goods or favorable circumstances.

[8] The view that the virtuous life *is* sufficient for a flourishing life, or that these lives are identical, is a defining characteristic of Stoic, rather than Aristotelian, eudaimonism.

[9] See also Baril (2014, 19); Bloomfield (2012, 283); Herdt (2019, 73, 90); Tessman (2005, Ch. 2).

reasons, such that they displayed virtuous motivation? This question puts us in a dilemma. If the Letter-Writers' virtuous motives are best characterized by a motive to flourish, then we need a plausible explanation of how it was operative as a motivating reason. But if happiness was not a motivating reason for the Letter-Writers, then this raises further questions about how eudaimonia could be necessary for virtuous motivation and, if not necessary, whether it could play a central role despite being dispensable in certain cases.

2. Aristotelian-Inspired Views of Virtuous Motivation

It is a reasonable expectation that any proposed account of virtuous motivation should be able to explain cases like that of the Letter-Writers. I will examine how views within the Aristotelian tradition could address the case. The first is a eudaimonist view, which places eudaimonia at the center of its virtue theory and, therefore, its account of virtuous motivation. The second view is an alternative I propose which places the concept of excellence at the center of virtuous motivation. This latter view I'll refer to as the *excellence-based* view.

Eudaimonist accounts, especially those which follow in Aristotle's footsteps, prioritize *eudaimonia*, happiness, or human flourishing as the central or primary concept in understanding virtue.[10] These accounts prioritize the concept of eudaimonia in determining what a good life looks like and how we are to attain this life, while also maintaining that eudaimonia is the ultimate aim of the moral life. Eudaimonist accounts also define the virtues mainly in terms of their relationship to eudaimonia. This goes so far as to qualify specific character traits as virtues

[10] See also Hursthouse (1999, 2022); Baril (2013, 2014); Annas (2011); LeBar and Goldberg (2012); LeBar (2013, 2018); Badwhar (2014); Russell (2012); van Zyl (2015). Other compatible terms for *eudaimonia* come in the form of "a good life", "the good of a human", the "human good", "goodness in the living of a human life", "a good, flourishing life", or "the overall goal of life" (Baril 2014, 20).

if they enable the virtuous agent to flourish.[11] Virtues must be good for their possessor or significantly contribute to the attainment of a flourishing life. Closely related to this, the eudaemon life is mainly a virtuous life, or a life characterized by virtuous activity. And so, a virtue is typically described as a trait that an individual needs to flourish and its exercise is central to the eudaemon life. Furthermore, eudaimonia is the ultimate end or goal employed in the virtuous person's practical reasoning. In one respect, practical reasoning about life as a whole is done in reference to eudaimonia, in that someone arranges their life in order to live well or flourish. But also, in everyday practical reasoning eudaimonia may still operate as a normative concept, even if it is not employed explicitly as a reason for this or that action. The eudaimonist position could be summarized as being committed to eudaimonism's central recommendation (ECR): "A human being ought to organize his or her life so that it realizes eudaimonia" (Baril 2014, 23). Any further recommendation or prescription within a eudaimonist theory would be qualified by ECR.

It is important to note that there are varieties of eudaimonist accounts.[12] But among them, those which follow in the Aristotelian tradition have received renewed attention. Among the contemporary forms of Aristotelian eudaimonism, Daniel Russell (2012) and Mark LeBar's (2009, 2013) work are particularly helpful for constructing an account of virtuous motivation.[13] On both their accounts, eudaimonia and practical rationality, when coupled, provide the best starting point for explaining virtuous motivation. Russell claims that eudaimonism can be viewed "as a theory of practical reasoning [which] focuses on the role of ends or goals in deliberation"

[11] See LeBar (2018, 474).
[12] See Baril (2013) and Annas (1993). For instance, there are Stoic versions of eudaimonism that differ from Aristotelian versions (see also chapter 4, section 1), specifically on the role of virtue and other goods within the flourishing life.
[13] See also LeBar and Goldberg (2012).

(2012, 15). Likewise, LeBar claims that his virtue eudaimonism is a "view of practical rationality" which "involves as central components both an account of what it is for a life to go well and what it is to act on reasons (or to exercise practical rationality or agency)" (2013, 14, 17). We may refer to this as the PR view (where PR stands for 'practical rationality'), since it is a eudaimonist view where practical rationality plays a key role. There are two main pillars for the PR view.[14] First, our ultimate goal or final end is happiness, or eudaimonia. Second, rationality requires some ultimate goal or final end that is the terminus of our reasoning.

According to the first pillar, there is one ultimate end or goal for our lives according to which we should organize our lives, and this end is eudaimonia. The reasoning for this comes from the fact that we have many goals or ends we desire and pursue, but among which there is one that is ultimate or final, thus creating a hierarchy of ends. [15] Not only do we desire subsidiary ends 'for the sake of' this ultimate end, but it also influences how we go about pursuing those other ends. In this way, our ultimate end generates norms and constraints for lower ends (LeBar 2013, 12). Aiming towards our ultimate end, which is eudaimonia, means that we *ought* to do such-and-such and pursue such-and-such to reach or fulfill it. Because eudaimonia is partly realized through our efforts and other goods, these are necessary and justified, in part, because of their contribution to our ultimate end of living well.[16] Such normativity is also reflected in our reasons for cultivating and exercising virtue. Because eudaimonists characterize eudaimonia as primarily constituted by virtuous activity, this generates normative reasons for pursuing a virtuous life. In

[14] These are found in both Russell (2012, 15) and LeBar (2013, 24, 26).
[15] See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chapter 1. See also Russell (2012, 14-15) and LeBar (2013, 16-17).
[16] Russell refers to these as maieutic ends which "we seek only by coming to have other ends we seek for their own sake" (2012, 19). See also LeBar (2013, 84) and Schmidtz (1995).

short, we ought to pursue sub-goals, of which virtue is most prominent, because our ultimate end is eudaimonia.[17]

The second pillar claims that practical rationality requires all our reasons for choice and action to be ultimately connected to or grounded in our final end. A key staple of the PR view is that "a central and organizing part of our lives is our exercise of rationality" (LeBar 2013, 9).[18] Because our rationality entails that we have reasons for acting, then in any instance of choice or action there exist reasons that explain and justify these. Our reasons, according to the PR view, should reflect the hierarchy of ends already discussed (Russell 2012, 15, 18). For example, a student may want to get into a good university so that they can get a good job. But both reasons are qualified as rational through their connection to an ultimate reason, or goal, such as wanting to live a good life (LeBar 2013, 14-15). The requirements of rationality, therefore, demand that we not only have reasons for what we do, but that these reasons connect to an ultimate reason that serves as the ground and justification for them. When coupled with the claim that eudaimonia provides the ultimate reason for choice and action, it follows that "All reasons we have…are grounded in some fashion in our interest in living well" (LeBar 2013, 25).[19]

Alongside these two pillars of the PR view, there are two further points worth noting, mostly for the sake of avoiding unwarranted objections to the view. First, the PR view makes no claim to the effect that the virtuous agent's motivation necessarily includes the explicit concept of eudaimonia, especially as it is understood in eudaimonist virtue-ethical theories. Since the concept of eudaimonia that is typically employed in the kind of ethical theorizing philosophers engage in, to demand that this should be involved in the motivating reasons of virtuous agents,

[17] See also Russell (2012, 19-20) and LeBar (2013, 24).
[18] See also LeBar and Goldberg (2012, 301).
[19] See also Russell (2012, 35) and LeBar and Goldberg (2012, 293).

who may and in most cases are not philosophers (let alone *moral* philosophers), is too demanding and unnecessary. And so, both Russell and LeBar, to their credit, avoid mention of such a demand. Another point, mentioned by LeBar, is that the "particular end of living well—need not function explicitly in an episode of deliberation for each choice or decision" (2013, p. 86). What this amounts to is that whenever a virtuous agent acts neither their deliberation nor their motives when performing an act require conscious consideration of their own flourishing. In other words, when looking at the reasons that motivate the virtuous person to act in a specific situation, we are unlikely to find, nor should we expect, among them reasons that are eudaimonia-related. And so, the PR view makes no requirement on virtuous motivation to that effect. Nevertheless, this does not exclude eudaimonia from playing any motivating role for the virtuous person. [20] For example, in moments when they are reflecting on life, the virtuous person will likely think about happiness or flourishing and how their life is progressing in that direction. The PR view merely stipulates that living well need not be an explicitly occurring reason that motivates the virtuous person when performing virtuous actions.[21] This remark, like the previous one, avoids the unwarranted objection that the PR view is proposing an account of virtuous motivation that is overly demanding or intellectualist.

Based on the PR view, when considering the virtuous person's motivating reasons underlying any specific choice or action, those reasons can be traced to the motive of wanting a flourishing life. For instance, consider the following reasons related to the performance of virtuous actions:

[20]More on this point relates to the two-level model of deliberation employed by Irwin (2007, 620n) and Annas (2011, 62). On that model, practical deliberation can be applied to what is appropriate to do in the situation at hand and, at another level, to what an agent should choose and pursue when considering their life as a whole. So when it comes time to deliberate about what to do in a situation, one need not include eudaimonist considerations that are present at a different level of deliberation.

[21] Annas (2013, 162) remarks that the *mature* virtuous person is unlikely to have explicit thoughts of their own happiness when they act because they have a habituated capacity that enables their explicit thoughts in a situation to reflect the relevant aims and values therein. Explicit thoughts about happiness, and even virtue, play less of an explicit role in the thoughts, deliberations, and motives of the virtuous person in moments of action.

"I could probably save him if I climbed up there", "You need it more than I do", "He needed help", "I can't let him down", "It was the truth", or "I owe it to her" (Hursthouse 1999, 128). For any of these, the PR view can claim that virtuous persons find them motivating both in their own right and because they are appropriate ways of responding to their situation. But, when considered in a 'big picture' way, they also link up to motivating reasons that are eudaimonist. That is, the virtuous person is also motivated by reasons to do such actions and be the kind of person who reliably acts that way because of their contribution to a flourishing life. Because virtuous motivation is constituted by motivating reasons, whatever they are, and since all our motivating reasons can be traced to flourishing in some way, then it follows that virtuous motives, and any reasons constitutive of it, are connected to and justified by eudaimonist reasons.

An alternative to the PR view is the excellence-based (EB) view. On the EB view, virtuous motivation gives priority and centrality to agential excellence. By agential excellence, I have in mind Aristotle's view of virtue, according to which virtue is understood as the excellent functioning of human beings which makes them *good* human beings.[22] For Aristotle, our natural function is to act rationally and guide our actions and emotions in accordance with our rationality, and to do this well from an acquired disposition is what counts as virtue or excellence.[23] And to function well we need both the virtues of intellect (e.g., practical wisdom, comprehension, understanding, etc.) and virtues of character (e.g., bravery, temperance, justice, etc.). Simply put, to function well as the kind of creatures we are requires becoming virtuous

[22] In a basic sense, the Greek word *aretê* means 'excellence,' even though it is typically translated as 'virtue.' In what follows I'll use the term *excellence* instead of *aretê,* and occasionally employ 'virtue.' See also Broadie's discussion of 'excellence' in Aristotle's ethics (1991, 38-41).
[23] The 'function' and 'virtue' distinction here can be found in both Plato's and Aristotle's work; for the former see *Rep*. 352d-353e and for the latter see *NE* 1097b30-1098a20.

overall. It is important to distinguish excellence, or virtue, from excellence in natural capacities or skills. Excellent eyesight is a good thing to have but it does not make someone a *good* human being. Also, there are many cases where human beings act and make things excellently but this has no bearing on whether they are good persons, such as the case with skills. LeBron James, for example, displays excellence in playing basketball and so is an excellent basketball player. However, being an excellent basketball player does not automatically make one an excellent or good person, in terms of being virtuous. We could say, then, that being good at something does not necessarily make one a good person.[24] Instead, excellence, as I'll use the term, refers specifically to a distinctive capacity human beings can acquire which makes them *good* human beings. As Gary Watson remarks, "a characteristically human life (functioning well as a human being) requires possessing and exemplifying certain traits", and these traits are "human excellences and render their possessors to that extent good human beings" (1997, 459). This serves as the conceptual basis for an excellence-based view of virtuous motivation.[25] So, in what follows, what I mean by agential excellence is roughly the same as what Aristotle describes as human virtue, or excellent human functioning which qualifies someone as a good and admirable person.[26]

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[24] Although Aristotle does not employ a distinct category of 'morality' or the term 'moral' as is usually done in contemporary philosophical discourse, we could interpret the terms 'virtue' and 'excellence' to have moral connotations, such that the virtuous or excellent person is good in a distinctly moral sense.

[25] One could argue that *kalon* (translated as 'fine,' 'admirable,' or 'noble') is a better alternative concept for understanding virtuous motivation that can be derived from Aristotle's framework. For example, Suavé Meyer describes such as "a characterization common to all virtuous actions that does figure in the virtuous person's motivation" (2016, 50; similar remarks to this effect are found in McDowell 1996). Though this is true, *kalon* has a much wider application than the domain of virtuous activity (see for example Lear 2006 and Irwin 2011). For instance, Aristotle uses *kalon* to describe well-ordered biological organisms or works of art. If anything, agential excellence reflects what is *kalon* and demarcates one's reasons as being good and virtuous.

[26] As I use the two concepts, 'virtue' and 'excellence' do not come apart; they are conceptually equivalent. In other words, I do not refer to a 'virtuous person,' 'virtuous action,' or 'virtuous motive' and an 'excellent person,' 'excellent action,' or 'excellent motive' as being conceptually different. Part of this stems from the fact that to be virtuous *just is* to be a good human being, capable of performing morally excellent actions from a morally excellent character. And the other part stems from the recognition that it would lead to unnecessary confusion if we did try to separate them, at least as I intend to use them. For instance, what if an apparent virtuous action failed to achieve its

According to the excellence-based view, human beings can demonstrate agential excellence in *what they do*, in the *way they are*, and in how they *live their life*. In other words, acting virtuously, having a virtuous character, and living a virtuous life, all exhibit human excellence in different but complimentary ways. Virtuous actions are in many cases excellent ways of responding to a present situation. For example, a generous action is one which respects the recipient, supplies their need, gives the appropriate kind of gift (e.g. a monetary gift or an employment opportunity), and is consistent with the agent having internal states reflecting a generous attitude or motive (such that their *aim* is to help the recipient and that they are willing and not pained by the opportunity to act generously). This requires that one is excellent in their practical reasoning, or that they possess and exercise practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), which enables an individual to correctly perceive morally relevant features of circumstances and to deliberate towards the best course of action.[27]

Excellence can also be a matter of the *way we are*, where excellence goes 'all the way down' to a person's underlying psychological structure. This involves being virtuous in an overall way,

target or produce a necessary outcome (such as when a generous action fails to actually help the recipient). If we compare this seemingly virtuous but unsuccessful action with the same action which *is* successful in its outcome, then the latter seems to be excellent in a way the former is not. However, the issue could be cleared up in the following way. First, if the agent could have been aware but failed to be aware of the possible failure of her action then the action would fail to be virtuous, since it appears that her action resulted from a failure in her practical wisdom (upon which all virtuous actions *qua virtuous actions* depend). If the action is, therefore, not virtuous then it cannot be excellent. But if the agent could not have been aware of the outcome, through no fault of her own but because the fact was inaccessible or unknowable, then her action did not result from a failure in practical wisdom (see also Stohr 2018, 462). And, if the agent recognizes, in future instances, the possibility of failing in this same kind of generous behavior, then we could assume that had she known this in the prior instance she would have modified her generous action. So, from this perspective, there was nothing which the agent could know, deliberate about, or act upon such that her action would be a successful in its outcome. When we compare this virtuous action with the same virtuous *but successful* action, the only difference is that the latter action happened to be successful. But the success of the latter action is in no way part of what the agent could have known or deliberated about in leading up to her action. If anything, the virtuous but successful action appears to be more excellent simply because of luck and nothing the agent is responsible for. Therefore, there is nothing about the latter that would make it more excellent than the first. And so, the agent's generous but unsuccessful action could still qualify as both virtuous and excellent so long as the outcome of her action was cognitively unavailable for her to identify and employ in her exercise of practical wisdom.

[27] See also McDowell (1979, 1996); Hurshouse (2006); Russell (2009, 2014).

maintaining the virtuous state of one's character over time, and where such reliably produces virtuous behavior in virtue-relevant circumstances. Lastly, excellence can be a description of how one has lived their life *as a whole*, insofar as they lived a virtuous life. On this point, the excellent life *just is* the virtuous life. The necessary outcome of the virtuous person's life, where they maintain their character and consistently act virtuously, is that of having lived an excellent life.

Earlier, we mentioned that the Letter-Writers case is an instance where the excellent life and the flourishing life come apart. And the main difference between the excellent and flourishing life depends on whether excellence is complimented by favorable external circumstances. The excellence-based view can agree with both Aristotle and the PR view that the flourishing life is our ultimate end or best life all things considered, that its central and dominant good is virtuous activity, and when external circumstances are unfavorable this may harm one's chances of flourishing. However, according to the EB view, being motivated to live an excellent life in any circumstance is central to being virtuously motivated.[28] This is because we can explain the virtuous person as always being motivated to live virtuously, maintain and express a virtuous character, and act virtuously *no matter the circumstances*. In a case like the Letter-Writers, a virtuous person may no longer be motivated to attain the flourishing life but will still be motivated to live excellently. For these reasons, the difference between the two lives is important

[28] With this remark, one might begin to question whether the excellence-based view is more akin to Stoicism than Aristotelianism. This is an important question that I address at length in chapter 4, but some remarks can be made here. One notable difference between the EB view and Stoicism is that the latter is eudaimonist in structure (much like Aristotelian eudaimonism and the PR view) and the former is not. A Stoic view of virtuous motivation claims that the virtuous person's motives underlying every choice and action entail a necessary connection to their desire for a flourishing life. The EB view does not share this claim, as is argued in the present chapter. Another notable difference is that the Stoics claim that one's motivating reasons must be grounded in distinct Stoic commitments; for example, that virtue is the only good and sole constituent of the flourishing life, and that external goods may be desirable and rational to pursue but do not enable one to flourish. On a Stoic view, to be virtuously motivated requires that one's motivating reasons are grounded in and connected to these unique Stoic commitments. However, an EB view takes this to be too demanding and not necessary for being virtuously motivated.

when considering the emphasis an excellence-based view places on the excellent life, and what it involves, within virtuous motivation.

Another aspect that is essential to understanding agential excellence pertains to how it is valued and how this value generates motivating reasons. Virtue is typically viewed as being valuable both for the sake of *eudaimonia* and for its own sake.[29] According to the former, virtue is valued because it is instrumental to or a constitutive part of the flourishing life. And according to the latter, virtue is intrinsically valuable. Two points are worth noting in how the value of virtue relates to motivating reasons. One is that our motivating reasons reflect how we value things. For instance, we have reasons to be virtuous because of itself and because it enables us to flourish. We also have reason to be virtuous because doing so can secure other goods (e.g., relationships, health, financial stability, etc.) that are part of a flourishing life. But one thing that stands out about the intrinsic value of virtue, is that the motivating reasons it generates are not necessarily connected to or derivative from other ways of valuing virtue and the kinds of reasons that value generates. This is to say that one reason we have to be motivated by virtue is simply because of what it is and how it is valuable in its own right, irrespective of how it relates to or contributes to something else of value. And so, the intrinsic value of virtue, or excellence, can motivate on its own.

A second point worth noting is that the intrinsic value of virtue is relevant to every moral situation. The reason for this comes from recognizing that some situations or broader set of circumstances may prohibit the exercise of virtue from *actually* contributing to a flourishing life. Here I am thinking of tragic circumstances where flourishing becomes impossible, such as in the Letter-Writers case. In those circumstances, some external goods or circumstances were no

[29] This view of the value of virtue is found in both Aristotle (see *EN* 1097b2-5 and II.4) and Plato (see *Republic* 358a).

longer possible to attain and enjoy, and, therefore, flourishing was no longer possible. The nature of such circumstances precludes virtue from being instrumentally or constitutively valuable for that individual, and it would seem that their motivating reasons would reflect this fact. Nevertheless, if virtue is valuable for its own sake and if this fact is unaffected by the nature of one's circumstances, then the intrinsic value of virtue can generate motivating reasons for every moral situation no matter how tragic it turns out to be. So, it is not the case that for every virtue-relevant situation the virtuous person will be motivated to be virtuous for reasons related to the flourishing life. But, the virtuous person can always be motivated by virtue for its own sake. In light of this, the excellence-based view takes the intrinsic value of excellence to be capable of generating motivating reasons on its own and can do so for every moral situation.[30]

Much more can be said about what agential excellence entails, and, additionally, there can be substantive disagreement over what it means to exhibit agential excellence. The same can be said for a conception of eudaimonia or a flourishing life. I will elaborate more on the concept of agential excellence in chapter 3 (see section 2). But for the present discussion, my focus is on the functional role that agential excellence can and should play in moral motivation and in comparing that role to the one that eudaimonia plays in eudaimonist accounts. The specific

[30] It is difficult to pinpoint how the PR view understands the value of virtue and how it relates to generating motivating reasons. One on hand, I take it that Russell and LeBar's views recognize that virtue is valuable both (a) for the sake of *eudaimonia* and (b) for its own sake. However, on their view, all our reasons for choice and action ultimately connect to eudaimonia (LeBar 2013, p. 25; Russell 2012, p. 35), leaving it unclear whether the intrinsic value of virtue can generate motivating reasons on its own. LeBar's view makes claims to the effect that all things we value are necessarily understood as also being valued for the sake of eudaimonia (2013, p. 17 and 26). However, this is not to claim that nothing is intrinsically valuable or that such value is ultimately reducible to or derivative from the value we place on eudaimonia. The claim seems to be, rather, that all things we value necessarily possess the (a) type value, even those things we typically think of as being valuable for the (b) type value. On this point, LeBar denies that "there is value in anything except that we can recognize it as within the ambit of the possibility of contributing to the good lives of individual human beings" and remarks that "the reason-providing nature of these things of value itself must be explained by its contributions to good human lives" (2013, p. 26). Russell, on the other hand, doesn't seem to make explicit claims like these. If this is the case, then at least LeBar's view could be seen as denying the intrinsic value of virtue being capable of generating motivating reasons on its own independent of its value for the eudaemon life.

details regarding agential excellence and what it looks like are, or course, relevant to how an excellence-based view will be implemented. However, in the present context, it should suffice to note that anyone sympathetic to Aristotelianism will demand further explanation of what counts as agential excellence, and any plausible explanation should be able to play the functional role in an Aristotelian-inspired view of virtuous motivation that I am claiming agential excellence can and should play.

In contrast to the PR view, we can construct an account of motivating reasons where agential excellence is central to understanding virtuous motivation. This begins with the recognition that the virtuous person is characteristically motivated to perform virtuous actions, cultivate and maintain a virtuous character, and to live a virtuous life. For instance, having virtuous motives necessarily involves being motivated to act generously, have a generous character, or live a life of generosity. The reasons which motivate the virtuous person to perform virtuous actions can always be related to agential excellence. Recall the sample of reasons virtuous agents act for mentioned earlier (e.g., "I could probably save him if I climbed up there", "You need it more than I do", "He needed help", "I can't let him down", "It was the truth", or "I owe it to her"). Any of these reasons can be traced to reasons for performing actions, having a character, or living a life that are honest, brave, generous, just, or trustworthy; all of which are virtue or excellence-based concepts. Virtuous motives, therefore, are always tied to these in some way. In the Letter-Writers' case, although it is not plausible that they thought their actions were best explained by whether such would lead to eudaimonia, it is plausible that they considered such actions as virtuous or as reflecting habits of thought and action that expressed the virtues. In short, if the virtuous person's motivating reasons can always be traced to agential excellence,

then this concept appears to be more central to understanding virtuous motivation. In this way, virtuous motivation is better understood as excellence-based.

Before moving further, we should recognize two potentially misleading assumptions about the excellence-based view. First, virtuous motivation, like moral motivation generally, can be seen as an *all-things-considered* judgment or form of reasons-responsiveness.[31] In claiming agential excellence is central to virtuous motivation or that the virtuous person's reasons can be traced to this concept, the EB view does not take this alone to suffice as all-things-considered responsiveness. Rather, this view claims that an all-things-considered responsiveness in the virtuous person's motives will always include reasons related to excellence. Second, in the same spirit of virtuous motivation being an all-things-considered responsiveness, the EB view is not making the claim that motives expressing a single virtue suffice for being virtuously motivated. In many cases, the virtuous thing to do involves balancing and integrating multiple virtues in how one responds. And though in some cases a single virtue may be relevant to responding appropriately, this mode of response is not isolated from the other virtues that constitute their character as a whole. To the contrary, when acting virtuously, the virtuous person's motives express *who they are* in the fullest sense or the totality of their virtuous character.[32]

Still, proponents of the PR view could object that the EB view does not fully demonstrate how agential excellence is sufficiently motivating if it is not bound up with flourishing. This objection arises from the eudaimonist view of practical rationality, according to which our motivating reasons to pursue excellence are connected to or grounded in our final end of eudaimonia. This is a reasonable concern to raise but takes us beyond the scope of the present work. In future development of the excellence-based view, I will give a fuller account of virtuous

[31] See also Russell (2009, 87-89); Bloomfield (2014, 174); Stohr (2018, 463); Curren and Ryan (2020, 299).
[32] See also Hursthouse (1999, Ch. 7).

motivation that resolves this concern. For present purposes, it should suffice to note two things. First, virtuous persons are in fact motivated by excellence even when they do not see it as part of a fully flourishing life. In other words, excellence can be motivating as an end in itself, as was mentioned earlier. This is demonstrated by the kinds of cases that have figured prominently in this chapter (e.g., the Letter-Writers case). However, this does not qualify as providing a fuller account of *why* they are motivated as such, but again, providing such lies beyond the present scope of this paper. Second, it should be recognized that specifically moral or virtuous motivation wherein excellence is central does not imply that flourishing cannot, or even should not, motivate us at all nor that such a motive is morally wrong. We can grant that a flourishing life motivates us as our ultimate end without also insisting that virtuous motivation be grounded in it. Nevertheless, the claim presently at issue is that virtuous motivation should be seen as grounded elsewhere, namely in the desire to be excellent, virtuous, admirable, or the like.

With both the PR view and the EB view in hand, we could consider the possibility of a third view that blends elements of the others in its account of virtuous motivation. Up to this point, we've remarked several times how eudaimonia is a matter of living virtuously in favorable circumstances. Or, to use Julia Annas' helpful distinction, eudaimonia is both a matter of "*the circumstances of a life*" and the "*the living of a life*" (2011, 92). The former of these, however, is in many ways outside of our control. We cannot ultimately determine through our own agency whether we live a long life, remain healthy, or avoid different kinds of tragedy. Because of this, whether we attain a flourishing life is not something ultimately within our power. What we can control, however, is the way we live our lives, insofar as we have control over "the way you deal with the circumstances of your life" (Annas 2011, 93). And it is this dimension of a flourishing life that the virtues exhibit considerable control over: "living virtuously and living happily are

ways of living my life, dealing with the material I have to hand, making the best of the life I have led up to now" (Annas 2011, 150). But however much living virtuously affects whether we flourish, it does not guarantee it for us. The virtuous person is most likely aware of the fact that eudaimonia in the fullest sense is not something anyone, including themselves, can bring about on their own. And when coupled with the awareness that they can control living their life in a virtuous and excellent way, they might, as a result, come to a different view of what their ultimate end in life is.

Since human beings can control whether they live excellently, the virtuous person might take this to be their ultimate end instead of eudaimonia. Simply put, the virtuous person may come to view their ultimate end as living excellently *no matter the circumstances*. The reasoning for this could be based on two things. First, as has been mentioned, living excellently is something virtuous persons can control, and so, it is rational to maintain this as one's end in life whatever else may come about. And the second is that living excellently enables them to flourish when circumstances are favorable, since, as has also been mentioned, a flourishing life is determined more by how we live rather than the circumstances we live in. Practically speaking, then, living excellently could be their ultimate end whether circumstances are favorable or not.

Nonetheless, there may be cases in which being motivated by eudaimonia *is* rational. The circumstances of our lives sometimes can and do change, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse; the latter of which is evident in the Letter-Writers case. In some cases, it is rational to set aside the hope of eudaimonia for one's life. But in others, it is rational to maintain that hope for one's life. [33] Put differently, it would seem irrational of the virtuous person to give up hope or

[33] This is somewhat influenced by Aristotle's conception of wish or rational desire (*boulēsis*). *Boulēsis* is a basic yet unreasoned desire for the human good that we naturally possess (see Gronroos 2015). However, *boulēsis* for the virtuous person entails a *correct* conception of the desired good (for instance, that eudaimonia is a life of activity

be totally indifferent towards eudaimonia when it is still a possibility for them. The circumstances of their life may prove favorable, and they may live a eudaemon life after all. In light of this, the virtuous person may still view the eudaemon life as something rational to be motivated by so long as it remains 'on the table,' even though they see the excellent life as their ultimate practical end.

From these considerations, we can explain virtuous motivation being directed towards two ends, in two ways, but with some overlap between them. In one way, the virtuous person is ultimately motivated to live virtuously and excellently no matter the circumstances, since this is the only thing relative to eudaimonia that they can bring about through their agency. And in another way, the virtuous person may see eudaimonia as something they are rationally required to be motivated by when circumstances permit. Taken together, virtuous motivation could be conceived as being practically directed towards living excellently regardless of one's circumstances and accompanied by the motive to flourish when such is rational given their circumstances. Moreover, the virtuous person's motivating reasons can always be tied to the desire to live excellently but may also be tied to their desire to flourish, so long as it remains a possibility for their life.

According to this third view, virtuous motivation is a blend of elements from the PR view and the EB view. For instance, this third view characterizes the virtuous person as being centrally motivated to live virtuously and excellently no matter the circumstances, which is a similar claim made by the EB view. For as we saw, the EB view prioritizes the excellent life over the eudaemon life in its account of virtuous motivation. And though this third view may not strictly identify living excellently with the concept of agential excellence, there is still a shared

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rather than pleasure or honor) and that one's desire is *rational* (for instance, it is irrational to wish for what's impossible, such as being born at a different time in history); see also *EN* 1111b26-30, 1113a15-b5; 1114a14.

excellence-based element between this view and the EB view. Furthermore, this third view claims that virtuous persons will be characteristically motivated by eudaimonia when it remains a possibility for their life. As noted, when circumstances are favorable, or not completely *un*favorable, it is more rational to be motivated by a flourishing life than to be indifferent to it. That is, unless the possibility of flourishing is clearly 'off the table,' such as in the Letter-Writers case, the virtuous person has good reasons to be motivated by eudaimonia. And so, this third view still retains a eudaimonist element in its account of virtuous motivation.

Although this alternative to the PR and EB view has the advantage of blending key elements from both views, it functions in basically the same way as the EB view. As we've noted, what this third view takes to be central to virtuous motivation is a matter of being motivated to live excellently no matter the circumstances. But it is reasonable to think that the motive to live excellently also entails the desire to maintain a virtuous character and act virtuously over the course of one's life, since these are what constitute an excellent life and we would expect virtuous persons to be characteristically motivated by such. If that's the case, then what is central to virtuous motivation for this third view is analogous to the concept of agential excellence. Fundamentally, then, this third view is excellence-based in its core explanation of virtuous motivation. Regarding the motive to flourish, it appears to be more of a function of the virtuous person's response to circumstances than a persistent desire. When circumstances take a turn for the worse, such as in the Letter-Writers case, it is rational for the virtuous person to set aside their motive for a flourishing life, and yet, they can still exhibit virtuous motivation. In other words, so long as one desires to live excellently they qualify as being virtuously motivated, whether or not they also desire to flourish. Ultimately, even though eudaimonia motivates the virtuous person in some circumstances, its presence as a motive is not what fundamentally makes

their motives *virtuous*. In sum, the core of the EB view is still retained in this third view, even with the accompanying motive for eudaimonia when circumstances permit. Because this third view functions in much the same way as EB view, I will set it aside moving forward and focus on the PR and EB view.

3. Making Sense of Virtuous Motivation in the Letter-Writers Case

Let's return to the Letter-Writers case. In the previous section, we proposed two views of virtuous motivation and, based on these, we can provide two interpretations of virtuous motivation within the Letter-Writers case. Either view's interpretation of the case must demonstrate how virtuous motivation, in terms of the reasons involved, can be explained by their proposed central concept.

One way the PR view can explain virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case is by resorting to facts about virtue's centrality in the eudaemon life. Eudaimonia is instantiated or realized, in part, through virtuous activity. That is, a life of virtuous activity is the main way in which eudaimonia comes to be in someone's life. Russell makes claims to this effect, in that "one has several ends to pursue for their own sake and the life one lives in living for these ends is a good life" and "to give ourselves the gift of a good life, [is] to find things to live for and then live for them" (2012, 20, 35).[34] More specifically related to virtue, being one of these ends or 'things to live for,' Russell claims "it is the exercise of practical wisdom—in a word, virtuous activity—that *makes* a human life such as to be a good human life, and it is on this power that happiness depends above all else" (2012, 90). The more general claim is that certain goods or ends *make* one's life a *good* life. And the more specific claim is that virtue makes one's life good

[34] See also LeBar (2013, 107-108).

more than anything else.[35] We need not read these remarks of 'making' and 'giving' oneself a good life as implying that eudaimonia is some separate product or outcome from how one lives their life. Virtuous activity is what primarily makes up the eudaemon life, thereby providing what it in fact is: *activity*. What follows is that virtuous activity and the virtuous life, being the most essential feature of eudaimonia, can be viewed as instances or as partial realizations of the eudaemon life.[36] The implications of this for the Letter-Writers case is that eudaimonia was partially available to those individuals through their virtuous activity. When translated into motivating reasons, any such reasons related to virtue also included or were connected to reasons related to eudaimonia. If this is the case, then eudaimonia had a role within the virtuous motives of the Letter-Writers.

There is another way the PR view can respond. Although it is safe to say that in the Letter-Writers case the flourishing life was no longer possible, they could, however, have lived the best life possible or come as close to the flourishing life as they could. In speaking directly about the Letter-Writers case, LeBar claims that these individuals had "decisive reason to accept the sentence [and] that these are reasons of well-being or welfare—that one's life really *goes better* from one's own perspective for doing so" (2013, 106-107; italics added).[37] So, although Letter-Writers could not attain the *best* life, this did not prohibit them from living the best life *possible*, since we can live in better or worse ways no matter the circumstances. We could also think about this is in terms of *approximation* to the flourishing life, such that choosing and living for those things which make up the happy life puts us in the best position to be as happy as we can be. For the Letter-Writers, living the best possible life or approximating to the flourishing life was

[35] See also Russell (2012, 91).
[36] This point is reflected in LeBar (2013, 80, 82) and Bloomfield (2014, 131).
[37] See also Bloomfield (2014, 207).

possible despite their circumstances. And if this is true, then perhaps they saw that remaining steadfast in virtue would make their lives go better. Regarding motivating reasons, this would entail that the kinds of reasons involved in virtuous motivation could still relate to eudaimonist reasons, given that the latter can guide the virtuous person in how best to live no matter the nature of circumstances.

There are, however, problems with these responses. One problem is that being motivated by considerations of partial flourishing or living the best life possible is not what make the Letter-Writers admirable. We admire the Letter-Writers because they were motivated to sustain their character and behave nobly in the worst possible circumstances; this also leads us to suppose that their motives were virtuous. Moreover, if we were to ask what reasons such individuals would give for why they did what they did, we might find some of the following: "It was the right thing to do," "it was my duty," "someone must take a stand," "injustice and tyranny cannot be tolerated," "it would be shameful to back down at this point," etc. For simplicity, let's refer to these as "LW reasons." These are fairly straightforward reasons that could have motivated the Letter-Writers, mainly because they can be seen as appropriate responses a virtuous person would have to the relevant features of their situation. Given their circumstances, being motivated by these reasons elicits our admiration for them and our admiration would be diminished if such reasons were wholly absent from their motives. On the other hand, our admiration for the Letter-Writers doesn't rest on whether they were motivated to live the best life possible or whether acting virtuously was a way of approximating a good life. These reasons don't strike us as obviously praiseworthy in the way that LW reasons clearly are.[38]

[38] However, I am not claiming that being motivated by such reasons of partial flourishing and living the best life possible is blameworthy. I am merely claiming that we would not praise the Letter-Writers if eudaimonist reasons motivated them in their situation.

Another problem, which closely follows the first, is that reasons of partial flourishing or living the best possible life count neither towards nor against the Letter-Writers being virtuously motivated. For instance, if one of the Letter-Writers was motivated because "injustice and tyranny cannot be tolerated" (or, any other LW reason) but *not* because "acting thus will make my life go better," (or, "this is a way of giving myself a good life") we wouldn't admire them less nor think they failed to respond to something important in their situation. And, neither would we say that someone motivated by *both* kinds of reasons is *more virtuous* than another who is motivated only by LW reasons. Considering that the Letter-Writers responded appropriately to LW reasons, we have what makes their motives exemplary or as virtuous as can be expected in such circumstances. Further inclusion of eudaimonist reasons would not add to their moral exemplarity nor be required in giving a full account of what made their motives virtuous. Taking these problems into perspective, we should prefer an account whose central concept is indispensable for explaining virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case.

For clarity's sake, the charge against the PR view is not that it is incapable of offering *any* sort of explanation for why the Letter-Writers' motives were virtuous. No doubt, the PR view would claim that because the Letter-Writers were motivated by LW reasons this partly explains why their motives were virtuous. But what the PR view takes to be central for virtuous motivation is not what makes the Letter-Writers' motives admirable after all. Or, put differently, eudaimonist reasons are either not among the Letter-Writers' motivating reasons or they do not make those motives virtuous. The problem for the PR view is simply that eudaimonia or eudaimonist reasons are not necessary for a full explanation of why the Letter-Writers' motives were virtuous.

At this point, we can turn our attention to the excellence-based view's interpretation of the Letter-Writers case. Recall that this case is an example of the excellent life and the flourishing life coming apart, where the latter of these is unattainable. Nevertheless, the excellent life was still attainable and, therefore, relevant for the individuals to consider in that situation. This entails that performing virtuous actions and maintaining a virtuous character were relevant considerations for the Letter-Writers, requiring them to respond to such among their motivating reasons. Because agential excellence was relevant for the Letter-Writers' situation and because it likely played a role in their motivating reasons, then this concept can explain why their motives were virtuous. Consider, again, some motivating reasons these individuals could offer, which we termed LW reasons. These are appropriate responses to relevant features of the Letter-Writers' situation; they are also all plausibly grounded in the concept of agential excellence.

Two ways can be proposed in which the motivating reasons of the Letter-Writers can be plausibly tied to the concept of agential excellence or excellence-based reasons.[39] First, virtuous motives could include virtue concepts directly and explicitly as a motivating reason. For example, in response to an unjust situation an individual can perceive the act of intervening "as just" (Audi 1995, 459). In other words, the act of intervening is interpreted as just according to the individual's concept of the virtue of justice, and this, in turn, motivates the individual to act accordingly. Also, a virtuous person's motives may include a virtue concept among several reasons, such as: "someone must take a stand," "injustice and tyranny cannot be tolerated," and "it is the *just* thing to do." Here, a virtue concept figures into at least one of the motivating reasons that, along with other reasons, motivate the individual, and thereby qualifying their

[39] What follows is inspired by Audi's (1995) discussion of 'aretaic connectedness', where there are direct and indirect forms of it. The idea is that an agent acts from virtue if their reasons for doing so are either directly or indirectly connected to aretaic concepts.

motives as virtuous in that situation. In either case, the individual possesses some intelligible concept of justice and would not have seen the action as virtuous, and thereby motivating, without possession of that concept.

For the Letter-Writers, it is surely possible for some, though not all, that a specific virtue concept functioned explicitly in generating their motivating reasons that counted as virtuous. Consider, for instance, Dr. Kurt Huber (professor of philosophy at the University of Munich) and Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (lecturer at the University of Berlin and pastor for the evangelical Confessional church). Given their education and profession, they would have been familiar with virtue concepts and could employ these directly within their motivating reasons.[40] However, we should not assume all the Letter-Writers were motivated in this manner. Nevertheless, this is a way in which the concept of excellence can be tied to the Letter-Writers' motivating reasons, insofar as they directly and explicitly involve virtue concepts.

Secondly, some motivating reasons could be seen as indirectly connected to virtue concepts. There are several ways we could describe this connection. For example, although the concept of justice may not figure directly or explicitly in one's motivating reasons, there could be other concepts, such as fairness or equality, that could generate and figure into one's motives. Concepts like fairness and equality could be viewed as subsidiary concepts of justice. And so, if a virtuous person's motivating reasons stem from or involve the concepts of fairness or equality, we could say that they qualify as virtuous motives. In another way, consider the following remarks by Robert Audi referring to intervening in an unjust situation: "I may also see it as appropriate to their similar investments of time and energy; as imposing on them the way

[40] This example is not meant to indicate that either Dr. Huber or Dr. Bonhoeffer were more capable or superior to others in their moral understanding, and thus moral motivation, because they may possess such concepts and understand how to use them in moral reasoning. Also, some of the other Letter-Writers could have also been motivated in this manner, such as those who were students of Dr. Huber and involved with him in Nazi resistance.

civilized people should treat each other; as affirming the equality of the two persons; as promoting harmony between them; or in other normative ways *appropriately connected with justice*" (1995, 459; italics added). From these remarks, we could suggest that if the specific propositional content of motives can be appropriately connected with the concept of justice or one of its subsidiary concepts, like fairness or equality, then those motives can qualify as virtuous. Christian Miller suggests a similar method of categorization for explaining virtuous motives based on their propositional content. Consider the following examples he gives of honest motives: "If I love someone, then part of what it is to love that person is to keep promises I make with that person," "If I owe someone something, I have to follow through on that commitment," or "I don't lie to my friends" (Miller 2020, 362). Miller proposes that each could be categorized as either a loving motive, justice motive, friendship motive, and possibly others. And, any of these categories of motives can be further categorized as honest motives, or motives appropriate to honest persons. As I see it, Miller argues that such reasons are virtuous if they can be plausibly categorized as types of motives for specific virtues. In sum, any of these options demonstrate that if a person's motives bear an indirect connection to virtue concepts, then they can be plausibly viewed as virtuous motives.

For the Letter-Writers, their motives can undoubtedly be connected to or categorized under specific virtue concepts, and, therefore, the concept of agential excellence. For example, the motives "someone must take a stand" and "it would be shameful to back down at this point" reflect the virtue concept of courage, based on the content of such propositions, and can be categorized as courageous motives. Also, these are the kinds of motivating reasons that we would expect from a courageous person. The same goes for the reason "injustice and tyranny cannot be tolerated," which appears to be related to the virtue of justice. This is a reason, among

others like it, we would expect to motivate just individuals and can be categorized as an appropriate motive for justice. For the motives "it was the right thing to do" or "it was my duty," it is less clear. For instance, if "it was the right thing to do" could be further explicated as "it was the right thing to do *because* it would be shameful to back down at this point" or if "it was my duty" was further explicated as "it was my duty *because* someone needed to take a stand against injustice" then we can see how even vague reasons can be connected to specific virtue concepts.[41] The basic thought is that if the content of these vague reasons could be further explicated and shown to be related to virtue concepts, then they too qualify as virtuous motives. The short of this is that if such motives can be plausibly tied to virtue concepts, then, by extension, they are tied to the concept of agential excellence. For the motivating reasons held by the Letter-Writers, these can be plausibly tied to virtue concepts and the concept of agential excellence. All of this supports the claim that the concept of agential excellence can explain the Letter-Writers' motivating reasons better than the concept of eudaimonia and, therefore, that the excellence-based view provides a better way to understand virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case.

But is this enough to generalize excellence as *the* central explanatory concept for virtuous motivation wherever it occurs? The answer to this question depends on whether we can generalize the implications of the excellence-based view's explanation of the Letter-Writers case to all other cases involving virtuous motivation. Recall that the Letter-Writers case served as a kind of test case by which we could examine virtuous motivation and see whether an account of virtuous motivation could provide an adequate explanation of it. The PR view needed to explain the Letter-Writers case where the concept of flourishing or eudaimonist reasons played a role in

[41] This is also referred to in Audi (1995, 460).

the motivating reasons of those individuals. And the excellence-based view needed to do the same but where the concept of agential excellence and excellence-based reasons were likewise operative. Whichever view's central concept better explained virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case had a stronger claim for their view being inclusive enough to explain all cases of virtuous motivation.

We could answer the question in another way. Perhaps what is central to virtuous motivation can be informed by the kind of life one lives or is available to live, whether this is a flourishing life or only an excellent life. For instance, if I realize that a flourishing life is not attainable this will likely affect what motivates me, including my reasons for being virtuous and acting virtuously. Consider also the fact that the flourishing life and excellent life can, and do at times, come apart. This is just what we see in the Letter-Writers case, insofar as their circumstances prevented the attainment of a flourishing life. But living an excellent life was still available for them. Given these facts, should we think that the motivating reasons which qualify their motives *as virtuous* shift from eudaimonist reasons to reasons related to excellence, depending on whether the flourishing life or only the excellent life is possible to live?

We can also note that whichever life is available to the virtuous individual, their motives will include reasons related to agential excellence. This is true if a flourishing life is still possible for the virtuous person, and they recognize it as such. Because eudaimonia is centrally a life of virtue, or virtuous activity, then one's motivation for eudaimonia will also include motives connected to agential excellence. This points back to virtuous activity and the virtuous, or excellent, life as being the core and dominant good of the flourishing life. So, for the virtuous person who still has a chance to flourish, considerations of excellence could easily go hand-in-hand with considerations of flourishing within virtuous motivation. From this, we may note that

reasons related to excellence play a central role within the virtuous person's motives whether they are pursuing a flourishing life or only an excellent life. The basic and core feature of excellence is evident in both lives, irrespective of the quality of external circumstances and how their life turns out. If this is the case, then no matter which life is available, virtuous motivation will always involve considerations of excellence.

But what happens when the flourishing life is no longer available, such as in the Letter-Writers case? For this we could say that reasons related to flourishing may not be relevant for virtuous motivation. But do reasons related to excellence, also, become irrelevant? This seems unlikely. Because the flourishing life and excellent life may come apart, losing the former doesn't entail loss of the latter. That is, agential excellence and motivating reasons connected to that concept may be retained when eudaimonia and eudaimonist reasons may not. If this is so, then agential excellence and reasons related to it remain present within the virtuous person's motives. In a way, the separability of the flourishing life and excellent life allows the latter to remain present in cases when the former is no longer possible.

What follows is that agential excellence is a consistent feature of virtuous motivation that we find across the two lives. And it remains consistent regardless of whether a flourishing life is available or not. If it is a consistent feature, then it can always inform and ground the motivating reasons that constitute virtuous motivation. Eudaimonia, on the other hand, is neither a consistent feature for every excellent life nor can it function as a motivating reason for every virtue-relevant situation or life circumstance.

The preceding considerations provide rationale for claiming that the only consistent feature of virtuous motivation is the concept of agential excellence, and it is this consistency which motivates its centrality in the excellence-based view. This is because whether

circumstances are good or bad, the relevance of acting excellently, maintaining an excellent character, or attaining an excellent life does not change. Circumstances can and do fluctuate and are not always favorable, but these facts do not affect the relevance of excellence within the virtuous person's motives. That is, being and acting excellently remains relevant to the virtuous person no matter how circumstances turn out. This affords excellence the degree of consistency needed to provide motivating force and guidance across situations and life circumstances. What follows is that if excellence is a consistent feature from situation to situation, then it underlies virtuous motivation wherever it occurs.

Conclusion

In what has preceded, it was determined that neither the concept of flourishing nor eudaimonist reasons were necessary for explaining virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case. From this it follows that the central concept of the PR view cannot be generalized to explain every case of virtuous motivation. However, we did determine that the concept of agential excellence or excellence-based reasons were necessary for explaining virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case. This demonstrates not only that the excellence-based view is a better fit for understanding all cases of virtuous motivation but is also a more inclusive account of moral motivation for virtue ethics.

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Chapter 2 - Virtuous Motivation and Other-Concern: An Excellence-Based Approach

Introduction

A challenge for contemporary virtue ethics, specifically those accounts which fall within the Aristotelian tradition, has been whether it can give a plausible account of why we should respect and care about others. This challenge gains traction because virtue ethics is occasionally portrayed as a moral theory which prioritizes cultivating a virtuous character and living a flourishing life, a life of *eudaimonia*. On this reading, virtue ethics advises an agent to be more focused on *themselves,* albeit in a more specific way, rather than on how they treat *others*.[42] Several contemporary virtue ethicists have provided responses to this challenge with a great deal of merit.[43] However, a particular brand of these views, eudaimonist virtue ethics, has done so at the cost of providing an inadequate view of virtuous motivation, especially when such motives are directed *towards others*.[44]

Eudaimonist virtue ethics (EVE) claims that we have an ultimate end which is happiness, or *eudaimonia*, and that this is central for understanding virtue. Eudaimonia is that *for the sake of*

[42] This has led some to charge contemporary virtue ethics as being guilty of egoism, where the virtuous agent's reasons for treating others with care and respect are ultimately grounded in their desire to flourish; see Hurka (2001, chapter 8). There has been a plethora of literature produced offering various characterizations of the objection from egoism (see for example Hare 2000; Toner 2006, 2010; Baril 2013; D'Souza 2018, 2019, 2021) as well as responses that vindicate virtue ethics (see for example Solomon 1988; Annas 1992, 2008, 2011). Much of the content in this literature overlaps with the present discussion but is, however, a different problem from what I'm referring to in this paragraph. Here, I am merely referring to the challenge of whether virtue ethical views can adequately account for other-regarding reasons, where these are not ultimately grounded in one's desire for the eudaemon life, or eudaimonist reasons.

[43] Extensive responses to this challenge can be found in the work of Daniel Russell and Mark LeBar; see, for example, (Russell 2012, chapter 1, §2 and 4; LeBar 2013: chapter 4 and 12). Other less extensive responses can be found in (Solomon 1988, 434-436) and (Annas 1992; 2008).

[44] It is worth noting that the way I frame the discussion is not intended to put self-concern and other-concern in tension, or to propose an individualistic account of human nature. Since my view is inspired by Aristotle and his account of human nature, I presume human beings to be deeply social beings. In this way, self-concern and other-concern (much like personal and social flourishing) are deeply intertwined, even though we can make a conceptual and sometimes practical distinction between them. Additionally, in life and moral practices, these regularly come into conflict, and a moral theory does well to help balance each appropriately while doing justice to each in their own right. This latter point is a goal for the present paper.

which we do all else and the virtues are traits we need in order to flourish and whose exercise is central to a flourishing life. For the eudaimonist, all motives we have connect, in some way, to our ultimate desire to live a flourishing life, which entails that virtuous motivation will also involve motivating reasons related to flourishing. The eudaimonist would also claim that eudaimonist considerations are part of virtuous motivation *towards others*. More specifically, they would argue that considerations of flourishing go hand in hand with caring for others, that is, we are virtuously motivated towards others so long as we do not abdicate our own desire to flourish.

However, there are some cases which are problematic for the eudaimonist view of virtuous motivation towards others. For there are cases of virtuous individuals who care deeply for others and dedicate their lives to helping people but this other-regard may not be motivated by their pursuit of their own eudaimonia. Cases like these demonstrate that whatever interest someone may have in their own eudaimonia, that interest neither explains their other-regard nor why it is virtuous. If these are valid cases of virtuous motivation, then EVE comes up short in demonstrating how the motive to flourish, and related motivating reasons, is necessary for being virtuously motivated towards others.

To be clear, the challenge for the eudaimonist presented here is not that it proposes a view which is objectionably self-centered or egoistic, though one could still press them on this matter.[45] Relatedly, the alternative to the eudaimonist view I propose is not an attempt to resolve that charge in a novel way. The present challenge for EVE, rather, is that their account of virtuous motivation towards others requires more than is necessary. EVE claims that unless eudaimonia motivates an individual at some level to help or care for others, then they fail to be

[45] See footnote 42 for more on the egoism objection as directed towards contemporary virtue ethics.

motivated in a fully virtuous way. However, as I'll argue in this chapter, this is not a necessary consideration that explains why such motives are virtuous in the first place. And we should also note at the outset that this challenge is not that one should not be motivated by eudaimonia or that it is immoral to do so. This is to avoid any confusion that I am arguing against being motivated by eudaimonia *in toto*.[46] The focus and challenge of this paper is directed towards the claim that eudaimonia ought always to motivate us to count as being virtuously motivated, even within cases of being motivated to act on behalf of others.

I argue for an alternative account of virtuous motivation that can better explain such cases. The account I propose is called the *excellence-based view of virtuous motivation* (EB), according to which virtuous motivation gives priority and centrality to "agential excellence." By agential excellence, I have in mind Aristotle's view of virtue, according to which virtue is understood as the excellent functioning of human beings which makes them *good* human beings. In all cases of virtuous motivation, one's motivating reasons can be traced to agential excellence, whether in the form of acting virtuously, being virtuous in character, and aiming to live a virtuous life. Virtuous motivation towards others, on this view, amounts to possessing deep care for others which the agent expresses *virtuously,* or *excellently* (e.g., caring for others *compassionately*). Where both are present in an agent's motives, the excellence-based view would claim that this individual demonstrates virtuous motivation towards others. Eudaimonist reasons are, therefore, not necessary for being virtuously motivated towards others.

Before moving further, we should also note the distinction between the present chapter and chapter 1, since there is considerable overlap between them. The first chapter focused on carving out a place for the excellence-based view with special attention given to the self-

[46] I say more about this briefly on page 57 and in footnote 72.

regarding aspect of moral motivation. There, we explored whether virtuous persons are better characterized as always acting for the sake of *their own* eudaimonia or *their own* excellence, and what we determined based on the Letter-Writers case was that the latter was far more plausible. For the present chapter, the purpose is to show how the excellence-based view can provide a more plausible account of what virtuous motivation *towards others* should look like. Because the challenge is accounting for virtuous other-regard, rather than virtuous self-regard, this requires the use of different concepts and cases than what we saw in chapter 1. The challenge posed by both chapters, however, is similar, insofar as they challenge the eudaimonist view on the grounds that it fails to sufficiently account for every case of virtuous motivation.

In section 1, I present a case which poses challenges to the eudaimonist view of virtuous motivation towards others. In section 2, I propose an alternative to the eudaimonist view, the excellence-based view of virtuous motivation, and demonstrate how it can provide a plausible interpretation of virtuous motivation in the opening case and a variant of it. In section 3, I consider two objections a eudaimonist might raise.

1. A Challenge for the Eudaimonist View of Virtuous Motivation Towards Others

Imagine a woman, whom we'll call Teresa, who dedicates her life to helping others by bringing aid to civilians in a war-torn country.[47] Although she grew up elsewhere, in a place that afforded all things needed to live a flourishing life, she decided to go where she felt she could help people in need and make their lives better.[48] Upon arriving in the war-torn country, Teresa finds herself

[47] This example is inspired by a similar case proposed by Swanton (2003, 81) which she uses as a counterexample to the claim that virtues should be defined as traits which enable their possessor to flourish. To be clear, I am using a similar example to make an altogether different point.

[48] A reasonable question to ask regarding this case is whether flourishing is a realistic or possible aim for Teresa, at least at the beginning of the case. However, we need to remember that flourishing, in an Aristotelian sense, requires living virtuously and experiencing favorable external circumstances, the latter of which includes among other things a long life, being healthy, being financially sufficient, having rewarding relationships, and so on. I say more about

deeply moved by the plight of the local people and intends to stay and help, fully aware of the difficulties and dangers involved and that it could turn into a lifelong commitment. While there, her safety is never certain, nor for those she helps. Nevertheless, she is dedicated to helping the local civilians, whom she has grown to care for deeply and, in time, is able to make a significant impact in their lives. Unfortunately, after several decades into her efforts Teresa contracts a fatal virus. In her final days, while thinking back on her life, she has no regrets as to how it went, nor does she harbor wishes for a different life. She believes she made the right choice to live a life dedicated to helping others.[49]

What are we to make of Teresa's life? For one thing, her life reflects something that comes to mind when we think of what good people are like: they care about others.[50] Good people are neither characteristically self-centered nor indifferent to the needs of others. They see others as important and as being valuable in a way that warrants respect, dignity, and care. But something else that comes to mind when we think of good people is that they care *deeply* about others. Although their concern for others is evident when acting in specific situations, it also

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this understanding of flourishing on page 52. At the outset of the present case, Teresa already lives in a context where these are very likely to be attained and enjoyed. However, within the war-torn country (which is a context where these things are *unlikely* to be attained and enjoyed), we can plausibly assume that Teresa's chances of flourishing are either vague or unlikely. A context like a war-torn country is one of harsh and horrific circumstances, which makes flourishing, so defined, almost impossible for people living within them Whatever the case, Teresa is setting aside a path for her life where flourishing is more likely for an alternative where flourishing is less likely, or at least a vague possibility. And, she is doing this because she is primarily motivated to help others. Teresa may aim for a flourishing life at the outset of this case, but if she is both aware and realistic about going to the war-torn country, then she will likely be conscious of the fact that she may not attain a flourishing life after all due to the risks associated with her decision.

[49] This case should not be mistaken for being an example of Wolf's (1982) 'moral saint,' Hampton's (1993) 'selflessness', or Hill's (1973) 'servility.' In the present case, Theresa is not a 'moral saint' who is attempting to be as morally worthy as she can through every action she does. Also, she is not 'selfless,' insofar as her care for others is so profound that she harms herself, gives up on her own life-projects entirely, or loses her sense of self. And finally, Theresa is not 'servile' in her efforts, where she abandons self-respect or duties she has to herself in order to serve others. For more on the moral importance of self-concern see also Cottingham (1991).

[50] Throughout this paper, I will primarily use the terms of 'caring' or 'caring for others.' However, these could be translated into compatible terms like 'respecting,' 'helping,' 'treating,' or 'working for the good of others.'

exists at a deeper level within their character and motives.[51] For example, consider Teresa's brother Frank, who is motivated to help an elderly person put groceries away in their car because he notices them struggling and helping them seems to be the appropriate thing to do in the moment. But that may be the extent to which Frank exhibits care for other people, as only in those situations or moments when it appears to be relevant. We have little reason to think, based on that instance alone, that caring for others is deeply important to Frank or part of his character, such that we could say it *deeply* motivates him.

For good people, however, we expect there to be something underlying how they respond to others in specific situations. Similarly for such people, we expect that they regard caring for others as highly important, intrinsically valuable, and, in some cases, worth dedicating their life to. Furthermore, it is an important and persistent feature of who they are, how they live their life, and influences the goals they have. [52] We expect the other-regard of good people to be deeply intertwined with their other-regarding virtues like compassion, generosity, and justice. What I

[51] Although I use language reflecting a motivational 'hierarchy,' which employs talk of higher and lower levels of motives, the same kind of point can be made if we think of motives 'holistically.' Caring about others appears to be a 'central' or 'core' motive within a good person's motivational structure, rather than being a lesser or marginal concern of theirs.

[52] More can be said about what it means to care, or be motivated, *deeply* by something. For one, it could mean that there is something an individual takes to be highly valuable so much so that they see it as worth committing to and, if possible, commit themselves to it. A desirable career or one's marriage, to mention a few, are things people value highly and commit much effort towards and sometimes their lives. Closely related to this, we could say that one is deeply motivated by something when it gives shape and direction to their life, and not merely direction for their situational motives. We could see how an environmentalist demonstrates deep motivation for rainforest preservation by dedicating much of their career to advocating for such in political legislation. Also, caring deeply for something could imply that it's important to the individual's sense of self or an integral part of their character. For instance, deep commitment to one's marriage shapes how an individual sees themselves and in how they shape their character to be a trusting, faithful, and loving spouse. But what further distinguishes this kind of motivation is that it is persistent apart from specific situations and can ground specific motives we exhibit when acting in situations. It's safe to assume that Theresa was motivated in many specific situations to help others. And we could also say that her care for others went deeper than any specific situation and helping motives she displayed therein. What she cared about was a stable part of her values, identity, and character, and not merely something she saw as important or motivating within any given situation. However, her motives to help in this or that situation could be said to be grounded in and initiated by her deeper care for others. She not only regards the needs of others as important but could also see it as part of her identity and character.

think is clear from Teresa's life is that these two remarks are applicable: she not only cares about others but does so in a deep way reflective of the other-regarding virtues.

But one question that could arise regarding the opening case is whether we can expect Teresa's motives to be comprehensible for ordinary people (e.g., those not engaged in philosophical discourse) or the moral learner, such that either party can draw moral guidance from the former. This is a reasonable question, since it is not always apparent what motivates moral exemplars to act as they do. If Teresa's case is like this, then ordinary people may not find her example informative for their moral lives. So, providing an accessible explanation of exemplary motives is something worth aiming for. However, even if we are unaware of what motivates Teresa, we can still draw guidance from her behavior. For instance, by observing Teresa's other-regarding behavior and taking it as an example, we can set similar behavioral goals for ourselves (though specific to our unique situation and circumstances) which, in turn, function as motives. In doing so, we can set ourselves on the path to virtue and being virtuously motivated. In other cases, what motivates exemplary individuals like Teresa can be understood and made intelligible for ordinary persons.[53] I present Teresa's case as an example of this, where we can make sense of her motives and draw moral guidance from them.

In this same vein, we can ask whether an excellence-based view's explanation of Teresa's motives can explain the motivating force of excellence in a way that is accessible to ordinary people. In section 3, I give a fuller treatment of how an EB view would explain Teresa's motives. But for the present, we can note that although an EB view's explanation of Teresa's motives may not appear to be understood in a straightforward way to the ordinary person or moral learner, further explanation can make it so. In fact, any philosophical explanation of why Teresa's

[53] This is made possible through self-narrative, testimony, or biographies of moral exemplars.

motives are virtuous may not be perspicuous to everyone at first glance. All this means, however, is that some further explanatory steps will be required to provide a satisfying response to all interested parties. And as we'll see, both the EB view and the eudaimonist can provide such. For the EB view, however, the everyday motives of virtuous exemplars, such as Teresa, can be connected to and explained in excellence-based terms, such as being motivated by: "living virtuously", "conducting oneself admirably", "being a genuinely (or authentically) good person", or "acting excellently in every opportunity". By making this connection explicit for ordinary persons and the moral learner, an EB view thereby provides an explanation of Teresa's motives that is more accessible. So, we can grant the possibility of some ambiguity surrounding an EB view's interpretation of Teresa's motives, but with further explication this ambiguity will diminish.

Something else worth asking about the opening case is whether Teresa has to expect that a life dedicated to caring for others will be a flourishing life in order to be motivated to undertake it in a good, virtuous way. If this seems like an unreasonable question to ask about the case, it isn't. For both Plato and Aristotle, it is a truism that all people desire to be happy and flourish, and where this desire influences all of a person's choices and actions, to one degree or another.[54] For example, imagine the kind of reasons a college student would give for why they are in college. You'd likely get a chain of reasons that look something like the following: "I want to get my degree," "I want to get a good job," "I want to live comfortably, be financially secure, and have nice things," and, eventually, "because I want my life to go well." The last reason can be seen as a kind of ultimate reason, which influences the other motives the college student has.

[54] See Plato's *Euthydemus*, 278e and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I. The connection between the moral life and the happy life is a prominent theme throughout ancient Greek and Stoic moral philosophy; see also (Annas 1993).

Because they want their life to go well, this motivates them to go to college, get a good job, and so on. In general, to the extent that we are motivated to flourish, we are therefore motivated to pursue and do things in life that enable us to flourish. This lends support to Plato and Aristotle's views about the role flourishing plays in our lives. It both guides our lives and motivates why we choose and do all that we do. And if this is the case for all people, then virtuous people should be no exception to the rule. When we apply this thought to Teresa from our opening example, we should be able to see some connection between her motive to help others and her motive to live a flourishing life.

Some contemporary virtue ethicists who follow in Aristotle's footsteps make similar claims about the role happiness should play in our motives, especially if our motives are to be virtuous. This position, known as eudaimonist virtue ethics (EVE), claims that we have an ultimate end which is happiness, or *eudaimonia*, and that this is central for understanding both virtue and virtuous motivation.[55] Eudaimonia is that *for the sake of which* we do all else, and eudaimonia qualifies as this end because it is the kind of life that is best and most complete. The virtues are traits we need in order to flourish and whose exercise is central to a flourishing life, leading eudaimonists to claim that the eudaemon life primarily consists of virtuous activity. Ultimately, EVE entails that reasoning about *eudaimonia* (or what we may call 'eudaimonist reasons') and what that life involves plays a significant role in how the virtuous person is motivated, including their motives to care for others.

[55] See also Hursthouse (1999, 2022); Baril (2013, 2014); Annas (2011); LeBar and Goldberg (2012); LeBar (2013, 2018); Badwhar (2014); Russell (2012, 2013); Van Zyl (2015). Other compatible terms for eudaimonia come in the form of "a good life", "the good of a human", the "human good", "goodness in the living of a human life", "a good, flourishing life", or "the overall goal of life" (Baril 2014, p. 20). The terms I've listed will be used interchangeably but will refer to the same kind of life as described by eudaimonists.

What then is a "eudaimonist reason"? In a nutshell, eudaimonist reasons explain an agent's desire and efforts to attain a happy life, live well, or flourish. For instance, recall the reasons a college student might give for why they wanted to go to college. Each reason provides some explanation as to why they are going to college, while the last reason, "because I want my life to go well," can be seen as a eudaimonist reason. That is, it is a reason whose content is specifically about living well or flourishing. These reasons can take a variety of forms, such as: "it will make my life go better," "I can't be happy without them," "that's part of a good life," "they make my life worth living," or even, "that would ruin my chances of being happy," "I can't live that way," "I couldn't live with myself if I did that." Such reasons express the agent's desire to flourish or to avoid what would ruin their chances for doing so. For the eudaimonist, all motives we have involve eudaimonist reasons in some way.[56] In applying these considerations to Teresa's case, then, understanding her motives to care for others and why they are virtuous must be made intelligible in terms of the eudaimonist claim that virtuous motives necessarily involve eudaimonist reasons.

The eudaimonist must claim that eudaimonist reasons are involved in how virtuous persons are motivated to care for others because of the role eudaimonia plays in the practical rationality of the virtuous person. The basic idea is that our reasons are *rational* insofar as they are connected to or justified by eudaimonia, given the role it plays as our ultimate end and as the rightful terminus of our reasoning.[57] The eudaimonist also regards the virtuous person as a model of how to exercise practical rationality in an excellent way (i.e., as someone who possesses practical wisdom, or *phronēsis*), which would entail that their practical rationality involves

[56] This is evident from both Aristotle's claims in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and other contemporary eudaimonists whom I'll refer to throughout this paper.
[57] For arguments to this effect in eudaimonist virtue-ethical accounts, see Bloomfield (2012), Russell (2012), LeBar (2009; 2013), and LeBar and Goldberg (2012).

considerations of flourishing.[58] In a way more specifically directed towards caring for others, the eudaimonist would argue that caring for others goes hand in hand with caring for oneself. Caring for others must in some way be motivated by one's own eudaimonia. Although one might have thought pre-theoretically that morality is largely a matter of how we treat others, some eudaimonists have stressed the point that self-concern is also important and that having a view towards flourishing is necessary to caring for oneself.[59] Given this, being virtuously motivated to care for others will involve balancing such care with care for oneself, the latter of which entails the motive to flourish. More on both points will be discussed in section 3. But for the moment, when considering how Teresa dedicated her life to helping people in the war-torn country, the eudaimonist would claim that eudaimonist reasons played a significant role in motivating her and in how her motives were virtuous.

However, the eudaimonist interpretation of Teresa's motives in the opening case can be challenged in the following way: should we really think her desire to help others is *virtuous* because it is motivated by eudaimonist reasons? If all we knew about her motives were that she had a deep concern to help other people and to do so in a compassionate way, where both are grounded in her character, then it would not be unreasonable to say that her motives are virtuous on this basis alone without having to know anything more about whether her concern for other is rooted in some more over-arching concern for her own eudaimonia.

Currently, we have at least prima facie reasons to think that the opening case serves as an example of someone who is virtuously motivated to help others where those motives may not

[58] Practical wisdom (or *phronēsis*), as I refer to it throughout this paper, is intended to be consistent with Aristotle's account of it found in *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. VI. See also Hursthouse (2006), Russell (2009; 2014), and Snow, Wright, and Warren (2021).
[59] This point is argued extensively in Bloomfield (2014, chapter 1, §1.2-1,4; see also his 2011). Refer also to footnote 81.

involve eudaimonist considerations. The burden for the eudaimonist is to demonstrate how there is more to their interpretation of the case than meets the eye. As we'll see, they have several options at hand to explain problematic cases like the opening one of this section. For those unpersuaded by a eudaimonist interpretation, the burden for them is to provide an alternative account of why Teresa and others like her exhibit virtuous motivation, despite the intuitive pull of the initial interpretation offered in the early portion of this section.[60]

2. The Excellence-Based View of Virtuous Motivation

The alternative account that I propose, which also falls within the Aristotelian tradition, is called the *excellence-based view of virtuous motivation* (EB). According to the EB view, virtuous motivation gives priority and centrality not to eudaimonia but to agential excellence, which human beings display in *what they do*, in the *way they are*, and in how they *live their life*. By agential excellence, I have in mind Aristotle's view of virtue, according to which virtue is understood as the excellent functioning of human beings which makes them *good* human beings.[61] For Aristotle, the virtues are distinct from other excellences humans can display, such as excellent eyesight or excellence in a skill (e.g., as a craftsman or musician). Also, the virtues involve the acquisition of character traits that are guided in accordance with reason making their possessor a *good* or *excellent* human being and which enable them to reliably perform excellent moral actions.[62] The virtuous person, then, is one who reliably performs virtuous actions,

[60] Some alternative virtue-ethical accounts of virtuous motivation can be found in Zagzebski (1996; 2004), Slote (2001), Swanton (2003; 2021), and Adams (2006). Here, however, I am more concerned with Aristotelian-inspired accounts of virtuous motivation.
[61] In a basic sense, the Greek word *aretê* means 'excellence,' though it is typically translated as 'virtue.' In what follows I'll use the term *excellence* instead of *aretê,* and occasionally employ 'virtue.' See also Broadie's discussion of 'excellence' in Aristotle's ethics (1991, 38-41).
[62] See also Hursthouse (1999), Watson (1997), and Battaly (2015).

possesses and maintains a virtuous character, and lives a virtuous life. These points serve as the conceptual framework for an excellence-based view of virtuous motivation.

In its account of what virtuous motivation looks like, in terms of the kind of reasons involved, the EB view claims that it characteristically involves aiming at *acting* excellently, being excellent in *character*, or at *living* one's life in an excellent way. In other words, virtuous motivation always involves reasons related to acting virtuously, being virtuous in character, or living a virtuous life overall. For instance, having virtuous motives involves being motivated to act generously, have a generous character, or live a life of generosity. Or, being virtuously motivated involves motives to perform brave actions, maintain a character that is brave, and live bravely over the course of one's life.

Motivating reasons of this kind may not be explicit to the virtuous person in the moment they perform a virtuous action, but such reasons do, nevertheless, motivate them at some level. For example, when performing a brave action, the virtuous person's reasons for doing so might be "Someone had to volunteer" or "One can't give in to tyrants" (Hursthouse 1999, 128).[63] Though such reasons make no explicit reference to the concept of bravery, they can, nevertheless, be seen as expressing a deeper motive to be brave or to perform brave actions. Put another way, the motive to be brave or to live courageously underlies the virtuous person's motives to perform brave actions in specific situations. And so, virtuous motivation can be seen as always involving reasons related to acting excellently, being excellent in character, or to living in an excellent way. Because of this, the EB view claims that the concept of agential excellence should be viewed as the central feature or basis for virtuous motivation. In this way, virtuous motivation is excellence-based.

[63] More on the kind of reasons that motivate the virtuous person can be found in Hursthouse (1999, chapter 6). See also Williams (1995) and Hursthouse (1995) on the same topic.

One important distinction between the excellence-based view and the eudaimonist view relates to the difference between the flourishing life and the excellent life. To be clear, the way I employ eudaimonia and the flourishing life should be understood in an Aristotelian sense. Both views agree with Aristotle that virtuous activity is the most important good among those necessary for living a flourishing life, while also recognizing that such activity is insufficient for realizing eudaimonia. And the reason for this is that living one's life excellently does not guarantee the best kind of life we can live *all things considered*. Rather, the best kind of life, or the eudaemon life, is an excellent life situated within favorable life circumstances. [64] So, the main difference in whether one lives an excellent life or a flourishing life comes down to whether their life circumstances were favorable. And if one lives an excellent life and does not flourish, it is likely that their circumstances were not favorable.[65] Thus, we can distinguish between the excellent and flourishing life according to whether excellence was complimented by favorable circumstances in life. But what's important for understanding the EB view is that the excellent life is something virtuous persons would always strive for, even when flourishing is no longer a realistic aim nor possible to attain. This is further support for why the EB view places the excellent life, rather than the flourishing life, as one of the central features in its account of virtuous motivation.

At this point, one might wonder why I have employed agential excellence instead of Aristotle's concept of *kalon* to explain virtuous motivation. To be clear, I take *kalon* to be relevant to virtuous motivation, but only when it is constrained in a way that makes it

[64] Aristotle, contemporary eudaimonists, and the excellence-based view can agree that a flourishing life also requires other goods and favorable circumstances (*NE* 1100a4-5, 1101a14-22). Goods of this kind are like the following: a long life, being healthy, lacking physical deformities, financial stability, good temperament, social relationships of various kinds, a good upbringing, or living in a relatively safe society. Because goods like these are necessary to flourish, virtuous activity or the virtuous life is insufficient for living the eudaemon life.

[65] Several authors have pointed out how the flourishing life and virtuous life can come apart; see Baril (2014, 19), Bloomfield (2012, 283), Herdt (2019, 73, 90), and Tessman (2005, chapter. 2).

coextensive with agential excellence. Let me explain what I mean by this. In several places Aristotle claims that virtuous persons act for the sake of *kalon*, which can be variously translated as 'fine', 'noble', 'admirable', 'praiseworthy', or 'beautiful'.[66] For example, when Aristotle describes the virtues of courage, temperance, or magnificence, he claims that the virtuous person performs these kinds of actions for the sake of *kalon* (*NE* 1115b12; 1118b16; 1122b6).[67] Put differently, the virtuous person is motivated to act courageously, temperately, or magnificently because these actions are fine, noble, or admirable, and not necessarily because they contribute to a flourishing life. That being so, *kalon* also captures the idea that virtuous persons are motivated to perform virtuous actions *for their own sake* (*NE* 1105a30-35). From this, we could say, in accordance with Aristotle, that virtuous persons are characteristically motivated to perform virtuous actions because they are *kalon*. On this point, Suavé Meyer comments that motivation for *kalon* is "a characterization common to all virtuous actions that does figure in the virtuous person's motivation" (2016, 50).[68] And because this concept both differs from eudaimonia and explains virtuous motivation, it can be tempting to think there is no need to employ an additional concept like agential excellence.

However, though it is true that Aristotle characterizes virtuous persons as being motivated by *kalon*, he also employs this concept with much wider application in other works.[69] For example, he describes works of drama (*Poet.* 1451a9-11), biological organisms (*PA* I.5.645a21-6), and even cities (*Pol*. VII.4.1326a33ff) as *kalon* when they exhibit certain

[66] Aristotle also contrasts *kalon* with the term *aischros*, the latter of which can be translated as 'shameful', 'disgraceful', or 'ugly'.
[67] To be clear, Aristotle occasionally describes the virtuous person as being motivated by what is *aischros*, which is the opposite of *kalon* (see the previous footnote). For instance, he claims that "the brave person will find death and wounds painful, and suffer them unwillingly, but he will endure them because that is fine or because failure is *shameful*" (*NE* 1117b7-9; italics added).
[68] Similar remarks to this effect are found in McDowell (1996).
[69] See, for example, Lear (2006) and Irwin (2011).

properties (e.g., order, symmetry, and definiteness or boundedness). In any case, the poet, biologist, or city planner can be described as motivated by *kalon* when they create stories, study animals, or design a city. However, in such examples, none of these motives indicate whether the individual is virtuous. Being motivated, for example, to create beautiful works of drama does not tell us whether someone is a good or virtuous person, and, in fact, one can be vicious and simultaneously motivated to create such works for the sake of *kalon*. The same thought can extend to cases of admiring biological organisms or city planning. In other words, one is neither virtuous because of such motives, nor does their absence count against being virtuous. Nevertheless, when one is motivated by virtuous actions, virtuous character traits, and a virtuous life, they are motivated by what is *kalon* and this gives some indication as to whether they are good, virtuous, or at least on the right path to becoming virtuous. Their motives, in this latter case, are admirable, good, or what we would expect of virtuous persons. The point, ultimately, is that simply being motivated by *kalon* does not entail that one exhibits virtuous motivation. Therefore, this concept would need to be constrained to capture and explain the virtuous person's motives. If anything, agential excellence is preferable because it both captures what is *kalon* and can specifically characterize virtuous motivation.

Returning to the main discussion, virtuous motivation *towards others*, on the EB view, amounts to possessing deep care for others which the agent expresses *virtuously,* or *excellently*. This entails, for one, that the virtuous person's care for others goes 'all the way down,' insofar as it is grounded in their character. As mentioned in the previous section, helping someone in a specific situation or only occasionally is not indicative of whether a person truly cares about others or is a caring person. Rather, for good or virtuous people, the expectation is that something deeper about their character and motives explains why they care about others, and the

EB view recognizes this as a necessary aspect of virtuous motivation. Secondly, it entails that caring for others involves exercising what are commonly referred to as "other-regarding virtues," among which are generosity, justice, friendship, and compassion.[70] Other-regarding virtues direct the agent's acts, motives, thoughts, and so on, towards other people and their good. For example, in performing a generous action, the virtuous person gives their attention to the person in need and their situation, they are motivated to provide what is needed for that person, and they act to address that person's need. But possessing the other-regarding virtues also entails more than merely being reliable in acting well within specific situations: such traits are part of the person's character, the very way they are.

At this point, we can begin to see how eudaimonist reasons and excellence-based reasons differ from each other. Consider the following distinction:

> *Eudaimonist reasons*: "it will make my life go better," "I can't be happy without it," "it's part of a good life," "this is the best life I could live," etc.
>
> *Excellence-based reasons:* "it's the compassionate thing to do," "I want to be a generous person," "living justly is important to me," "I try to be honest whenever I can" etc. [71]

The content of the former reasons pertains to living well, flourishing, or a life of happiness. These reasons relate to an agent's desire to choose or do something that is either conducive to a

[70] The terms 'other-regarding virtues' and 'self-regarding virtues' should not be seen as strict designations, where an other-regarding virtue pays no attention to the individual who possesses it, or the self-regarding virtues permit no thought for others. These are intended to be rough categorizations, where the exercise of other-regarding virtues are typically directed towards others and the exercise of self-regarding virtues are typically directed towards oneself. See also Taylor and Wolfram (1968), Solomon (1988), and Hursthouse and Pettigrove (2022).

[71] These categories of 'eudaimonist reasons' and 'excellence-based reasons' are not intended to be rigid and fixed. We can allow for some ambiguity both in what people mean when they say they are motivated by either reason and in how these reasons can be combined in one's motives. For instance, someone could explain their reason for acting as "I couldn't be happy without it", but really mean that they could be happy doing something *because* others are excluded or suffering. Additionally, someone saying that "this is the best life I could live" could simply mean that the virtuous life is what they're referring to. But despite these, we can still make a conceptual distinction between these kinds of motivating reasons along the lines of being eudaimonist or excellence-based. One type of reason may relate to a flourishing life and another type may simply be referring to excellence in some way.

flourishing life or to avoid something that would harm their chances of that life. For instance, someone might be motivated to take up a new job for reasons such as: "it is with a company I respect" and "it will make my life go better." The idea, then, is that eudaimonist reasons provide further motivating reasons to choose or do something relative to attaining a flourishing life. In contrast, the content of excellence-based reasons pertains to acting virtuously, being virtuous in character, and living the virtuous life. For example, an honest person might be motivated by reasons such as, "She deserved the truth" and "It would not have been honest," both of which can be categorized as excellence-based reasons (Miller 2020, 361). These are motivating reasons to choose or do something relative to acting or being virtuous. According to the EB view, eudaimonist reasons may motivate the virtuous person in various circumstances, but it is not because of such reasons that their motives are virtuous, especially in situations when caring for others is salient. Rather, it is because excellence-based reasons motivate them that they exhibit virtuous motivation.

For Theresa's motives in the opening case, the EB view would recognize that caring for others is something deeply important to her, which is essential for virtuous motivation. It is true that virtuous people are thoughtful and concerned for others when they perform benevolent or charitable actions, for example. That is, they are aware, responsive to, and motivated to help others when that is salient in a given situation. Nevertheless, this doesn't fully encompass virtuous motivation towards others since that concern could simply be a response to the situation rather than being grounded in a person's character, where it is a stable and persistent feature of who they are. The expectation for the virtuous person, then, is that caring for others is deeply important to them and part of their character.

However, we should not think that caring deeply for others, by itself, is enough to be virtuously motivated towards them. An example of this can be seen in romantic relationships where one person loves another deeply but lacks an accompanying motive to treat their beloved *well*, or in a virtuous way. In that case, the deep care the lover has towards their beloved lacks something important in order to say that such care is excellent. For example: imagine that my significant other has received a job offer which involves moving to another state and suppose I decide to move with her. Perhaps I do this because I care about her, I also respect her goals, and since it generally aligns with my interests (e.g., I get to maintain the relationship, I currently work a dead-end job, and lack any better opportunities). But perhaps this is as far as I go to show I care, such that I am not also motivated to be helpful or supportive in other ways for my significant other. To me, just being there is enough to show that I care. Although I am deeply concerned for my significant other and express it in my behavior (e.g., by relocating with her), how I express that concern hardly corresponds to how a virtuous person would express similar concern. On the other hand, I could also be motivated to support her in the best way I can during this life-changing transition. Moving to another state with the pressure of a new job can be difficult to navigate, and being aware of this motivates me to be as supportive as possible for my significant other in that time (e.g., by also planning the move or taking care of living arrangements). Although the move still aligns with my interests, my concern is more focused on supporting my partner in an excellent way. Being concerned in this way need not require any immediate sacrifice on my part or for me to set aside other concerns. It mainly requires that the caring behavior I express towards my significant other be motivated by a desire to care *excellently* for her. In this alternative scenario, how I express other-concern better corresponds to how a virtuous person would express that same concern. The main point to draw from this is that

virtuous motivation towards others also requires that such concern be expressed in an excellent or virtuous way.[72]

Going back to our opening example, the excellence-based view would claim that Teresa's motives count as virtuous, primarily, because she desires to care for others *excellently,* or in a way expressing virtue. This would involve her reasons to care for others being connected to and shaped by her desire to be virtuous and act virtuously. Imagine, for example, that she sees her commitments, actions, character, and life goals in a way that relates to others in terms of compassion. If asked about why she lived her life as she did, she might respond along the following lines: "I genuinely care about treating others compassionately," "I aim to be a compassionate person and treat others that way," or "Living a life of compassion is very important for me." If she interprets her caring behavior in another way, say in terms of benevolence, charity, or justice, we will get responses of a similar form but with these different virtues. And if she described her motives in terms that are vague or not explicitly virtue-concepts, they can still be seen as related to or expressing the other-regarding virtues. Perhaps

[72] Something important to note about the excellence-based view and this example is that the picture portrayed of virtuous motivation (or, excellent care) towards others does not necessarily require or encourage someone to set aside their general interests or desire for personal flourishing. On this matter, an EB view would claim that so long as one is sufficiently motivated by excellence, or excellence-based reasons, then one can be motivated by additional reasons so long as they neither confuse nor undermine one's motive for excellence. And this applies whether one's motives are directed to oneself or others. In some cases of other-regard, however, setting aside one's interests or desire for flourishing may be permissible or even required to be virtuously motivated. For example, someone might have to set aside their career as a travel writer to take care of an ailing spouse. In that case, being virtuously motivated to care for the spouse would require setting aside one's career interests, at least temporarily. For the present example, though, my motives count as or approximate to virtue because what's central is my desire to care for my significant other in an *excellent* or *virtuous* way. A similar point can be drawn from the Letter-Writers case from chapter 1, since the individuals in that case could still exhibit virtuous motivation while setting aside their desire to flourish. But in that same case, if other individuals who were similarly motivated by excellence also maintained their desire to flourish, there is no prima facie reason this should count against them or detract from their motives being virtuous. Nothing said in the arguments presented in chapter 1 preclude this assessment. What mattered for either Letter-Writer displaying virtuous motivation was their steadfast commitment to remain virtuous despite being in horrific circumstances. And if their commitment to excellence sufficiently motivated them, then they exhibited virtue whatever else might also motivate them. Ultimately, an EB view would claim there is nothing outright problematic about being simultaneously motivated to express virtue *and* to maintain one's interests or desire to flourish, so long as the former motivates them no matter what and the latter does not undermine or confuse the former.

Teresa views her activities, character, and life in terms of being 'loving,' 'caring,' or 'helping,' for example. These could easily reflect virtue concepts and, thereby, qualify her as having virtuous motives towards others.[73] So, although she cares deeply about others, she equally cares about people in a way that is expressive of virtue.

Consider an altered version of the opening case: Imagine that Teresa *does not* go overseas to bring aid to others in the war-ravaged country. Perhaps the opportunity never presented itself, and so it was not a possibility for her. Imagine, rather, that she remains in her home country and in her hometown, where it is safe and provides all things necessary for a flourishing life. She has the same motivation to help others in need and dedicates herself to outreach efforts in her local city. Her commitment to the locals and alleviating their needs runs deep and she is able to make a significant impact in their lives. She lives the rest of her life helping others, and at the end of her life has no regrets. She has and makes good on opportunities for virtuous action, but she also has favorable life circumstances for a long, healthy life in a way that did not apply in the original case. The main difference with this life, in contrast to the other, is that a flourishing life is possible for her and likely motivates her in some way.

As we saw in the first case, Teresa's motives in the second case involve deep care for others and the desire to treat others virtuously. In the second case, however, flourishing may well be relevant to how she lives her life and so could easily motivate her actions in various ways, in part because her circumstances are conducive to flourishing. Eudaimonist reasons, then, could

[73] For more on this, see Audi (1995) and Miller (2020). For example, in response to an unjust situation an individual can perceive the act of intervening "as just" (Audi 1995, 459). That is, the act of intervening is interpreted as just according to the individual's concept of the virtue of justice, and this, in turn, motivates the individual to act accordingly. Or, one's motivating reasons can be categorized according to virtue concepts. Consider the following examples Miller discusses for honest motives: "If I love someone, then part of what it is to love that person is to keep promises I make with that person," "If I owe someone something, I have to follow through on that commitment," or "I don't lie to my friends" (Miller 2020, 362). Each reason could be categorized as either a loving motive, justice motive, friendship motive, and possibly others, and any of these categories of motives can be further categorized as honest motives, or motives appropriate to honest persons.

easily be present in her deeper motives, but it is unclear if or how they relate to being virtuously motivated towards others in the second case. What is clear, however, is that in both cases she cares deeply for others and is motivated to express that care in accord with her virtue. That is, the decisive factor in explaining whether her motives were virtuous, in either case, is the connection between her care for others and expressing it virtuously. This is the common thread which makes it plausible in both cases that Teresa is virtuously motivated. The difference in the cases, the availability of eudaimonia due to favorable life circumstances, does not make a difference to whether her care for others was virtuous.

But for this second case, can the excellence-based view make sense of eudaimonist reasons in Teresa's motives for that scenario? The excellence-based view could say the following to account for eudaimonist reasons in the second case. Consider again the difference in Teresa's motives between the opening case and the altered case. In the former, her motives are virtuous because of the presence of motivating reasons like "People are in need of help" and "I genuinely care about treating others compassionately." And in the altered case, her motives are likewise virtuous but include a further motivating reason, such as: "This is a way of giving myself a happy life." For this latter case, eudaimonist reasons add another layer of motivating reasons to Teresa's motives, insofar as her care for others involves eudaimonist reasons. The EB view would claim that although her motives have been expanded to include more motivating reasons, they are still virtuous on account of the same motivating reasons she had in the first version of the case.

One way to see this is through recognizing that the core and dominant feature of the flourishing life is virtuous activity, which, again, is something the excellence-based view and the eudaimonist can agree on. If, then, an individual is motivated to live an excellent life (which, by

definition, includes virtuous activity and having a virtuous character), then they are also motivated by the core and dominant feature of eudaimonia. However, the flourishing life requires more than living excellently, where further things are needed such as: a long life, stable health, good temperament, a satisfying career, financial stability, intimate relationships, and other external goods or favorable circumstances. So, when a virtuous person is motivated to flourish, then they are likewise motivated to pursue some of the goods listed. In other words, being motivated to flourish gives them reasons to pursue other things alongside their pursuit of virtue. And in this sense, the virtuous person's motives are *expanded* to include reasons related to other things necessary for flourishing. So far, we have an additional layer of reasons that virtuous persons can find motivating, but what's unclear is the contribution, if any, made by such reasons to having *virtuous* motives.

For the opening case, the EB view would claim that Teresa exhibits virtuous motivation because her deep care for others is accompanied by a desire to act virtuously towards them, to do so from a virtuous character, and where this is consistent with living a virtuous life. In other words, her motives qualify as virtuous on account of her desire to care for others excellently, maintain an excellent character towards others, and to live a life caring for others excellently. These features, according to the excellence-based view, qualify Teresa as having virtuous motivation towards others in both cases.

Still, there is a potential worry that arises for the EB view's account of virtuous motivation towards others. For instance, even if this view is committed to saying that agential excellence, or excellence-based reasons, motivates virtuous persons to act on behalf of others, there is a lingering worry as to whether the former effectively leads to prioritizing and giving appropriate attention to the latter. In other words, the worry is that if I act from a concern for my

own excellence when caring for others, even though this concern is not explicit to me when I act, then my motives could still be morally narcissistic and, therefore, not virtuous.

However, several remarks can be made to abate this worry. First, we mentioned earlier that good and virtuous people not only care about others in a deep way but also desire to care for others *virtuously*. We can add to this that caring for others virtuously entails doing so *for their own sake*, regardless of whether the virtuous person is concerned for their own flourishing and without doing so to bolster their own excellence. Second, deep concern and appropriate attentiveness to others (or, other-focus) is internal to agential excellence. This follows because other-focus is internal to the other-regarding virtues and their exercise. By their very nature, the other-regarding virtues direct the virtuous person's thoughts, attention, emotions, and motives to others and what conduces to *their good*. For example, if I am generous, then my motives for performing a generous action are primarily directed towards the recipient, what their need is, and how best to meet that need. My attention is not directed towards myself or my excellence, either in my occurrent motives or at a deeper level, otherwise I fail to attend to the other person and their needs as I should. Similarly, being motivated by justice means that one desires and is motivated to bring about justice, equality, and fairness for others as well as oneself. Obviously, in either case, this requires an excellent action from the virtuous agent, but the target of the motive and the agent's attention are both other-focused. We can expand this to say that whenever a virtuous person seeks to act justly, generously, compassionately, or in a caring way, they do so by attending to and prioritizing those to whom their act is directed. Furthermore, the other-regarding virtues are bound up within the concept of agential excellence. This means that we cannot understand agential excellence aright without the inclusion of the other-regarding virtues in that concept. In terms of motivation, being motivated by agential excellence necessitates being

motivated by the other-regarding virtues and what they involve. What follows is that if deep concern and appropriate attention to others is internal to the other-regarding virtues, then they are also bound up with the concept of agential excellence. In sum, agential excellence can motivate the virtuous agent in a way where other-focus runs deep in their motives, directs their attention away from themselves and towards others, and prioritizes acting for the good of others when relevant in a situation.

To wrap up this section, the excellence-based view explains virtuous motivation as centrally a matter of being motivated by agential excellence, which involves reasons to act, maintain one's character, and live in accordance with virtue. Virtuous motivation towards others, then, is a matter of caring for others in a way involving excellence-based reasons. In the first case, Teresa's motives were virtuous because at a deeper level she cared for others and expressed that care virtuously. And in the second case, her motives were virtuous because she desired to care for others excellently in a way that was balanced with her desire to flourish. One takeaway from this is that eudaimonist reasons are not necessary for exhibiting virtuous motivation towards others in every case. And a second is that although eudaimonist reasons may not be necessary for virtuous motivation they can, nevertheless, be present within the virtuous agent's 'all-things-considered' responsiveness to relevant features of her circumstance.

3. Objections and Replies

In response to the excellence-based view's interpretation of the opening case, the eudaimonist would likely raise either of two objections. One objection the eudaimonist can raise is that the EB interpretation of Teresa's motives paints a picture of virtuous motivation that fails to be fully rational because Teresa's reasons are not ultimately grounded in eudaimonia and only

eudaimonia is uniquely qualified to play the role of an ultimate end. As discussed in section 1, the eudaimonist would claim that our reasons are *rational* insofar as they are connected to or justified by an ultimate end, which functions as the terminus of our reasoning.[74] Recall the example of the college student's reasons (also from section 1) for why they are going to college. If we kept pressing the college student as to why they are going to college, eventually we'll come to a final reason which grounds and explains all other reasons. The college student chooses to go to college *for the sake of* something further, which, through a chain of reasons, eventually reaches a terminating reason as something chosen *for its own sake*. And so, all the other college-related reasons are rational, at least in part, because of their relation to an ultimate reason which is motivating *for its own sake* (e.g., "because I want my life to go well").

As the eudaimonist sees it, practical rationality demands that the final end of our reasons is eudaimonia, since it is the most complete life and is chosen for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else. When coupled with the claim that all our reasons for choice and action connect with our final or ultimate reason, it follows that "All reasons we have…are grounded in some fashion in our interest in living well" (LeBar 2013, 25).[75] What follows is that the virtuous person's reasons for caring for others are rational insofar as they are connected to or grounded in eudaimonist reasons. Therefore, according to the eudaimonist, displaying rational other-concern involves recognizing the *for the sake of* relation between our reasons to care for others and eudaimonist reasons. Failing to recognize this relation is a failure to account for an important reason to care for others, which is that we do so *for the sake of* a flourishing life.

[74] Both Russell (2012) and LeBar (2009; 2013) put forward an argument of this kind. On both of their accounts, eudaimonism is a theory or view of practical rationality in which we have reasons to act in virtue of ends; see Russell (2012, 15) and LeBar (2013, 14, 17). See also LeBar and Goldberg (2012).
[75] See also Russell (2012, 35) and LeBar and Goldberg (2012, 293).

Another way to see what rational other-concern looks like, is by delineating the two kinds of reasons for why we should care for others.[76] On one hand, the eudaimonist may recognize that we have reasons to care for others for their own sake.[77] That is, caring for others is intrinsically valuable and an end in itself. For example, Frank's reasons for helping the elderly person put groceries in their trunk is to help *them*, and that, one might think, is the end of the matter.[78] It is for their benefit that Frank does this, without considering any further benefit to himself. However, the eudaimonist also recognizes, from a broader perspective, that we have reasons to care for others and be caring people for the sake of living a flourishing life. Here is where eudaimonist reasons come into the picture. A flourishing life necessarily involves caring for others, which gives us a further and altogether different kind of reason for caring for others. So, the eudaimonist can posit two kinds of reasons that motivate care for others: 1) reasons for the sake of others, and 2) reasons for the sake of eudaimonia. If we are to exercise our rationality as the virtuous person does, then we ought to take account of *all* reasons relevant to caring for others, which necessarily include eudaimonist reasons. To be motivated only for the sake of others is half the picture. We also need to be motivated by reasons of how caring for others impacts our life and enables us to flourish.

With these points in hand, the eudaimonist objection becomes clear. If the virtuous person is a model for how to exercise practical rationality in an excellent way, and if Teresa is virtuous and practically wise, then her motives ought to reflect the demands of practical rationality and relevant reasons in caring for others, which necessarily involve eudaimonist reasons. The charge against the excellence-based view amounts to it giving an incomplete picture

[76] This argument is primarily found in Russell (2012, 31-34) and LeBar (2009; 2013, chapter 12).
[77] See also Annas (1992, 136), Russell (2012, 26), and LeBar (2013, 323).
[78] See also Russell (2012, 33) and LeBar (2013, 324-328).

of virtuous motivation by excluding reasons she necessarily must consider if she is to be fully rational in her motives.

In response to this objection, the excellence-based view would claim that because there are circumstances in which exercising practical rationality does not require eudaimonist considerations, then it is not necessary for virtuous motivation. This undermines the claim that one's exercise of practical rationality fails to reflect the virtuous person's if eudaimonia is not included. For example, one such case can be seen through the lives of some men and women who were imprisoned and executed for their resistance to the Nazi regime, as discussed in the Letter-Writers case of chapter 1.[79] For these individuals, while in prison and awaiting execution, happiness in the sense of eudaimonia was not available for them. But, despite their circumstances, some of these individuals remained virtuous in character and conduct. In such circumstances, should we think that these virtuous individuals considered their own flourishing or how they could live happily given their circumstances? If they did, then it would not have played a decisive role in their practical rationality, since practical rationality concerns what an agent should do in their circumstances and individuals in circumstances like these cannot effectively bring about a flourishing life for themselves. And if they did not consider their own flourishing, we would not think they are any less rational or less virtuous on account of this, especially since they deliberate in accordance with a clear understanding of the situation. This suggests that in some cases, the virtuous person's practical rationality, and likewise their motives, may not involve eudaimonist considerations or reasons.

[79] This example is first mentioned in Foot (2001). The accounts of such individuals are included in a collection of letters in Gollwitzer, Kuhn, and Schneider's *Dying We Live: The Final Messages and Records of Some Germans who Defied Hitler* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

Teresa's motives from the opening case can be seen in a similar way. Given the grave nature of her circumstances, along with the fact that she committed her life to being there, and all this with no clear view as to if or when her circumstances would change for the better, it is possible that thoughts about her own flourishing and how she could attain it were not deemed relevant or at least not decisive in the exercise of her practical wisdom, or practical rationality. What's clear in her circumstances, is that there are people in need of help and that she can contribute to alleviating that need. If she is virtuous, then she would need to be aware of these considerations and appropriately respond to them in her reasoning and motives. Furthermore, she would most likely see the need to help others in ways that are compassionate, generous, and so forth; i.e., in a virtuous way. So, if she's virtuous, then she would undoubtedly have thoughts about how best to meet those needs through her actions, that is, through performing virtuous actions.

However, considerations of flourishing and living a happy life are not equally salient in Teresa's situation, which leads us to doubt whether eudaimonist reasons motivated her at all. When thinking both realistically and practically about how to live in her circumstances, she may give little or no thought to her own happiness other than, perhaps, her willingness to sacrifice a measure of her own flourishing for the sake of the good of helping others. Rather, she will likely be more focused and concerned about the people she is caring for, how well she is caring for them, and how these fit into living as best as she can in her circumstances. If this picture is accurate, then her exercise of practical rationality and her motives will be rational whether or not they involve eudaimonist reasons.

We need not think that the virtuous person is at fault if, while exercising practical wisdom, they do not see eudaimonist considerations as decisive for how they live their life.

According to the excellence-based view, the virtuous person should be construed, instead, as someone who is excellent in thinking rationally about how to live *no matter the circumstances*, and in doing so can always deliberate about how best to live in their circumstances and attend to the things and activities that enable them to live excellently. So, even if the virtuous person does not see eudaimonia as necessary to how they deliberate about life, they can still deliberate about how to live an excellent and virtuous life. This should lead us to think that the demands of practical rationality eudaimonists rely on are, under further consideration, only *contingent* demands, where these depend on circumstances being conducive to flourishing in order for them to be relevant for practical deliberation.[80] But expounding on this claim, and how the eudaimonist could respond, takes us far beyond the present discussion. For Teresa's motives in the opening case, we need not think that her exercise of practical rationality, or practical wisdom, would be less than virtuous and generate motives that are, likewise, less than virtuous just because she does not have eudaimonia in view as her ultimate end or because her motives to care for others do not involve eudaimonist reasons.

Another objection the eudaimonist can raise is that appropriate other-concern must be balanced with self-concern, the latter of which requires eudaimonist considerations.[81] The thrust of this objection is that when we devote ourselves entirely to caring for others while ignoring the quality of our own life and whether it is shaping up to be the flourishing life we want, then we are likely to end up in a position of self-deprecation. To put the point differently, in the absence of appropriate self-respect we are bound to live a life of "self-lessness," where we lose our sense of self, or live a life of servility to the wants and needs of others.[82] Being in either position is

[80] This allows, perhaps more than should be, that the kind of demands of practical rationality eudaimonist have in mind *should* be demands in the first place.
[81] As mentioned in footnote 59, this point is argued extensively in Bloomfield (2014).
[82] Refer to footnote 49. See also Hampton (1993) and Hill (1973).

incompatible with appropriate self-respect or self-concern, especially when we think of how the virtuous person would respect and care for themselves. To avoid slipping into such a position, the eudaimonist claims that maintaining a perspective on one's flourishing and whether relationships are actually conducive to it will prevent self-deprecation, self-lessness, and servility.

Two contrasting examples help illustrate this point, both of which are drawn from Hampton (1993).[83] Consider this first example:

> This woman, whom I will call Terry, had been pregnant with twins, but one of the twins had died during the fourth month of pregnancy, and the other twin had just been born prematurely at six months with a host of medical problems. We were discussing how stressful this woman's life had been while she was pregnant: she was a housewife, and her two boys, aged three and five, were lively, challenging, often unruly—a real handful to raise. Her husband worked long hours in a law firm, so the vast majority of the childcare and household chores fell on her shoulders. "You could see that she was exhausted by the end of the first trimester," I maintained, "because her eyes were tired, and her cheeks were sunken—she looked almost like a cadaver" (Hampton 1993, 135). [84]

[83] It's important to note that I do not present Hampton's examples here because I think they are the best ones that could be devised. Instead, I present them because they are both relevant to the topic and because they have been subject to scholarly debate (e.g., Russell's discussion of them as seen in the subsequent text). Taken together, however, these examples can be seen as potentially misrepresenting real-life experiences or even as psychologically implausible. For example, parenthood will most likely involve both moments of distress and extreme self-sacrifice as well as other moments of fulfillment, joy, and personal satisfaction. In addition, the more difficult experiences related to parenthood cannot be plausibly traced to the choices one makes. For another example, giving birth to a premature infant and the stress involved in that experience cannot be plausibly explained relative to one's choice in having children. One's choice, in that situation more broadly, may have been to have a child and not that of having a child with severe medical complications. This thought can also be extended to other relationships which may become extremely difficult but are still worth being committed to. But the main thing to keep in mind is that Hampton's examples make a clear point about other-regard and self-sacrifice, and others have made notable contributions to that same point.

[84] LeBar also provides a helpful example of this kind based on friendship (see his 2013, 324).

Two things are clear from Hampton's example: 1) the woman dedicates her life to caring for others, and 2) how she cares for others is actually harmful to herself. The first of these is not the real problem, but the second is. Now, let's contrast this with another example Hampton provides:

> I have a friend whom I consider to have made an authentic choice to be a housewife and mother…. She stayed home to care for her children because she adored them, and she genuinely liked the control over her own time that the life of a housewife gave her. Moreover, she has been quite capable of limiting her care to her family over the years whenever she thought they were demanding too much, by using a kind of prickly sarcasm they have been loath to experience. Her life has always included all sorts of projects and plans (e.g., involvement in art organizations' self-study projects that have made her an expert in the flora and fauna of her region) that she greatly enjoys and that have helped to make her a fascinating individual to know. So she is richly developed person, and her care of others is a natural result of what she has chosen to love in her life (1993, 157).[85]

In commenting on this second example, Russell draws our attention to the last sentence of the quote and remarks that, "she seems to have chosen to make caring for her family one of the loves of her life as a way of giving herself a good life" (2012, 26). In saying this, Russell seems to suggest that the woman is guided by a view to living well, where caring for her family, rather than conflicting with that end, is a way of realizing it. He goes on to claim that

> in order for that kind of closeness and devotion to another to continue as that kind of good, one must also remember that the point of devoting oneself to another is for the sake of giving oneself a good life. When that perspective is lost, devotion becomes "selfless"

[85] The quote also appears in Russell (2012, 25).

in the pejorative sense of self-abnegating, losing perspective on one's life as a whole (2012, 27).[86]

The point to be drawn is that keeping a view to one's own eudaimonia helps significantly both in choosing what kinds of relationships to invite in our lives but also in how to appropriately invest ourselves in them. For this latter example, we could say that because the woman considers her own eudaimonia when caring for her children, she avoids becoming a "doormat" for others (LeBar 2013, 320).[87] This, at least to the eudaimonist, underscores the necessity of including eudaimonist reasons within our motives to care for others.

When we apply these remarks to Teresa's case and how she is virtuously motivated, the eudaimonist would claim that in order for her helping efforts to not overshadow concern for herself, then she would most likely need to have eudaimonist considerations in mind. That is, she is appropriately caring for herself when her own desire to flourish is maintained while dedicating herself to helping people in the war-torn country. And her motives are virtuous because how she cares for others is appropriately balanced with care for herself. The charge against the excellence-based view is that without eudaimonist reasons to counterbalance her caring motives, then Teresa's motives lack proper self-respect and make her vulnerable to self-deprecation, self-lessness, or servility.

For this second objection, the excellence-based view can respond in either of two ways. By way of a quick response, the EB view could simply point out that respecting oneself is part of an excellent life just as much as respecting and caring for others is. In other words, self-respect is necessary for living virtuously and the virtuous life involves self-respect. There is no reason,

[86] Both LeBar (2013, 320) and Bloomfield (2014, chapter 1) make similar claims to this effect.
[87] The full quote from LeBar is as follows: "Clearly a disposition to make ourselves doormats for others will not survive critical scrutiny as serving that Ultimate End well" (2013, 320).

however, to claim that only a concern for eudaimonia could count as satisfying the need for self-respect. Conversely, the person who subjugates themselves to abusive or dominant relationships or dedicates themselves to social efforts that bring significant harm to their lives fails to act in self-respecting ways and, therefore, does not act as the virtuous person would or in a way consistent with a virtuous life. In terms of motivation, being motivated to live virtuously involves motivating reasons to care for oneself and care for others. Since the EB view maintains that virtuous motives pertain to acting virtuously, being virtuous in character, and living the virtuous life, then so long as one is motivated by these then they are unlikely to undermine their self-respect and descend into self-abnegation. And so, there is no real need for eudaimonist reasons, since the aim to live virtuously adequately captures and supports an agent's self-respect.

Another way of responding to the second objection is to say that failing to respect oneself in relationships may not be due to a failure to consider eudaimonia as one's ultimate end or grounding reason so much as failing to weigh the impact of other-concern against costs to the self accurately. Let's imagine, for example, that in the opening case Teresa's practical wisdom also balances her care for others with care for herself. Perhaps, while being in the war-torn country, she continued activities she found satisfying and which speak to her sense of self, such as reading literature or painting. These are not merely ways of resting for the sole purpose of reengaging to help others but are things she enjoys and does *for herself*. If she always neglected time for reading or painting, or any other way of caring for herself, and did so for the sake of dedicating *more* time to helping the local residents, then her helping efforts could be considered excessively self-abnegating and, therefore, not virtuous. Nonetheless, one can still imagine Teresa engaging in judicious self-care while still living a life anchored in caring for others for their own sake.

Conclusion

In this paper, I've argued for two things. The first is that virtuous motivation, especially towards others, need not always involve considerations of one's own *eudaimonia* or eudaimonist reasons. And the second is that virtuous motivation towards others is better explained by an excellence-based view, wherein the concept of agential excellence is central to understanding virtuous motivation. In section 1, I posed a challenge for the eudaimonist view through the case of Teresa, who dedicates her life to caring for people in a war-torn country. Teresa's life is an example of someone who is virtuously motivated to help others but who may not consider her own flourishing as something that motivates her. In section 2, I introduced the excellence-based view of virtuous motivation and demonstrated how it could provide a satisfying interpretation of Teresa's life, whether eudaimonist reasons were relevant or not in her motives to care for others. Section 3 explored two objections the eudaimonist could raise, where one pertained to the role of practical rationality and the other to the role of self-concern. The excellence-based view rebutted both objections by demonstrating how it could account for practical wisdom, or excellent practical rationality, and care for oneself without the need to appeal to eudaimonist reasons.

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Chapter 3 - An Excellence-Based View of Practical Wisdom

Introduction

Recent work in virtue theory has drawn attention back to the importance of practical wisdom (or, *phronesis*) within moral reasoning. Several contemporary virtue-ethical accounts of practical wisdom are influenced by Aristotle's account, especially concerning the role he assigns to a conception of the good and flourishing life, or *eudaimonia*, within practically wise deliberation about how to act and live. For these Aristotelian-inspired accounts, practically wise deliberation is necessarily directed towards the ultimate end of eudaimonia and is guided by such when reasoning about how best to act in any given circumstance. Thus, eudaimonia provides necessary guidance for practically wise deliberation. In what follows, I'll refer to virtue-ethical accounts that hold this position as *eudaimonist views of practical wisdom*.

However, the eudaimonist view of practical wisdom is problematic when attempting to explain some plausible cases of practically wise deliberation. For instance, we can imagine cases where virtuous persons deliberate excellently about how to act and live but do not employ a conception of a good and flourishing life when doing so. Perhaps, instead, these individuals deliberate with a view to living a morally excellent life, being a good and virtuous person, or what the virtuous or best thing to do is, and when guided by such they effectively and reliably determine how best to act in any situation they find themselves in. If this is the case, then perhaps the eudaimonist view of practical wisdom is inadequate to account for every case of practically wise deliberation.

In this chapter, I propose an alternative to the eudaimonist view which I call an *excellence-based view of practical wisdom.* The central claim of this view is that practically wise deliberation can always be guided by the end of acting and living virtuously, whether or not this is situated within a broader desire to flourish. Basically, phronetic deliberation can be

characteristically guided by what is virtuous to do, what expresses a virtuous character, or what is consistent with a virtuous life, or what I'll simply refer to as "agential excellence." And when guided by agential excellence, one can deliberate effectively to answer the question 'what is best to do?' for any given circumstance. Not only can they determine what is best by deliberating according to agential excellence, but they can do so in a way that does not require guidance from a conception of the flourishing life. Because of this, eudaimonia may not be necessary for guiding practically wise deliberation since agential excellence can adequately fill this role.

I begin section 1 by discussing Aristotle's influence on contemporary accounts of practical wisdom, specifically regarding eudaimonia's guiding role in practically wise deliberation. I conclude that section with a case that poses a challenge for the eudaimonist view: a case of a virtuous and practically wise individual who does not deliberate in accordance with a conception of the good life. In section 2, I sketch the excellence-based view of practical wisdom. Using conceptual material primarily from Aristotle to construct this account, I demonstrate how the concept of agential excellence is sufficiently robust and capable of functioning as an end for guiding our moral lives. Following this in section 3, I show how agential excellence can guide phronetic deliberation to determine what is best to do. The result of this demonstration is that practically wise deliberation can be sufficiently guided by agential excellence without requiring a conception of the flourishing life. In section 4, I offer reasons to prefer the excellence-based view over the eudaimonist view of practical wisdom. Lastly, section 5 explores other functional roles of practical wisdom and how these can likewise be guided by agential excellence.

1. Aristotle, Situational Deliberation, and the Eudaimonist View of Practical Wisdom

For Aristotle, living a good and flourishing life requires possessing practical wisdom, or *phronesis*. This is because practical wisdom is necessary for being virtuous overall, and being virtuous is central to a well-lived life, or a life of *eudaimonia*. As he defines it, practical wisdom is "a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being" (*NE* 1140b5-7).[88] This virtue enables its possessor to understand and achieve in action what is *best to do,* both in specific situations and in life overall. In other words, the phronimos (i.e., the person who possesses practical wisdom) characteristically 'gets things right' or knows 'what's what' regarding what to do and how to live (McDowell 1979, 331; Hursthouse 1999, 12; Hursthouse 2006, 285; Foot 2002, 6). The phronimos is capable of this because they understand what's truly good for human beings (both in general and for themselves) and because they can deliberate excellently about how to realize this good in their actions and way of life.

The importance of practical wisdom is also evident in the role it plays for the other virtues. Although categorized by Aristotle as an intellectual virtue, practical wisdom is integral in guiding the other type of virtues: the character virtues. For instance, each of the character virtues (bravery, temperance, generosity, justice, etc.) are traits that when exercised by an agent in accordance with 'correct reason' can accomplish "the right thing, in the right way, and at the right time" (*NE* 1142b28-29; see also 1106b21-23, 1109a27-29). Possession of these traits enables someone to respond reliably in situations where that virtue is relevant; e.g., acting bravely whenever it is appropriate to do so. But because we are just as likely to go wrong as right when trying to act bravely, we need more to ensure that our attempt to act bravely doesn't fall

[88] All quotations from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* are from Irwin's (1999) translation.

short of what's most appropriate for the circumstance we are in. What's needed is practical wisdom, which provides 'correct reason,' or rational calculation about how *best* to respond.

For example, in a situation where generosity is relevant, the practically wise agent recognizes this and deliberates about how best to act generously in the situation. They are most capable of reasoning towards the best way to give to a recipient in need, or, what a generous action looks like for *this* person in *this* situation; since it is not always clear whether giving money, paying a bill, or providing a job opportunity would be the appropriate response (Hursthouse 1999, 12; Russell 2014, 205). Situations like this require seeing or 'picking up' on what is morally salient, rationally deliberating among the salient features and ways of responding, and doing such in accordance with one's understanding of what is good and beneficial for human beings. This is what it means to act in accordance with 'correct reason.' In other words, practical wisdom prescribes the 'correct reason' for performing virtuous actions, in terms of *what* should be done and *why*. Because of this, practical wisdom is necessary for all the virtues and no virtue can be fully possessed or exercised appropriately without practical wisdom (*NE* 1144b31-1145a1). And when we consider what it means to be virtuous overall, then, likewise, Aristotle would claim that we cannot become so without becoming practically wise.

In this chapter, however, I want to focus on the end to which practical wisdom is directed and how deliberation towards that end enables one to figure out what is best to do. Put simply, I want to focus on *what* guides practically wise deliberation. To see what I mean by this, let's turn briefly to some remarks Aristotle makes about practical wisdom in book VI of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle begins his discussion of practical wisdom, or prudence, in the following way:

> We may arrive at a definition of prudence by considering who are the persons whom we call prudent. Now it is held to be the mark of the prudent man to be able to deliberate well about

> what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general (1140a25-26).[89]

For Aristotle, the phronimos is not merely one who deliberates, nor deliberates well, but is, rather, one who deliberates well about what is "good and advantageous for himself," being his own eudaimonia. And since practical wisdom is "concerned with action," the prudent person excels at deliberating towards acting well (*eupraxia*), which will primarily consist of virtuous activity but will likely entail actions that are practically beneficial for one's life (e.g., taking steps towards being healthy or making fruitful financial decisions). When combined with Aristotle's definition of eudaimonia as a life of activity (*NE* 1098a4-8, 1098b33-1099a4), we can see that the defining characteristic of the prudent person is their ability to deliberate excellently towards those actions that realize a well-lived life.[90] In effect, he acts well *because* he knows and deliberates correctly about what it means to live well. Just as an archer guides his arrow towards a target or a doctor guides her treatment towards health, so also the phronimos guides his deliberation about acting well in accordance with his ultimate target of eudaimonia. From this, we get Aristotle's answer to the question "what guides practical wisdom?" and that answer is eudaimonia.

Although Aristotle's view of practical wisdom places a great deal of emphasis on deliberation, we should also note that an array of skills or 'parts' constitute this virtue and

[89] See also *NE* 1140a31-32, 1141b10-14, and Irwin (1999, 279).
[90] See also *NE* 1141b10-11 and Irwin (1975, 570).

contribute to its exercise.[91] Daniel Russell (2009, 2014) has described Aristotelian practical wisdom as consisting of a "whole family of skills," which include:

> deliberative excellence (*euboulia*), by which one finds courses of action that are correct and beneficial (vi 9); good judgment (*sunesis, eusunesis*), by which one is insightful and perceptive in one's comprehension (vi 10); discernment (*gnōmē*), which makes one reasonable, equitable, and sympathetic (vi 11.1143a19-24); and intelligence (*nous*), by which one is appreciative of the particularity of the circumstances in which one chooses and acts (1143a25-b17)…[and] cleverness (vi 12.1144a28-29)…[which] is simply an aptitude for finding effective means to one's end, *whatever* that end may be (2014, 206-207)[92]

Each of these are necessary to having practical wisdom, and thus contributes to the phronimos' ability to determine what ought to be done in each situation.[93] So although much of the present discussion will focus on practical wisdom as a *deliberative* virtue, we should remember that it is not a "monolithic virtue" but consists of various parts or practical skills (Russell 2009, 20).

Deliberation that seeks a practical answer to the question "what should I do?" for a specific situation can be referred to as *situational deliberation.* This is reasoning practically about what act should be performed for a given situation, and this is something Aristotle likely had in mind when discussing deliberation (see *NE* 1112a20-1113a14).[94] For instance, imagine a situation where your friend is distraught over a failed romantic relationship, they need to be

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[91] It should be recognized that the various 'parts' of phronesis mentioned here differ from the various functions or roles practical wisdom performs; see section 5 of this chapter, where the latter of these are discussed as they appear in contemporary views of practical wisdom.

[92] See also Russell (2009, 20-25) for a lengthier discussion of these parts of phronesis.

[93] Although some authors have noted considerable ambiguity regarding these parts and their interaction (see Snow, Wright, and Warren 2021, 78), they could be organized into two groups. For example, intelligence, discernment, and good judgment enable the phronimos to accurately discern and perceive what is morally salient in a situation; for more on this perceptual function of practical wisdom see McDowell (1979), Nussbaum (1999), Reeve (1995), and Sherman (1991). Deliberative excellence and cleverness enable the phronimos to specify virtuous ends related to action and to identify the necessary means to reach those ends.

[94] See also Reeve (1995, 77); Russell (2009, 4-6); Wiggins (1980, 231 and 234).

supported and comforted and maybe even need some distraction from their present state of mind. But there are better or worse ways to go about this and what one should do is not immediately clear, and so, deliberation is needed.[95] If you are practically wise, as Aristotle understands it, you will be able to deliberate excellently about what's important and what you should do. For the present example, the phronimos can deliberate towards how best to support their friend, mitigate their emotional distress, give them hope for moving forward, and how to be a calming presence while giving their friend the space they need. But how does the phronimos' view of the eudaemon life help them reach the appropriate conclusion regarding what to do? As we've seen, Aristotle thinks that a key characteristic of phronetic deliberation is that it takes into consideration what promotes eudaimonia or "the good life in general," and this should apply even when the phronimos deliberates about how to act in specific situations.

Aristotle would likely make the following claim: when the phronimos deliberates about what to do in a situation, there are different ways in which eudaimonia can guide their deliberative process. In one way, the phronimos might deliberate in a situation with eudaimonia in view, such as, for example, determining that excessive drinking *does not* coincide with or contribute to the life they want (i.e., a flourishing life), but moderate drinking is the better option. They might see that a specific action is unfitting for the life they want or who they want to be. In a case like this, the phronimos may *explicitly* draw upon their understanding of a flourishing life when reasoning about what to do in a specific situation.[96] When confronted with a decision about how to act, the phronimos may choose to act, or not, because they consciously and explicitly acknowledge it as consistent, or inconsistent, with a flourishing life.

[95] See also Hursthouse (2006, 303-304).

[96] It should be stated that eudaimonist views do not claim that eudaimonia *must* explicitly guide the phronimos' deliberation; see, for example, Annas (2011, 162) and LeBar (2013, 86). I have only listed this form of deliberation as a possibility for how the phronimos might deliberate with eudaimonia in view.

In a slightly different way, one can deliberate *before* or *after* a situation while being guided by a conception of a flourishing life. Perhaps a practically wise person has, in their past, seen others drink excessively and reflects on the costs of that behavior. After such an occasion, they deliberate about what should have been done, or what they want to do in the future, and set this as an action-guiding goal for the future. And when they encounter similar situations in the future, they may not need to pause and deliberate about how to proceed, since they have settled on what should be done through prior deliberation. Here, thoughts about living well and how important moderation is to that life can explicitly guide their reasoning about how to act. Determining what should be done in a situation, therefore, is not divorced from their view of living well in general. And so, even in a situation where a practically wise agent does not stop to deliberate, this could be explained by the fact that they have already deliberated about what to do prior to that kind of situation. Nevertheless, this is still situational deliberation, since it is deliberation that seeks a practical answer for the question "what should I do?"

We could further add that eudaimonia can operate as a background consideration that *implicitly* guides situational deliberation. For instance, the phronimos values friendships, self-control, and honesty because these are important for living well. When deliberating about how to act in a situation, these values may come to mind and explicitly guide the deliberative process, whereas their conception of a flourishing life may not come to mind at all. They may see *this* act as inconsistent with friendship or *that* act as the best way to be honest or respect a person's worth. Here, their view of a flourishing life is not an occurrent concern but still provides background guidance for what they should do and why.

Aristotle's account of practical wisdom and his view that eudaimonia guides deliberation are not without influence in contemporary accounts of practical wisdom. For instance, Daniel

Russell poses the question: "might it…be the case a *phronimos* needs to have a conception of the good life as a whole in order for phronesis to function properly?" (2009, 29). He then provides an answer to the question:

> A conception of the good life is important for phronesis, which balances different ethical concerns with one another: sometimes courage involves standing and fighting, and sometimes it involves stepping down; one can know the difference in a particular circumstance only by understanding what is worth fighting for, and at what cost, and this means having an overall conception of the good….This fact suggests that part of having the virtue of courage, say, is to understand why courageous action makes sense, and in particular why it makes sense that such action should have a place in one's life (Russell 2009, 29).

He goes on to add the following remarks:

> a conception of the good life just *is* an appreciation of what sorts of things one has reason to do. In that case, to grasp (as comprehension does) what one should do 'in relation to the end without qualification' is to grasp what reasons there really are, and this involves accepting those sorts of reasons as reasons of one's own…So it seems that while phronesis is not about implementing a true conception of the good life on particular occasions, still phronesis requires that one have a true conception of the good life (2009, 30).[97]

Two things from Russell's remarks are worth noting. First, the 'conception of the good life' employed within practical wisdom is roughly synonymous with Aristotle's view of eudaimonia, which necessarily includes both virtuous activity and external goods or favorable circumstances

[97] See also Russell (2009, 17-18; 2014, 205-206).

(see also *NE* 1099a29-1099b7; 1101a14-16).[98] And, it should be noted that this view of eudaimonia seems to be a common thread among contemporary eudaimonist virtue-ethical accounts.[99] This is important to distinguish their view from others that may take 'the good life' to strictly consist in virtuous or excellent moral living, such as the view held by the Stoics. For them, the virtuous life *just is* the flourishing life, which is not something we see reflected in contemporary views of practical wisdom that follow in Aristotle's footsteps. Also, the conception of the good life referred to here is not abstract or detached from the agent's context and circumstances. This 'conception of the good life' is basically the eudaemon life in *my* life, that is, the flourishing life as manifest in my unique identity, goals, and life circumstances.

Second, Russell claims that a conception of eudaimonia is necessary to appreciate and balance various moral concerns appropriately, both of which fall under the umbrella of practically wise deliberation. For instance, the phronimos deliberates about how to balance competing moral concerns and ways of responding in specific situations, such as in cases that require telling a harsh truth to a person with sensitive feelings.[100] The phronimos will recognize both (honesty and respecting someone's emotions) as important and deliberate about how to balance both in their response. Because a flourishing life is one in which being truthful and being emotionally intelligent are important, the phronimos can guide their situational deliberation by those facts. Similarly, the phronimos deliberates in a way that properly appreciates what's at

[98] To be clear, within *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (2009) Russell does not explicitly remark on how his use of eudaimonia, or a conception of the good life, is synonymous with Aristotle's, specifically about the necessity of both virtuous activity and favorable circumstances. Nevertheless, because Russell's Aristotelian account of practical wisdom employs a conception of eudaimonia, it is likely that his view on the constituents of eudaimonia does not differ significantly from Aristotle's. In his *Happiness for Humans* (2012), Russell gives a more explicit account of his view of eudaimonia and what it consists of, which closely resembles Aristotle's view.

[99] See Annas (1996, 2011); Badhwar (2014); Baril (2014); Bloomfield (2014); LeBar (2013); Russell (2012, 2013); van Zyl (2015).

[100] Hursthouse (2006) also notes that "it is generally recognized that practical wisdom comes into play in the correct resolving of difficult dilemmas" (289).

stake in a situation and includes the appropriate reasons for pursuing a course of action. For example, when confronted with a dilemma to stop and help an injured motorist or to bypass them in order to be on time for a business meeting, the phronimos will without doubt prioritize the former and one reason for this is that it is consistent with a good and flourishing life. Put differently, a flourishing life is one in which the safety of others is more important than business transactions, and the phronimos guides his deliberation accordingly and reflects such in their reasons for acting.

To be clear, Russell is not alone in his view on the importance of a conception of eudaimonia for guiding phronetic deliberation. Others have taken a similar stance. Aristotle's influence is alive and well among contemporary views of practical wisdom (see also Bloomfield 2012, 280-281; Hacker-Wright 2015, 984, 988-989; Kristjánsson 2022, 180; LeBar 2013, 28; LeBar and Goldberg 2012, 300-301, 304-305; Nussbaum 1999, 106; Price 2005, 272; Swartwood 2020, 79; Ferkany 2020, 113). For instance, Darnell et al. (2019) remark that

> the core deliberative component is said to be that which enables the phronimos to hit the mean, responding in the way that is best overall. That requires that one can identify salient reasons for responding in certain ways to a situation, and seeing those reasons that are most weighty as such, *which is only possible against a conception of the good life* (or, again, perhaps a more modern way of putting it may refer to a hierarchy of values or priorities), however rough and ready, incomplete, and unsophisticated this may be. For otherwise, in a given situation, where one sees reasons both for and against, say, doing the brutally honest thing, one will have no way of deciding whether doing the brutally honest thing would be best in such a situation, as opposed to, say, acting compassionately (Darnell et al. 2019, 114; italics added).

Much of what is said by Darnell et al. reflects Russell's remarks mentioned earlier. Not only does practical wisdom require possession of an accurate conception of the good life, but phronetic deliberation cannot function properly without it. It is necessary to determine the best way to respond in any given situation or life circumstance, it enables one to identify and appreciate the reason-giving force of salient features within a situation, and it helps the phronimos balance important concerns and settle upon that which is most weighty. For present purposes, we can refer to these contemporary views of practical wisdom who assign eudaimonia a necessary guiding role within phronetic deliberation as *eudaimonist views of practical wisdom*.

There is, however, a lingering question about whether a virtue-ethical account of practical wisdom *requires* practical deliberation to be guided by eudaimonia. For those virtue-ethical accounts that fall within the Aristotelian tradition, this seems to be the usual path taken. But there is a problem. If eudaimonia must guide practical wisdom, then any occasion of situational deliberation not guided by a conception of a flourishing life fails to fully exhibit practical wisdom. Put differently, if eudaimonia is not guiding someone's practical deliberation, in some way, concerning how to act and live, then that individual is missing something essential to practical wisdom or fails to guide their deliberation as they should. And if this is so, then they do not have practical wisdom, are not fully virtuous, and even fail to be on the right path to virtue.

However, what if we encounter an individual who appears to be virtuous and practically wise but whose deliberation is not guided by eudaimonia? Imagine, for example, Dominique who appears to be an overall virtuous person. Perhaps growing up Dominique was inspired by his aunt, a lifelong nurse who dedicated herself to caring for others. She may have had traits like compassion, humility, and empathy for the suffering of others. Dominique may have also been inspired by figures like Florence Nightingale or Mother Teresa, whose similar efforts and lives

he admires. He sees their values, character, and actions as ideals to strive for, although in a way specific to his own life and circumstances. Perhaps Dominique took these examples to heart, chose to live his life in a similar way, and shaped his character and goals accordingly, such that he also dedicates his life to being a nurse. Over time and life experience, Dominique develops similar virtuous traits and becomes excellent in his practical deliberation. That is, he reasons well and reliably about how best to act, no matter the situation he encounters or life circumstances he finds himself in. From this information alone, it appears that Dominique primarily guides the way he acts and lives in accordance with being a virtuous person, acting virtuously, and living an overall virtuous life. Put another way, when thinking practically, he mainly considers what makes sense in light of his desire to live virtuously.

Perhaps Dominique actually lives a flourishing life, that is, he lives virtuously within favorable life circumstances over the course of his life. Nothing about Dominique's circumstances preclude this possibility and he seems like a prime candidate for attaining that life. But what's important for present purposes is that he rarely has thoughts to this end, and it plays little, if any, decisive role for how and why he acts as he does. Put simply, eudaimonia plays neither an explicit nor implicit guiding role in Dominique's situational deliberation. Rather, when thinking practically, he mainly considers what makes sense in light of his ultimate aim to live virtuously.

It's worth pointing out how this example differs from others that have appeared in earlier chapters. For instance, in the example of the Letter-Writers, which figured centrally in chapter 1, their circumstances precluded eudaimonia from being something that necessarily motivated them. Such circumstances involved imprisonment, separation from their loved ones, and eventual execution. What followed from this was that their motives could still be virtuous without

eudaimonia being a motivating factor. In the example of Teresa, from chapter 2, we sought to demonstrate that her desire to care for others was not necessarily motivated by her desire to flourish. In other words, Teresa displayed virtuous other-concern that was not necessarily connected with a concern for her own flourishing. The present example, in contrast to these others, focuses on Dominique's deliberative process and not on whether he flourishes or whether he is virtuously motivated per se. Rather, since there is a form of deliberation characteristic of virtuous persons and since both Aristotle and several contemporary virtue-ethicists contend that eudaimonia must guide this deliberation, the present discussion seeks to challenge this view. Nevertheless, the present discussion is still within the same purview of the work as a whole: it challenges the role eudaimonia is typically assigned within the virtuous person's motives and practical reasoning.

The question we need to answer regarding Dominique is whether he has practical wisdom. If our answer is "no," then this is likely because we think eudaimonia *must* guide practical wisdom in some way. For Dominique, this would mean that he does not have practical wisdom fully or does not deliberate excellently unless eudaimonia guides it. And if this is the case, then anyone who fails to guide their practical deliberation in a similar way does not have practical wisdom nor can be fully virtuous. But, in fact, Dominique appears to be both virtuous and practically wise, given that he deliberates well and is reliable in acting excellently and living an overall admirable life. Dominique reliably 'gets things right' in specific situations and this is made possible because his deliberation is guided by virtue or moral excellence. This forces us to question the eudaimonist view's claim that eudaimonia is the end to which practical wisdom must be directed towards and guided by to discern what is best to do.

If we are inclined to think that Dominique *does* have practical wisdom, then this undermines the necessity of eudaimonia's guiding role in practical wisdom. Claiming that Dominique has practical wisdom entails, on one hand, that eudaimonia may not be necessary in some cases of phronetic deliberation. For if it was, then Dominique could be neither virtuous nor practically wise unless eudaimonia guides his deliberation in some capacity. It also entails, on the other hand, that a conception of virtue or something equivalent can guide practical wisdom on its own. The reason for this is that a virtuous life, or what I'll refer to as 'agential excellence', is structurally parallel to the eudaemon life. Not only is the virtuous life an end worthy to be pursued for its own sake but it is also a sufficiently inclusive end capable of guiding phronetic deliberation. More will be said in the following sections about how the virtuous life, or agential excellence, can satisfactorily guide phronetic deliberation.

All this should cause us to step back and re-evaluate practical wisdom and what might be guiding its exercise in virtuous lives. Perhaps eudaimonia is not the only or best candidate to guide practically wise deliberation, especially when we think of how it may function in concrete situations and lives. Perhaps this role is better fulfilled by virtue or agential excellence instead, as we saw in the example of Dominique. In the next section, I will sketch an account of practical wisdom where agential excellence, not eudaimonia, is a morally inclusive end sufficient for guiding situational deliberation.

2. An Excellence-Based View of Practical Wisdom

The overarching question we are seeking to answer is this: what end *guides* the phronimos' deliberation about how to act and how to live? In this section and the next, I argue that we should view phronetic deliberation as always being guided by the end of acting and living virtuously,

whether or not this is situated within a broader desire to flourish. If this is the case, then for any situation or life circumstance, practically wise deliberation can be guided by what I'll refer to as 'agential excellence.' In this section, I sketch this account which I call an *excellence-based view of practical wisdom*.

A necessary starting point for sketching the excellence-based view of practical wisdom is to clarify what is meant by 'agential excellence.' The conceptual framework for agential excellence is primarily drawn from Aristotle's view of virtue in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Two things are worth drawing out of it for the subsequent discussion. The first is that Aristotle conceives of virtue as the excellent functioning of human beings that makes them *good* human beings. In *NE* I.7, Aristotle argues that human beings have a characteristic function that differentiates them from other living things. [101] Aristotle describes this characteristic function in terms of rational activity or the ability to guide our actions and emotions in accordance with reason. But since human beings can fulfill this function in various ways without also becoming good, Aristotle goes further to claim that human beings need to fulfill their characteristic function *well*. And to do this, human beings need to acquire and exercise dispositions (what Aristotle refers to as a 'state' or *hexis*; see also *NE* II.1 and 1105a29-34) which enable them to guide their actions and emotions excellently, reliably, and in accordance with reason. These dispositions are the virtues, which Aristotle divides into two kinds: virtues of character (e.g., bravery, temperance, friendship, justice, etc.) and virtues of the intellect (e.g., practical wisdom, understanding, theoretical wisdom, etc). To function well and be virtuous overall, human beings

[101] This argument is commonly referred to as the Function Argument. It can also be found in Plato's *Republic* (see 352d-353e). For more on Aristotle's version, see Whiting (1988), Lawrence (2001, 2006), and Korsgaard (2008a, 2008b).

need to acquire and exercise both kinds of virtue. And in becoming virtuous overall, according to Aristotle, we become *good* human beings.

Another way of explaining Aristotle's view of virtue can be drawn from Martha Nussbaum's (1986) discussion of how we can conceptualize the virtues relative to various "spheres of human experience" (245). What Nussbaum means by "spheres of human experience" are the kinds of experiences or circumstances that are commonly observed among human beings, regardless of differences in culture or society. Basically, these are experiences common to human nature and activity. Among such are: "Bodily appetites and their pleasures," "Distribution of limited resources," "Attitude to slights and damages," and "Association and living together," to name a few (246). And for each sphere, we can raise the question: "what is it to choose and respond well within that sphere? And what is it to choose defectively?" (245). Nussbaum remarks that "Aristotle articulates his general approach, beginning from a characterization of a sphere of universal experience and choice, and introducing the virtue-name as the name (as yet undefined) or whatever it is to choose appropriately in that area of experience" (246-247). So, for example, the virtue that enables someone to choose appropriately within the sphere of "bodily appetites and their pleasures" is temperance or moderation. Similarly, the virtue related to "distribution of limited resources" would be justice. The same goes for the other spheres of experience and whatever virtues enable a person to respond well within them. Several things from this are important for present purposes. First, human nature and activity customarily involve certain universal spheres of experience, such as those just mentioned. Second, for each sphere of experience we can choose or respond *well*, or in worse ways. Third, the virtues are those dispositions that enable human beings to reliably choose and respond well in each sphere

of experience. In short, human beings display virtue or function excellently when they possess and exercise virtuous dispositions within the different spheres of human experience.

Aristotle would also claim that the virtues, or acquired excellences, that make human beings good differ from other kinds of excellences they can display. For example, financial shrewdness is a valuable talent or skill, but possessing it says nothing about whether a person is good, bad, admirable, or not. Similarly, the life of an excellent basketball player or accomplished pianist does not entail that their life was morally admirable or the contrary. Put differently, being good at something doesn't necessarily make one a *good person*. In that same vein, having excellent eyesight or a naturally high IQ are desirable traits but, likewise, do not make one morally admirable or praiseworthy. Compassion or generosity, on the other hand, are morally good character traits to have and partly explain why someone qualifies as a good person; though, we expect a good person to be *more than* generous. It is this latter Aristotelian conception of virtue and excellent human functioning that is central to the conception of agential excellence.

The second takeaway from Aristotle's account is that the virtuous life can be understood as conceptually separable from a flourishing life. To see this, we can identify two different lives at work in Aristotle's account. First, there is the eudaemon life as our ultimate end, being a life wherein we both act virtuously throughout *and* experience favorable circumstances. This life qualifies as our ultimate end because it is both complete and self-sufficient, whereas a completely virtuous life falls short of both conditions despite being admirable and worth choosing for its own sake. In other words, there is more to the happiest and best human life than living virtuously, and Aristotle goes on to describe eudaimonia as requiring a stable presence of external goods and prosperity in order to be the best and most complete life human beings can live (see also *NE* 1099b25-1100a; 1100b9-11; 1101a14-15). Another life present in Aristotle's

work is the virtuous life. As mentioned, the eudaemon life entails that one lives virtuously or displays "the best and most complete virtue…in a complete life" (*NE* 1098a18-19). But it might also happen that tragedy befalls a virtuous person, or they fail to obtain some external goods and favorable circumstances needed to fully flourish. And so, their life may not pan out to be a flourishing life, but we would still conclude that they lived a virtuous life.[102] This is a life in which they fulfilled the human function excellently and lived in a way that is morally fine, admirable, and praiseworthy. From this, we have another way of understanding agential excellence: as that of a virtuous life.

Before moving further, some clarification is needed regarding the role of external goods and favorable circumstances within both the virtuous life and virtuous activity. This is to avoid the misconception that nothing else is needed to act and live virtuously besides *virtue itself*, such as is found in the Stoic view briefly mentioned earlier.[103] Relatedly, it would be a mistake to think that the virtuous person aims only at being virtuous with no concern for other goods in life. To avoid this confusion, we should recognize that favorable circumstances play an important role in cultivating virtue. For example, lacking good role models while growing up or being raised in an abusive family environment can greatly prohibit an individual becoming virtuous. Conversely, having good role models and being raised in a supportive family can lead to awareness of what it is to be a good person or what, for example, traits like benevolence or fairness are like. Also, performing some virtuous actions require possession and usage of external goods. An obvious example of this can be seen in a case where performing a generous

[102] For example, see Aristotle's mention of the tragic case of Priam in *NE* 1100a6-9.
[103] See also page 88. According to the Stoics, virtue itself is the sole constituent of a flourishing life and, therefore, the only thing needed to flourish. The excellence-based view, as an alternative Aristotelian account, does not share the Stoics position on either the nature of virtue or the flourishing life. I discuss Stoicism and how it differs from an excellence-based view in greater detail in chapter 3, section 1.

act requires possessing money that can be gifted to a needful recipient (see also *NE* 1178a25-34). And we could also add that a measure of financial stability is needed to perform some generous actions, since being tight with finances could hamstring one's ability to give when necessary. All of this is to say that we should not be misled to think that external goods and favorable conditions are unimportant for being virtuous. On the contrary, the phronimos, or virtuous person, is aware of the role of external goods and favorable circumstances for the virtuous life and has the appropriate attitude towards them. That is, they value such goods both for their own sake and because they are needed to perform some virtuous actions. In other words, the phronimos' conception of agential excellence and what it entails can lead them to correctly appreciate external goods and favorable circumstances and to determine when they are necessary for acting virtuously.

Nevertheless, Aristotle would likely agree that a virtuous person, who is both mature and experienced, is unlikely to depend much on external goods and favorable circumstances. Though it is true that these are essential for early stages of moral development, it is also true that those experienced in virtue know how to maintain their character and act virtuously in their absence. For instance, as we saw in chapter 1, the Letter-Writers were able to maintain their character and act nobly in the worst of circumstances, which included imprisonment, impending execution, and separation from their loved ones. [104] Although such conditions can make it difficult to be steadfast in virtue, they do not make it impossible to do so. Similarly, for example, an experienced generous person would most likely know of other avenues to give generously when their own finances are limited, perhaps resorting to giving their time, talents, or other possessions

[104] This example was first introduced in Foot's *Natural Goodness* (2001). The accounts of such individuals are included in a collection of letters in Gollwitzer, Kuhn, and Schneider's *Dying We Live: The Final Messages and Records of Some Germans who Defied Hitler* (2009).

to benefit a recipient. In short, two key points can be drawn from these remarks and those in the previous paragraph. The first is that although external goods and favorable circumstances are needed to some degree for attaining a virtuous life and performing virtuous actions, we should not think that the latter is impossible without the former. And the second is that the concept of agential excellence can guide an individual to value and make use of such goods when necessary for virtuous activity.

As mentioned, Aristotle's account of excellent human functioning and a virtuous life provide the conceptual basis for agential excellence. A virtuous life or excellent human functioning entails that an agent has cultivated a virtuous character and acts virtuously in a consistent way. The concept of agential excellence, therefore, takes these as its core dimensions: a virtuous life, a virtuous character, and virtuous activity. So, when we say that a person *displays* agential excellence, what we mean is that they exhibit a virtuous character, act virtuously, or live a virtuous life. Similarly, when we say that someone is *guided by* agential excellence, we mean that they are guided by these dimensions and what they entail.

But alongside Aristotle's account, we could envisage the concept of agential excellence arising in another way. In the last section, we described how Dominique admired his aunt and others like Florence Nightingale and Mother Teresa, and guided his moral life, in large part, based on their example. In other words, these people function as 'moral exemplars' for Dominique. [105] If we asked him *what* he admired about such individuals, admittedly he would

[105] These remarks and what follow are inspired by Linda Zagzebski's 'exemplarist moral theory' (2017). As she defines it, and as I generally employ the term here, an 'exemplar' is "a paradigmatically excellent person. An exemplar is a person who is most admirable" (Zagzebski 2017, 20). I mostly rely on two principles from her view: 1) we identify exemplars through the feeling of *admiration* (2017, 43) and 2) we admire exemplars based on *acquired traits or excellences* (in contrast to natural excellences, such as the ability to sing well or lift heavy weights) (2017, 37-40). Though these principles are generally helpful for framing the present discussion, we encounter problems upon their closer examination. For instance, the accuracy of our admiration can be questionable and, at times, simply wrong. Even though Zagzebski claims that basic trust in our feeling of admiration is "inescapable and rational," she suggests that we could always test the fittingness between our admiration and its

describe their character, actions, and the life they led. More specifically, because their lives were characterized by compassion, humility, and empathy towards the suffering of others, Dominique admired them and wanted to emulate these in some way within his own life. The basic thought here is that by investigating the properties of moral exemplars we can also arrive at a conception of agential excellence.

For example, consider someone like Mother Teresa and what properties make her a moral exemplar. We could ask, for instance: "*Why* was she a good person and *how* did she live an excellent life?" And in response, we could give a description of her character and what she did throughout her life. It is fair to say that Mother Teresa is admired and considered a good person because she had traits like compassion and empathy. Also, her life and actions were defined by persistent efforts to help and care for the poor, diseased, and suffering people of Calcutta. Based on this brief example, we could characterize good persons or excellent lives as involving the possession and exercise of traits like compassion and empathy. We could also describe such traits as involving appropriate motives, feelings, and values which give rise to actions that seek to alleviate the suffering of others. For example, if Mother Teresa performed the same caring acts but without being appropriately motivated or having the right feelings, our admiration for her would diminish greatly. For other traits like justice, generosity, honesty, courage, and others,

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object by means of conscientious self-reflection and from within our communities (2017, 17, 44-50). Nevertheless, concerns may still linger because entire communities sometimes admire evil persons, such as in the case of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. It is likely that an individual in that context would rationalize their admiration for Hitler by testing it through individual and communal reflection. Also, Zagzebski believes that "we admire intellectual virtues in the same way we admire the moral virtues," specifically when we mark the distinction between natural and acquired traits (2017, 39). That is, we admire people differently for something that comes natural to them in comparison for something acquired by choice and effort. Though we do admire people for intellectual virtues they possess, it's questionable whether all or most of these traits contribute to someone qualifying as a *good* person. For instance, Zagzebski remarks that "closed-mindedness and intellectual dishonesty are contemptible," that is, they are both vices and detract from someone being a good person. However, it's not clear whether lacking intellectual curiosity and humility detract from someone's goodness in the same way. This seems to warrant further clarification of what specific traits qualify someone as a good person.

we could identify them in a similar way based on other exemplars. But what's important for present purposes is that moral exemplars, such as Mother Teresa and others, characteristically display, albeit in different ways, the following general properties: virtuous character traits, virtuous activity, and a virtuous life. Based on this, we could define agential excellence based on the properties exhibited by moral exemplars: those of a virtuous character, acting virtuously, and living a virtuous life.

Interestingly, conceptualizing agential excellence based on moral exemplars does not take into consideration whether such persons flourished. For as we saw with the example of Mother Teresa, her character and life were exemplary and worthy of admiration because they exhibited virtue, and not because she lived well *all things considered*. If she did in fact flourish this would not likely enhance her admirability. Instead, she is admirable because of her character, what she did, and how she lived, which may not have ultimately led to her own flourishing. The same could be said for other notable figures like Confucius, Harriet Tubman, or Nelson Mandela. Our admiration doesn't appear to be based on whether they flourished, but, rather, on the fact that they seem to be excellent persons with virtuous traits. Put simply, we consider someone a moral exemplar because they exhibited virtue, not because they may have flourished. Agential excellence, therefore, seems to be the fundamental basis for why such persons are moral exemplars or *good* human beings.

With these points in hand, we can see how agential excellence, or the virtuous life, can be conceived as a distinct end from eudaimonia and as an end that could guide practically wise deliberation. On one hand, we can understand virtue and the virtuous life without situating it within the eudaemon life. And on the other, the two different lives function as ends we can aim for and derive guidance from. For instance, eudaimonia can function as the ultimate end for how

to live our lives in the best possibly way *all things considered*, that is, when taking both moral and prudential value into account. But in a different way, agential excellence can function as the ultimate end for our specifically *moral* lives, such that we derive guidance from it to live in a virtuous or morally excellent way. That is, if the virtuous life is conceptually separable from eudaimonia, then it can stand independently as an ultimate end for our moral lives. And if this end can guide our moral lives, it can also guide our practical deliberation when reasoning about what we should do. If anything, the eudaemon life is only capable of guiding our lives *morally* because it entails the virtuous life. Thus, the guidance the virtuous life provides is epistemically prior to whatever further guidance the eudaemon life can provide.

But why think that agential excellence is fit to guide practical wisdom without relying upon a conception of eudaimonia? Here's why: agential excellence is a sufficiently inclusive moral end. This concept entails all necessary moral concerns for being excellent in character, action, and life. In other words, when we conceive of a life in which we act virtuously, have a virtuous character, and live virtuously throughout, we thereby have a complete and self-sufficient moral end to guide our lives in accordance with; no moral consideration is lacking, and nothing further is needed. Put simply, agential excellence can sufficiently guide the phronimos' deliberation in what we would call the 'moral sphere' (Hursthouse 2006, 285). A fuller conception of the flourishing life or eudaimonia, at least how Aristotle and contemporary Aristotelian virtue-ethicists conceive of it, does not seem to provide additional guidance for living virtuously that is not already included within the concept of agential excellence.

One might object that the view I am offering is not sufficiently inclusive, but it is worth pausing and taking account of just what is included under the concept of agential excellence, or a

virtuous life. Though this view is more discriminating than its eudaemonist alternative because it includes all and only what is morally relevant, nonetheless, it is quite comprehensive.

To see how agential excellence is sufficiently inclusive as a moral end, we can first consider what a virtuous life entails. When thinking of specific examples of a virtuous life, we are likely to be drawn to the lives of moral exemplars, such as Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Ghandi, or others like them. As mentioned, the lives of moral exemplars are excellent and worthy of admiration because of the excellent character and actions that constitute such lives. If we put together excellence in character and action in a person's life *as a whole*, the result is that one has lived an excellent moral life. The point being that our conception of an excellent life can guide us towards the properties that constitute such lives, such as having an excellent character and acting excellently.

To see what an excellent or virtuous action is, we can borrow Aristotle's description as an act which is done in the right way, at the right time, with the right means, towards the right things, and from the right 'state' or character trait.[106] On one hand, virtuous or excellent actions are those which are best or most fitting for a situation. For example, a truly generous act provides the right amount of financial support for the right recipient. As such, it is neither too little nor too much, as, for example, when the recipient is susceptible to careless spending. Instead, a generous act for this kind of recipient will involve a gift that is just enough to take care of their need or is in some form that is not monetary. Furthermore, a virtuous action necessarily involves having the correct internal states, such as having appropriate thoughts, emotions, and motives related to that virtue. For instance, a generous action requires an attitude of generosity when performing the action. Giving begrudgingly or with an attitude of indifference to the needs of others

[106] See Aristotle, *NE* 1142b28-29, 1106b21-23, and 1109a27-29.

demonstrates that one's emotional state is contrary to the performed act. We should also note that in many cases a virtuous action will be a response to a relevant moral value. For instance, an honest action may be done out of respect for the value of truth. Similarly, a just action may be performed out of respect for fairness and equality. Or, in some cases, a virtuous action may be done out of respect for a particular person as being valuable, such as one's spouse, parents, or child. In many other cases, a plethora of moral values may need to be considered and respected in order to act well in that instance.

Another dimension of agential excellence is that of excellence in a person's character. On this view, human beings are morally excellent insofar as they possess and maintain a virtuous character, wherein we would find traits like generosity, honesty, justice, temperance, or courage, to name a few. In an Aristotelian sense, these can be understood as *acquired psychological dispositions*, which are stable over time and reliably manifest trait-relevant thoughts, feelings, motives, and actions.[107] For example, being generous in character, once acquired, is a stable feature of that person and consistently manifests itself over time. Furthermore, a generous person is someone we'd expect to demonstrate generous behavior across a variety of situations in which generosity is relevant. They are not merely generous to their own children, but would be generous to friends, coworkers, and others when it's an important feature of a situation and when resources permit them. Lastly, a generous person is one who values generosity and who cares about helping others by providing for them.[108] In other words, a virtuous character includes deeply held moral values. It is characteristic of virtuous people that they care about truth, helping others, and respecting the freedom, rights, and dignity of others. Moral values are not strictly action-guiding principles but are part of the very character and identity of the virtuous person.

[107] See Miller (2018) for a helpful review of virtues as dispositional traits.
[108] See also Annas (2011, chapter 7).

Ultimately, the point is that possessing virtuous character traits, which entails a commitment to various moral values, is necessary for being excellent in character.

According to the excellence-based view, agential excellence is capable of guiding phronetic deliberation because it is a sufficiently inclusive moral end and is conceptually separable from the eudaemon life. If this is the case, then practically wise deliberation can be adequately guided by considering what is virtuous to do, what expresses a virtuous character, or what is consistent with a virtuous life. And when guided in accordance with agential excellence, the phronimos can reach a practical answer to the question 'what is best to do?' for any given circumstance. Not only can they determine what is best to do by deliberating according to agential excellence, but they can do so in a way that does not require guidance from a conception of the flourishing life.

3. How Agential Excellence Can Guide Practically Wise Deliberation

Now that we have a clearer picture of the concept of agential excellence, it needs to be shown how it can guide practically wise deliberation. To see this, let's turn back to the example of Dominique. From that example, Dominique's practical wisdom could be described as guided by agential excellence. Part of this is explained by the fact that when Dominique deliberates about what he should do in specific situations, he is guided by whether an action is virtuous or morally excellent. Also, he may guide his decision based on whether an act expresses a virtuous character trait, such as compassion or honesty, or because it is compatible with a virtuous life, as when an act is a way of living out a compassionate life. Whatever the case, if Dominique's practical wisdom is sufficiently guided by agential excellence or an equivalent concept, then he may not rely on a conception of the flourishing life to help him deliberate about what to do.

To get a better glimpse of how this works in concrete circumstances, let's consider an example of how Dominique deliberates about acting compassionately. Imagine, for example, that Dominique is in a situation where someone is badly injured and requires medical treatment. Imagine, further, that this hurt individual, whom we'll call Charles, was a childhood bully to Dominique and caused significant harm to him in various ways when he was younger. How can agential excellence guide Dominique's phronetic deliberation to determine what's best to do in this situation? For one, he can recognize that failing to provide medical assistance to any person, even Charles, is simply not a virtuous action, not compassionate behavior, or the appropriate way to respond to another's suffering. Because attending to and healing the physical suffering of others, regardless of what they have done, accords with excellence, the phronimos can rely on their understanding of this to determine how best to act in a situation where compassion is needed. Another way Dominique might guide his deliberation is by considering what best expresses a compassionate character. For instance, avoiding the opportunity to assist another person's suffering, even someone who has significantly harmed him, is incompatible with Dominique's desire to be compassionate. That is, not providing medical care for Charles is inconsistent with how Dominique sees himself nor is it consistent with the kind of person he wants to be. Finally, when deliberating about what to do, Dominique may consider how allowing another person to suffer and possibly die, when he could do something about it, is not fitting for or part of an excellent life. He might see the compassionate or caring life as an ideal, and a life like that does not involve foregoing another's suffering even when that same person has done harm. And so, an excellent life can also guide Dominique's reasoning towards what's best to do.

We should note that what has been said about a deliberative end's explicit or implicit guiding role is relevant here. The phronimos may explicitly draw on any of the dimensions of

agential excellence, whether this is done while deliberating in a situation or before or after a situation. Or, agential excellence may serve as a background consideration that implicitly guides situational deliberation. In Dominique's case, he may explicitly deliberate in accordance with excellence to determine what he should do for Charles, and thus determine that treating him in the best way possible is what must be done or that it is consistent with who he wants to be. In contrast, Dominique may have deliberated prior to the situation that helping *any* kind of person, good or bad, in a compassionate way is consistent with a good character or conducive to an excellent life, but in the moment may not have such thoughts in mind. In the latter case, agential excellence guides Dominique's situational deliberation as a background concern.

But what about a similar situation in which different concerns come into conflict? Imagine, for instance, that Charles's physical harm was perpetrated by individuals to whom he owes a gambling debt. Perhaps these individuals have notoriously threatened and harmed those who provide any form of assistance to those in their debt. If Dominique or any member of the hospital staff treats Charles, then they are at risk of being harmed. However, Dominic believes that he cannot cave to threats and avoid treating someone in need. A situation like this, therefore, also requires courage. And, furthermore, it requires balancing the need to be compassionate with the need for being courageous.

But here too, agential excellence can guide deliberation towards the correct way to balance both virtues in one's response. If the phronimos considered what would be the excellent thing to do, then both compassion and courage surface as equally important for what should be done. And so, what is excellent would be to balance and integrate both in one's action. In other words, considering what is excellent can lead Dominique to determine how to be *both* compassionate and brave, such as, for example, secretly helping Charles at an offsite location.

Similarly, if Dominique thought about it in terms character, he would want to express himself as *both* compassionate and courageous in how he cares for others. Caring only about being compassionate or only about being courageous demonstrates a fragmented character in this kind of situation, and this falls short of responding excellently. Also, an excellent life involves valuing and respecting both when possible. If Dominique considers what would be consistent with an excellent life, this too can guide him towards living in a way that balances compassion with courage. Excellence, therefore, would involve integrating both concerns and, thus, avoid the apparent conflict. For if Dominique only cared about being compassionate or only being brave, then the other concern would be ignored or depreciated. For instance, if Dominique refused to act because of the threats, then he would fail to act compassionately. And, conversely, if he refused to take the threats seriously, and treated Charles as he normally would, then he would be acting rashly and in ignorance of his own safety, his peers, and the individual in his care.

A further question is whether agential excellence can guide phronetic deliberation in a way that properly appreciates things and generates appropriate reasons for action. There are several reasons to think that it can. For example, a conception of the excellent life involves, among other things, compassion towards others, responding courageously to threats, and valuing the safety of others. In other words, we cannot properly conceive of a virtuous life where such concerns are absent or ignored, and many other concerns are necessarily part of that life. The phronimos is thereby guided by their view of the excellent life to value compassion towards others, standing firm in danger, and protecting others. Furthermore, virtuous persons are committed to such values, or put differently, these values partly constitute their character. If I am striving towards having an excellent character, then I deliberate about what to do in a situation relative to what I value and deeply care about. And lastly, we can add that an excellent action is

done for the right reasons. Not only is an act virtuous because of what's being done, or the observable behavior, but also because of *why* it is done. And *right reasons* need to reflect *what's important* or *at stake* in the situation one is in. For the present case, Dominique's action is excellent only insofar as his reasons for acting reflect the importance of compassion towards others, facing threats bravely, and not putting others needlessly in harm's way. If the phronimos deliberates about what is best to do, then this will involve considering the relevant reasons for action.

To summarize what has been said up to this point, we can see that agential excellence can guide practically wise deliberation and, therefore, that the excellence-based view of practical wisdom stands as a plausible alternative to the eudaimonist view. When deliberating about what to do in a situation, the phronimos can be guided by agential excellence towards what is best, whether this is done explicitly in the situation or whether it serves as a background consideration. Also, phronetic deliberation can adequately balance conflicting moral concerns when guided by agential excellence. And, as seen in the previous paragraph, agential excellence can lead the phronimos to deliberate in a way that identifies what's worth responding to and to reflect such in their reasons for acting. Ultimately, because the phronimos can reach a correct deliberative conclusion by being guided by agential excellence, then we can conclude that practically wise deliberation does not necessarily rely upon a conception of eudaimonia.

4. Advantages of an Excellence-Based View

At this point, however, we've only shown that agential excellence *can* guide phronetic deliberation, not that it's *preferable* to eudaimonia in this role. But there are two reasons to think agential excellence is a preferable deliberative guide for practical wisdom.

One advantage can be seen when we examine the different lives of virtuous persons and what they have in common. For instance, Dominique was an example of a virtuous person whose practical wisdom was guided by agential excellence, not eudaimonia. Eudaimonia may have been something he considered from time to time and in different circumstances. But for the most part, agential excellence provided most, if not all, guidance for his exercise of practical wisdom. We can also consider instances of virtuous individuals in tragic circumstances who may not consider eudaimonia when thinking practically about how to live and act. We saw an example of this in the real-life case of the Letter-Writers which figured centrally in chapter 1. Despite being virtuous, the Letter-Writers experienced the loss of things and opportunities that would have enabled them to flourish. Nevertheless, what stands out is that these individuals did not fail in character. They remained virtuous even though flourishing was no longer 'on the table' for them. During their imprisonment and time awaiting execution, should we think that eudaimonia guided their practical wisdom when deliberating about how to act and live? This seems unlikely, given the nature of their circumstances coupled with their awareness of this fact. They knew death was immanent, they knew there was no possibility of return to their normal lives and families, and they were being treated as criminals and would be executed as such. Instead, it would make more sense to claim that their practical reasoning was guided by the aims of maintaining a noble character or living honorably in their final moments. In other words, something like agential excellence was more likely what guided their practical reasoning. What agential excellence provides, therefore, is consistent deliberative guidance no matter the circumstances. Whether eudaimonia is available or not, the practically wise agent can always deliberate according to agential excellence to guide their lives, character, and actions.

Another advantage of an excellence-based view can be drawn from the work of Paul Bloomfield (2012). In a nutshell, Bloomfield argues that "goodness ought to be the loadstone of practical reasoning" given that "a happy human life is a good human life" (2012, 282). He writes that

> It is…goodness at which our practical rationality ought to aim, just as it is truth at which our belief-forming mechanisms ought to aim. If we value goodness, and guide the formation of our characters in relation to what it is to be 'a good human being', taking goodness as the goal of what we are trying to achieve in our lives, then our practical rationality will be (oriented) as it ought to be (2012, 283)

Further on, he adds:

> Practical rationality so conceived aims at goodness and is a proper part of the goodness in the world, and as a virtue, it becomes a proper part of the happiness or the goodness of the life of the person whose will it is. We ought to direct our wills towards the good, and thereby we will direct our lives towards the good. In so far as we are successful, we will live good lives and be good people (2012, 284)[109]

The upshot of these remarks is that "doing the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, and so doing regularly, with grace and aplomb, is as good a picture of living a happy life as we will ever get" (2012, 281). Bloomfield's comments point to two things that sit well with the excellence-based view of practical wisdom, but it is the latter of these that demonstrates why its preferable to a eudaimonist account. First, Bloomfield argues that when our practical reasoning is directed towards goodness that this can effectively lead us to living morally good lives and being good people. He is not claiming, as the eudaimonist position does, that directing one's

[109] Similar remarks are made in Bloomfield (2014, 228-230).

practical reasoning towards eudaimonia is necessary for this. In following Bloomfield, the excellence-based view makes a similar move. When phrased in excellence-based language, agential excellence is sufficient for guiding the phronimos' deliberation towards living an excellent life and being an excellent person without requiring guidance from eudaimonia.

The second point made by Bloomfield is that when we aim at goodness this puts us in a better position to attain a flourishing life. His reasoning reflects the Aristotelian view that eudaimonia primarily consists of living a morally good or virtuous life, but he departs from it insofar as eudaimonia need not be the guiding principle for our practical reasoning. Rather, he thinks that our practical reasoning ought to be oriented towards goodness and the virtuous life, first and foremost. An excellence-based view makes a similar claim, insofar as excellence can adequately guide our deliberation towards living virtuously, and living virtuously is the central feature of a flourishing life and most difficult aspect of it to attain. So, basically, when we aim towards and guide our lives in accordance with agential excellence, this puts us in a better position to attain a flourishing life by attaining what's central to that life. Furthermore, Bloomfield recognizes that eudaimonia can be affected by misfortune in life, but that we should still orient our practical rationality towards goodness. He claims:

> there is some reason to think that being good and being happy can and will come apart from each other. But this does not, in itself, force us to give up on the idea that being a 'good human being' can set the standard for how to live, even in tragic circumstances: it only forces us to acknowledge that being good is sufficient only for us to be as happy as we can possibly be, given who we are and the circumstances in which we find ourselves (2012, 283).

In agreement, the excellence-based view would claim that guiding our practical deliberation according to excellence puts us in the best position to flourish whether circumstances are favorable or not.

This doesn't dissuade the virtuous person from desiring the eudaemon life nor deliberating about how to attain it. But even if such remarks make space for eudaimonia in phronetic deliberation, they do not thereby support the claim that a conception of eudaimonia is necessary for the phronimos to deliberate excellently about how to act and live. As noted, deliberation pertaining to our moral lives can be sufficiently guided by considerations of agential excellence without help from a conception of eudaimonia. And we should also note that when practical deliberation includes a conception of eudaimonia it necessarily includes other considerations besides virtue or moral excellence (such as concerns related to family, one's career, or personal health), how these relate to flourishing, and how they relate to action in each situation. But the addition of these other concerns in phronetic deliberation doesn't thereby expand the scope of relevant moral considerations that must be considered when determining how best to act. For this point as well, agential excellence can sufficiently guide the phronimos to take into consideration all relevant moral concerns when deliberating. Including the broader scope of eudaimonist considerations doesn't provide additional deliberative guidance for the phronimos regarding their moral life, that is, when determining how to act virtuously and live an excellent life. If Bloomfield is right, not only does the phronimos deliberate well when guided by goodness, virtue, or being a 'good human being,' but doing such also positions them well to flourish. In drawing from Bloomfield, the excellence-based view is simply claiming that we should aim towards and guide our lives in accordance with agential excellence, since that is our best bet for living a flourishing life.

5. Beyond Situational Deliberation

In the preceding sections, I have sought to demonstrate how agential excellence can sufficiently guide practically wise deliberation and that there are reasons to prefer the excellence-based view of practical wisdom over the eudaimonist view. The central claim was that whenever the phronimos deliberates about what to do for a given situation, agential excellence can adequately guide their deliberation towards the best response, thus avoiding the necessity of eudaimonia to guide deliberation.

Although I've focused on practically wise deliberation, this may come across as an oversimplification of practical wisdom or perhaps too narrow of an understanding given other roles or functions it performs.[110] For instance, recent work on Aristotelian practical wisdom has explored a variety of roles or functions it performs, which means it enables its possessor to do more than merely deliberate excellently about how to act (Darnell et al. 2019; Snow, Wright, Warren 2021; Kristjánsson 2022). The various roles identified within these works are the following: 1) action guidance (also referred to as the *constitutive function*), 2) regulation and integration of a multiplicity of virtues (also referred to as the *integrative function*), 3) emotion regulation, and 4) reflection on one's life as a whole (also referred to as the *blueprint function*). Although these various roles differ from phronetic deliberation as specifically described throughout this chapter, nevertheless, each depends upon deliberation in some capacity to function properly. The main task for this section is to demonstrate that agential excellence can also guide these roles of practical wisdom. And because it can, as I try to show, this only further

[110] Recall that in section 1 included a brief description of the various 'parts' that constitute phronesis (e.g., good deliberation, intelligence, good judgment, cleverness, and discernment). In this section, the shift of focus is towards the various 'functions' of phronesis (i.e., what it *does* or enables its possessor to do).

bolsters the case for an excellence-based view and its claim that agential excellence can adequately guide practical wisdom.

Up to this point in the chapter, the defining activity of practical wisdom has been described as excellent practical deliberation about what to do in a situation. However, much of this discussion has been about action guidance, since it is by deliberation that the phronimos *guides* their *actions* correctly. Put differently, practical wisdom is action-guiding insofar as it is "internal to each virtue, and guides action in accordance with that specific virtue" (Snow, Wright, and Warren 2021, 71). As we've seen, practical wisdom enables its possessor to determine that generosity is required for the situation one is in, which is one step in action guidance. And the other step is where practical wisdom determines how best to perform a generous action in the present circumstance. In short, if we asked: "what does practically wise action guidance look like?" the answer will necessarily involve a picture of how the phronimos deliberates about what to do in a situation. So, because practically wise action guidance necessarily involves deliberation, and because we've seen much of how this looks in the previous sections, I will refrain from explaining this point further.

Another role that overlaps with action guidance is the *integrative function*, wherein practical wisdom balances and integrates a multiplicity of virtues or moral concerns. This role also surfaced in the preceding sections, so I will not add much more here. The integrative function of practical wisdom comes into play for situations where, "ethically salient considerations, or different kinds of virtues or values, appear to be in conflict and agents need to negotiate the dilemmatic space" (Kristjánsson 2022, 179).[111] For example, if someone notices that both generosity and fairness are important within a situation, but conflict with each other,

[111] See also Darnell et al. (2019, 118); Snow, Wright, Warren (2021, 72).

practical wisdom can balance and blend both to produce the appropriate response. This role frequently overlaps with action guidance, since guiding one's action in dilemmatic situations requires weighing, balancing, and integrating the various concerns at stake to determine how best to respond in action. And if that's true, then situational deliberation in conflict cases necessarily involves the integrative function, since deliberating about what to do will involve weighing, balancing, and integrating various moral concerns relevant to that situation.

A role that did not make a pronounced appearance in the preceding sections was that of *emotional regulation*. Nevertheless, much like action guidance, practical wisdom guides the phronimos by "helping to bring their emotional responses into line with their understandings of the ethically salient aspects of their situation, their judgment and their sense of what is at stake in the moment" (Kristjánsson 2022, 180). This shouldn't come as a surprise, since a virtuous action necessarily involves the agent having appropriate emotions or feelings while acting.[112] For example, if someone acts generously but does so while feeling resentment towards the recipient, they do not perform a virtuous action in the fullest sense. This is because performing a generous act, as a virtuous person would perform it, will characteristically involve feelings like willingness or gladness at the opportunity to help another person in need. Or a virtuous response to a situation may only involve an emotional reaction. For instance, when a notoriously problematic coworker is finally fired, a virtuous person's response may only consist of feeling sorrow for that person, rather than enthusiasm. The point being, a virtuous person would express the right emotions in response to a situation, and it is the role of phronesis to guide them correctly in this matter. One way it does this is by deliberating towards what emotional response fits the situation at hand, such as in the recognition that feeling sorrow, rather than indifference,

[112] See, for example, Aristotle's description of proper emotions or feelings in relation to bravery, temperance, and generosity (*NE* 1116a19, 1118b35, 1120b27-28).

is an appropriate response to another person's loss. But the phronimos may also need to regulate overreacting or underreacting to a situation, such as being excessively distraught over damage to one's car or feeling indifference over the death of a close relative.[113] In short, phronesis regulates both the type and degree of emotions felt in response to a situation.

When the phronimos deliberates about what to do or how best to respond in a situation, the deliberative process will necessarily play a role in action guidance, emotion regulation, and, in dilemmatic situations, balancing and integrating different moral concerns and virtues. In other words, each of the roles discussed up to this point are inseparable from phronetic deliberation. And what was determined in the previous sections was that phronetic deliberation can be adequately guided by agential excellence, thus avoiding the need for guidance from the concept of eudaimonia. What results is that each role of practical wisdom discussed so far (action guidance, emotion regulation, and the integrative function) can, likewise, be adequately guided by agential excellence. For action guidance, the phronimos can deliberate towards how best to act when they consider what an excellent action fully involves, what expresses or maintains an excellent character, or what is consistent with or conducive to an excellent life. And with the integrative function, what one ought to do will involve balancing and harmonizing different virtues or moral concerns to determine the action that best fits the situation. Emotion regulation follows suit, insofar as deliberation will be required to determine what emotion is most fitting for the performance of a generous or fair action, for example, or what kind of feelings would be expressed by a person of excellent character.

We have yet to remark on the fourth role, that of reflection on one's life as a whole or the *blueprint function*. As recent work describes it, practical wisdom can guide how a person reflects

[113] See also Snow, Wright, and Warren (2021, 73).

on their life as a whole, regarding both their moral identity and in how they are living up to their conception of a good life (Darnell et al. 2019, 119; Kristjánsson 2022, 179-180). Snow, Wright, and Warren provide a helpful example to illustrate this function: "A mother might realize that she has become impatient and sharp with her children; upon reflection, she decides that she does not want to be that way. Phronesis enables her to make the decision to cultivate patience and kindness, and thereby, to strive to become a better parent" (2021, 73). [114] Practical wisdom, therefore, is key to reflecting on one's character in search of areas needing improvement and whether one is living up to the quality of person they want to be. It is also key to reflecting on what is needed for living well and how different goods interact within that life (Kristjánsson 2022, 179). However, what needs to be settled, for present purposes, is whether a conception of eudaimonia is *necessary* for guiding practical wisdom during moments of life reflection.

If only eudaimonia can adequately guide reflection on one's life as a whole, then this excludes two real possibilities for practically wise individuals. One is seen in the example of Dominique, who may desire to live a happy and flourishing life but does not see this as decisive when reflecting on his own life. Dominique mainly considers what is virtuous or admirable in moments of reflection. He examines his character, goals, and values with a view to being good and virtuous. So, Dominique can still be considered practically wise and virtuous because agential excellence guides his life-reflection. Another possibility is found in tragic cases of virtuous individuals, whose situation or circumstances preclude their chances of flourishing. As

[114] Interestingly, Snow, Wright, and Warren (2021) do not appear to have a clear position on whether a conception of the good life or eudaimonia is necessary for guiding the blueprint function. What is clear from their work is that either a "fully articulated comprehensive vision of their good" or "an explicit ordering of their ends and aims" is *not* needed for phronesis to help its possessor reflect and properly order their lives (74). Instead, they allow phronesis to play a role in constructing a blueprint or virtuous conception of the good life. Nevertheless, the question that remains for their view is whether the blueprint function necessarily aims at constructing an articulate and comprehensive view of the eudaemon life or whether this function can simply aim towards constructing a view of a virtuous and excellent life.

mentioned earlier, an example of this can be seen in the Letter-Writers case. Should we think that eudaimonia guided their practical wisdom when reflecting on their life? This, again, seems unlikely. And the reason for this is because they were likely aware of the tragic nature of their situation but still desired to live nobly and excellently despite this. So, when reflecting on their life, it seems more likely the case that they guided such reflection in accordance with living excellently and maintaining an excellent character. For either case, phronetic reflection on one's life as a whole may not require guidance from eudaimonia, but, rather, may be sufficiently guided by agential excellence.

Nevertheless, there is an additional problem related to the blueprint function that the excellence-based view must avoid. A common problem raised for this function of practical wisdom is that it seems to rely upon a "fully articulated comprehensive vision of the good," whether this is a specific conception of eudaimonia or a systematic ordering of ends and aims for one's life (Snow, Wright, Warren 2021, 74).[115] The thought goes that having a fully mapped out view of a good life or something similar is needed to properly guide one's life-reflection. But this is problematic because arriving at a conception like this is something that is available only to philosophers and other intellectual types. It is unlikely that most ordinary people could arrive at a sophisticated conception of eudaimonia or 'blueprint' of values and aims for one's life. Thus, practical wisdom and its blueprint function will be out of reach for most ordinary people. A concern for the excellence-based view is that possessing a comprehensive view of agential excellence can, likewise, appear to be too intellectualist and out of reach for many when

[115] This is commonly referred to as the Grand End view; see Broadie (1991, 199-201) and Kraut (1993, 361-362). A more modest version, proposed by Darnell et al., suggests that we need only a "blueprint of the aims of human life" (2019, 119).

reflecting on their life. If that's true, then it fairs no better than other conceptions in guiding the blueprint function.

In response, we could say that practically wise people, such as Dominique, need not have a fully articulate and comprehensive view of agential excellence. Dominique, for instance, could be describe as having arrived at a conception of a virtuous person and excellent life through exposure to various moral exemplars. It's plausible that his views became more detailed with life experience, but they may also be incomplete to a degree. Also, it is equally plausible that Dominique can, through further reflection, fill in his view of excellence to be *more* comprehensive and articulate as he navigates the moral life. Though his views of a good person and excellent life are initially derived from moral exemplars who exhibited compassion, empathy, and humility, we can safely assume that over time he will add to his views other admirable traits and actions. This allows for a conception of agential excellence to be developed over time and experience and, similarly, be possessed in a more or less articulate fashion. Therefore, it does not need to be possessed in a fully articulate and comprehensive fashion in order to guide phronetic reflection on our lives as a whole.

From the preceding discussion of the various roles of practical wisdom, another advantage of the excellence-based view emerges. Because agential excellence can adequately guide every role or function of practical wisdom, it provides comprehensive or 'across-the-board' guidance. As we saw, agential excellence can guide the virtuous person towards what is best, whether in action guidance, emotional regulation, or when a situation requires balancing and integrating various moral values and virtues. And, it can guide life-reflection, or the blueprint function, so that a person's values, projects, and overall character are consistent with or conducive to living an excellent life. In other words, in any of practical wisdom's roles, agential

excellence can guide deliberation or life reflection towards what is best. This cannot be said for eudaimonia's role in guiding practical wisdom. Eudaimonia, or a conception of the good life, does not provide necessary guidance for practical wisdom's various roles. Rather, these roles can be performed effectively without eudaimonist considerations and, if that's the case, then we should prefer a deliberative end that is active across the various roles of practical wisdom, and agential excellence can do just that.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for an alternative way of understanding practical wisdom and what should guide practically wise deliberation. Because some practically wise individuals may not deliberate with a view towards their own eudaimonia but may deliberate excellently with a view to living an excellent life and expressing a virtuous character, we have reason to think that eudaimonia is not needed to guide practically wise deliberation. Instead, what has been shown is that agential excellence is capable of guiding phronetic deliberation wherever we find it and is preferable to eudaimonia in this role. And, as we saw in the previous section, agential excellence is also capable of guiding other roles practical wisdom fulfills for its possessor. From all this, the excellence-based view stands as a preferable alternative to understanding practical wisdom than its eudaimonist counterpart.

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Chapter 4 - Alternatives to an Excellence-Based View of Virtuous Motivation

Introduction

Imagine a wealthy person who writes a substantial check as a donation for a charitable cause.[116] Let's also imagine that this individual is virtuous and in this generous act their motives are fitting for the situation and admirable. One way to describe *why* their motives are admirable or virtuous is to point out that generous people recognize what the point or target of generosity is and are motivated by this when acting generously. In this instance, our wealthy person recognizes that this charity's cause is worth supporting and is thereby motivated to support them through a donation, since that is the best way hit the target of generosity in this situation. Another way to describe why their motives are virtuous is because they are emotionally receptive to the charity's cause and are thereby moved to care for those whom the charity seeks to help. In this sense, they are motivated to care for others by providing a generous donation. Yet another way to explain what makes the wealthy person's motives virtuous is to highlight the fact that they value generosity because it is morally excellent and desire to act generously whenever possible. This commitment to generosity is intrinsically motivating, and it also motivates this person to hit the targets of generosity and to care for others through generous acts. From all this, we can see a variety of ways to describe what makes motives correct and virtuous. And, relatedly, there are different approaches one can turn to for describing virtuous motivation and what's central to it. One of the purposes of this chapter is to consider different virtue-ethical approaches that can be used for describing and justifying cases of virtuous motivation.

In previous chapters, I carved out a novel approach which I call an *excellence-based view of virtuous motivation.* This view took Aristotle's account of virtue as excellent human functioning

[116] This example is inspired by a similar one used by Stohr (2018, 453).

and made it central to understanding the virtuous person's reasons for acting and living as they do. For Aristotle, the virtues are those traits which make us excellent and *good* human beings. And being virtuous entails the possession of virtuous traits (both moral and intellectual), characteristically performing virtuous actions, and, in turn, living a virtuous life overall. I referred to this multidimensional picture of virtue as "agential excellence". For an excellence-based view, virtuous motivation entails a connection between one's motivating reasons and the concept of agential excellence. Individuals act from virtuous motives when their motives involve a desire to act excellently, maintain and express an excellent character, and aim to live an excellent life. Basically, an excellence-based view claims that a commitment to virtue or excellence is central to virtuous motivation and is a necessary part of what makes motives virtuous in every case we find them.

The main purpose of this chapter is to show that despite the merits and insightful contributions they make to understanding virtuous motivation, none of the alternative virtue-ethical approaches we'll consider prove to be better options than the excellence-based view. To show this, I examine each alternative approach to show what their account of virtuous motivation would look like alongside its merits and deficiencies. The views under consideration will be that of a Stoic view (in both ancient and contemporary form), an empathy care-based view, and a target-centered view. Throughout I will also allude to the eudaimonist view, which has received extensive treatment in other chapters (most notably in chapters 1 and 2, but also partly in chapter 3). But against these alternative views, I show how the excellence-based view can incorporate their merits while avoiding their shortcomings, and how a commitment to excellence is central to virtuous motivation in every case we find it.

In section 1, I begin with an examination of a Stoic view of virtuous motivation. For this view, we see some overlap with Aristotelian-inspired views as well as some notable differences. The Stoic view is also eudaimonist in how they structure virtuous motives but differ in the unique commitments that shape their account, especially for their view of virtue, how virtue is valued in comparison with other goods, and what the flourishing life looks like. And, as we'll see, the problems with a Stoic view ultimately stem from both features. In sections 2 and 3, we pivot to examine two contemporary virtue-ethical approaches. Section 2 explores an empathy care-based view found in the work of Michael Slote. This view places empathic care and concern at the heart of its view of virtuous motivation. For it, a person is virtuously motivated only if their motives are grounded in and expresses empathic care for others. Although Slote's view has much to offer in its picture of what genuine other-concern involves, empathic care does not surface in every case of virtuous motivation and can be problematic when divorced from practical rationality. Lastly, in section 3, we consider a target-centered view based on Christine Swanton's work. In a nutshell, Swanton's view claims that what makes motives virtuous is that they aim at hitting the 'targets' of virtue. Her account of these targets and what they entail is both insightful and worth incorporating into any account of virtuous motivation. However, the centrality of the targets ultimately leads to a rather narrow account of virtuous motivation that leaves out other features that seem to be necessary.

1. A Stoic Account of Virtuous Motivation

In chapter 1, we remarked how there are a variety of eudaimonist accounts that can be employed to construct a view of virtuous motivation. One account that has yet to be considered is that of Stoicism, which, despite some similarities, is a long-standing rival of Aristotelianism. The Stoics agree with Aristotle that eudaimonia is our final end which we seek above all else, that this end is complete and self-sufficient, and is not sought for the sake of anything else.[117] Similarly, they agree that it is rational for us to seek this end. And they grant that the virtuous person's motivating reasons underlying any choice or action can be traced to their motive of wanting a flourishing life. Brennan describes the Stoic view in the following:

> the Stoics assume that all human beings wish to be happy, and that happiness is our end, that is, that for the sake of which we do everything we do. They also tell us what happiness is: it consists in following nature. To follow nature means to act in accordance with our own nature as human beings, but also to act in accordance with Nature as a whole, that is, the entire cosmic order governed by Zeus. By following nature, we will be happy. By following nature, we will also be virtuous. Furthermore, they say that virtue is the only thing that is good in any way, shape or form. Only what can benefit us, that is, make us happy, is good; and only virtue does that (2005, 35).

We can also add the following remarks by Cooper:

> on the Stoic theory virtuous persons always act, first, for the sake of their own happiness (referring all their actions to happiness as their single comprehensive "end"); second, choosing virtuous acts for their own sake, as parts of their happiness; and third, choosing them as conforming to the universal law, that is, to the will of Zeus (1999, 428-429).

[117] For more on the eudaimonist nature of Stoicism, see Annas (1993, 166), Cooper (1999, 428-429), Brennan (2005, 35).

Despite the eudaimonist similarities between the Stoics and traditional Aristotelianism, there is a substantial difference between them regarding what eudaimonia and virtue entail, as well as the value of virtue relative to the eudaemon life.[118] These differences ultimately lead to varying accounts of what virtuous motivation looks like.

In previous chapters, we noted how an excellence-based (EB) view did not share the eudaimonist structure of virtuous motivation held by some virtue-ethical accounts that follow Aristotle, and this relates to Stoicism as well. As we saw, an EB view agrees with Aristotle's account of virtue and what eudaimonia generally consists of but differs on how these interact in an account of what makes motives right or virtuous. The main difference being that one can exhibit virtuous motivation without always being motivated by eudaimonia. Because Stoicism is also eudaimonist it takes a similar stance on the role of eudaimonia within virtuous motivation. For although the Stoic may claim that we are properly motivated by virtue when we desire it above all else and for its own sake, they also claim that this entails choosing it for the sake of eudaimonia. And so, an EB view will also differ from them on this point. Despite this, a lingering question is whether an EB view would be better situated within a Stoic rather than Aristotelian framework, given how the Stoics make virtue or excellence the sole constituent of a flourishing life. By doing this, their view also makes excellence central to virtuous motivation, even though excellence is identical to flourishing. I will ultimately argue that despite apparent similarities, an EB view is better off not employing a Stoic framework for several reasons.

Before diving into a Stoic account of virtuous motivation, we should mention some further distinctions. In previous chapters, virtuous motivation was partly explained by examining the motivating reasons that underlie virtuous actions. We did this by considering how an instance

[118] For an insightful discussion on this, see Annas (1993).

of virtuous motivation involved the performance of a virtuous act done for the right reasons. Additionally, we discussed how right, or virtuous, reasons were usually connected to or explained by some further consideration, such as the desire to flourish or a commitment to excellence, or "agential excellence" (i.e., acting virtuously, expressing or sustaining a virtuous character, or living a virtuous life). The eudaimonist and EB view agreed that what explicitly motivated virtuous individuals reflected what was morally salient within a situation. Where they differed surfaced in light of the eudaimonist claim that such motivating reasons were connected to and partly explained by one's desire to flourish. In contrast, the EB view claimed that the motivating reasons of the virtuous person could always be connected to and explained by a commitment to excellence, regardless of any further connection to a desire to flourish. As we'll see, a Stoic view makes similar moves in how it explains virtuous motives. For them, virtuous motivation involves acting for right reasons that are further connected to and explained by specific commitments held by the Stoics. These commitments pertain to the unique way Stoics understand what virtue is, why it alone is ultimately good, how we are to value other things, and what the flourishing life really amounts to.

To begin, the Stoic view of eudaimonia is largely shaped by their conception of virtue and what it means to 'live according to nature'. For the Stoics, human nature is distinctly rational, meaning humans uniquely possess a rational soul. This rationality designates what is of utmost importance for humans and where their flourishing will ultimately be found. So, living according to nature, on one hand, involves living in accordance with our rational nature. On the other hand, living according to nature means to live in accord with the nature of the universe, or *cosmic* nature. Human beings exist within and live as parts of the broader cosmic order, and as

such are subject to its various laws and occurring phenomena.[119] In addition, Stoics hold that cosmic nature is rationally ordered according to the will of Zeus and, because of this, the natural course of events which take place are likewise rationally ordained.[120] Taken together, Stoics believe that our end "is living in agreement with our own nature as with that of the universe as a whole, because it *belongs* to our human nature to be in agreement with the nature of the whole" (Cooper 1999, 442).[121]

A prominent feature of Stoicism is their claim that virtue is *sufficient* for eudaimonia. In other words, the Stoics believe that the person who has virtue and lives virtuously also flourishes.[122] To support this doctrine, they argue that *only* virtue is truly good.[123] One way they explain this is through a comparison of virtue with other things people typically think are good and needed in order to flourish, such as a good reputation, health, pleasure, and wealth, to name a few.[124] These supposed goods do not benefit our rational nature or perfect its exercise, therefore they cannot be considered truly good. And because of this, they are not ultimately necessary for

[119] Diogenes Laërtius 7.88; Cicero *On Goals* 3.64; Epictetus *Discourses* 2.10, 3. All Stoic quotations are from Inwood and Gerson (2008).
[120] Cicero *On Goals* 3.64. See also Inwood (1985, 119).
[121] See also Diogenes Laërtius 63C and Inwood (1985, 106).
[122] Stobaeus comments that the Stoics "say that every honorable and good man is complete [perfect] because he lacks none of the virtues. The base man, by contrast, is incomplete since he participates in in none of the virtues. That is why good men are always and under all conditions happy, and the base unhappy" (*Anthology* 2.11g.).
[123] See also Annas (1993, 393).
[124] Diogenes Laërtius writes: "They [the Stoics] say that some existing things are good, others are bad, and others are neither of these. The virtues – prudence, justice, courage, moderation and the rest – are good; and their opposites – foolishness, injustice and the rest – are bad; neither good or bad are those things which neither benefit nor harm, such as life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, good reputation, noble birth, and their opposites death, disease, pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, bad reputation, low birth and such things…For just as heating, not cooling, is a property of the hot, so benefitting, not harming, is a property of the good; but wealth and health do not benefit any more than they harm; therefore, neither wealth nor health is good" (7.101-103). See also Stobaeus *Anthology* 2.5a-5b, 5e, 7; Cicero *On Goals* 3. 26; Sextus Empiricus *M* 11.41. Additionally, Cicero provides the following summary of the Stoic argument for the sufficiency of virtue for eudaimonia: 1) "everything which is praiseworthy is honorable; therefore, that which is good is honorable" (3.27), 2) "an honorable life is a happy life" (3.28), 3) "what is honorable is also good" (3.28), and 4) "only the honorable is good, i.e., that to live happily is to live honorably, i.e., virtuously" (3.29).

eudaimonia.[125] Virtue, on the other hand, always benefits our rational nature and is therefore good, and it's opposite, that of vice or ignorance, is what actually harms us.[126] So long as one has virtue, they have what is truly beneficial and good and this enables them to flourish. Adding any external goods is preferable, but does not make one's life objectively better, and taking any away or losing them does not make life worse. Virtue, therefore, makes all the difference as to whether one flourishes. And it is because virtue makes all the difference for attaining eudaimonia that the Stoics conclude that it alone is both *necessary and sufficient* for living the eudaemon life.

Other external 'goods' are valuable, according to the Stoics, but this value is not commensurate with virtue and neither do they contribute to a eudaemon life.[127] The Stoics are willing to agree that it is perfectly natural and rational to prefer being healthy, living safely and comfortably, and being financially prosperous, for example, than not, and we do well to recognize the advantages they provide in various domains of life. Nevertheless, the possession and usage of such external goods do not truly benefit nor harm human beings, specifically regarding their rational nature. Because of this, the Stoics called such goods 'indifferents' because they make no real difference as to whether one flourishes. Those goods which we naturally prefer are aptly called 'preferred indifferents' (e.g., health, safety, financial stability),

[125] Stobaeus summarizes the Stoic view on this: "And of good things, some are necessary for happiness and some are not. And all the virtues and the activities which employ them are necessary; joy and good spirits and the practices are not necessary. Similarly, of bad things, some are necessary as being bad for the existence of unhappiness, and some are not necessary. All the vices and the activities based on them are necessary; all the passions and ailments and things like this are not necessary" (*Anthology* 2.6d). Sextus Empiricus also describes the Stoic view of indifferents as "that which contributes neither to happiness nor to misery, and it is in this sense that they say that health and disease and everything bodily and most external things are indifferent since they tend to pruduce neither happiness nor misery. For that which can be used well and badly would be indifferent. Virtue is always used well; vice is always used badly; but health and bodily things can be used sometimes well and sometimes badly, and that is why they would be indifferent" (*M* 11.61).

[126] Schofield also notes that a fundamental truth and guiding principle of Stoic philosophy is that "the only things which are intrinsically good and bad are conditions of the self; above all virtue and vice" (2003, 234). See also Diogenes Laërtius 7.94-95, 98-99; Stobaeus *Anthology* 2.5d, 11h; Sextus Empiricus *M* 11.22-23, 61; Sextus Empiricus *PH* 3, 169-170; Epictetus *Discourses* 1.22.1. See also Frede (1999, 89).

[127] Cicero also writes: "there is one kind of value which applies to virtue, and it derives its meaning from its distinctive type and not from its magnitude" (*On Goals* 3.34).

and those which we naturally try to avoid are called 'dispreferred indifferents' (e.g., illness, death, poverty). Knowing this distinction between the value of virtue and indifferents is necessary for guiding choice and action correctly. In effect, one acts virtuously in choosing and using external goods if one does so from an understanding of them *as* indifferents. The virtuous person, therefore, knows what indifferents are, how they are to be valued, and whenever they choose or avoid such things based on this knowledge they also act virtuously.[128]

Finally, this brings us to the Stoic view of virtue. What makes us virtuous, according to the Stoics, is perfecting our rationality, which follows from the claim that virtue involves living in accordance with our rational nature. This centrally involves acquiring true beliefs and guiding all choice and action in accordance with such.[129] Thus, the Stoics see virtue as fundamentally a matter of knowledge.[130] Or, put differently, virtue is a disposition to reason and act based on a comprehensive knowledge of reality. For example, most of us pursue careers or choose to start a family because we think that doing so will enable us to flourish or that they are necessary for a happy life. The Stoics, however, argue that our *reasons* for choosing these, though not necessarily the choices *themselves*, are based on false beliefs, and are, therefore, not virtuous but vicious. To believe that such things are truly good and needed for eudaimonia is simply false according to the Stoics.[131] And we have such beliefs because we are mistaken about what it means to live in accordance with nature, the value of virtue, and what flourishing actually consists of.[132] If we are to correct ourselves, we must come to have a correct understanding about

[128] Stobaeus *Anthology* 11g. See also Brennan (2003, 286-289).
[129] See also Gill (2004, 113-114).
[130] See also Annas (1993, 400) and Inwood (1985, 139).
[131] Another way of putting this is that such beliefs and the associated desire "is disobedient to reasons; its cause is believing that a good is approaching and that when it is here we shall do well by it" (Stobaeus *Anthology* 10b). See also Brennan (2005, 89).
[132] See also Frede (1999, 83).

such things.[133] And once we acquire correct beliefs, we must also cultivate a disposition to always act from this knowledge. For now, suffice to say that the virtuous person, according to the Stoics, is one who has perfected his reason through acquiring correct beliefs and consistently chooses to act in accordance with them.[134]

At this point, we need to pause and consider which of these commitments are essential to a Stoic account of virtuous motivation. [135] For a modern Stoic, there might be an inclination to avoid some commitments held by ancient Stoics. For example, the ancient Stoics held that being virtuous required guidance from a Stoic understanding of eudaimonia, virtue, and both human nature and cosmic nature, as well as how these are intertwined and imbued with the rationality of Zeus. Subsequently, the virtuous person possesses correct knowledge of these and always chooses to act based on such knowledge, thus exhibiting virtuous motivation whenever they act on such knowledge. Basically, one's motivating reasons are virtuous only if they are grounded in and guided by such beliefs. However, a modern Stoic may not find all such beliefs or commitments necessary to maintain and be motivated by.

For instance, Lawrence Becker (2017) provides a revised version of Stoic ethics that can be used to construct an account of virtuous motivation. His account drops both the theological and teleological elements of ancient Stoicism, specifically those commitments about Zeus and a rationally ordered universe. Additionally, he proposes a revised view of Stoic virtue that does not rely on a rigid body of knowledge and is more compatible with contemporary psychology. His approach maintains only three Stoic commitments: 1) virtue is the only good, 2) virtue is an active form of rational agency, and 3) virtue is sufficient for flourishing. On Becker's view, the

[133] Epictetus *Discourses* 3.3.18-19. See also Brennan (2005, 37-38).
[134] Diogenes Laërtius 7.126; Stobaeus *Anthology* 2.5b1-5b2, 5b4-5b5, 11m.
[135] Becker makes this point in his (2018, 138-139).

first and third of these carry over in similar form from ancient Stoicism. For the second commitment, however, Becker reinterprets what is involved in and necessary for 'perfecting our rationality' or attaining virtue.

Becker's description of virtue focuses on the element of *agency* rather than knowledge. Although this differs slightly from the Stoic insistence that virtue is a matter of knowledge, it is still consistent with their view that virtue is displayed in how the agent actively chooses and acts from a perfected rational nature. So, Becker is still within the purview of Stoic thought on the matter. On his view, virtue is redefined as "an active form of rational agency" (Becker 2017, 90). One way to understand this is in terms of developed well-functioning psychological capacities (Becker 2017, 90).[136] Human beings have a range of psychological endowments, developments, and constructed elements which constitute agency. Attaining "perfectly healthy agency" means that one's

> endowments (body, primal impulses and responses, consciousness, information processing, and so on) enable rather than hinder developed traits (basic tenors of personality and so on), which in turn both preserve endowments and enable rather than hinder the exercise of agency in constructing the elements of agency proper (benevolence, reciprocity, affect, emotions, and so forth) (Becker 2017, 114).

The thought goes that when we attain an upper, yet psychologically realistic, level of fitness in these capacities and abilities, we thereby become virtuous. That is, we acquire virtue when our agentic powers have been excellently developed and are exercised accordingly. Becker remarks that such development requires one to acquire accurate knowledge of reality, but this knowledge need not entail such a comprehensive understanding of human nature and the cosmos as was

[136] See also Becker (2017, 113, 116-118, 120).

required by the ancient Stoics.[137] Furthermore, Becker maintains that his view of virtue can still suffice for a flourishing life, since, as he writes, the "virtuosic exercise of agency—that is to say, virtue itself—will be [the agent's] ultimate good" (2017, 126). [138] Space prevents us from giving a deeper analysis of Becker's account, but what matters is that at the heart of Becker's revised version of Stoic ethics are several distinct Stoic commitments, which include some modern adaptations. That said, Becker gives us a framework to sketch a modern view of Stoic virtuous motivation.

For this view, three Stoic commitments play an integral role in understanding virtuous motivation. As mentioned earlier, these are: 1) virtue is the only good, 2) virtue is an active form of rational agency, and 3) virtue is sufficient for happiness. Alongside these, we could say there is an additional commitment to understanding external goods as 'indifferents', given that only virtue is good. This would mean that correct motivation towards external goods is displayed if one values, pursues, and treats them as indifferents (i.e., goods that are desirable and helpful in some areas of life, but are not as valuable as virtue nor are they constituents of a flourishing life). In turn, these commitments guide and explain the virtuous person's motives when acting

[137] For example, this knowledge is described under Becker's reinterpretation of what it means to 'follow nature': "Following nature means following the facts. It means getting the facts about the physical and social world we inhabit, and the facts about our situation in it—our own powers, relationships, limitations, possibilities, motives, intentions, and endeavors—before we deliberate about normative matters. It means facing those facts—accepting them for exactly what they are, no more and no less—before we draw normative conclusions from them. It means doing ethics *from* the facts—constructing normative propositions a posteriori. It means adjusting those normative propositions to fit changes in the facts, and accepting those adjustments for exactly what they are, no more and no less. And it means living within the facts—within the realm of actual rather than hypothetical norms" (2017, 46). Becker adds: "Following the facts has nothing to do with conjuring up a quasi-theological vision of the universe as a teleological system whose ends we are designed to serve—unless, of course, it is a fact that the universe *is* such a system and we *are* designed to serve it" (2017, 46).

[138] Becker describes eudaimonia at length as "a state of being and consciousness that is consistent with the active, effective activity of ideal agency and in general is characterized by the calm (equanimity; tranquility) that comes from the absence of further moral struggle and the absence of retrospective regret or prospective alarm about things outside one's control, together with the confidence that comes from the effortless persistence of moral purpose" (2017, 90-91).

virtuously. To put the matter differently, whatever occurrent or explicit motivating reasons underlie a virtuous act (such as Hursthouse's 'X reasons' that we have made use of in previous chapters), these are virtuous, in part, because they are further connected to or grounded in these Stoic commitments.[139] Without such commitments in one's motivational structure and grounding their motivating reasons for virtuous action, then one does not seem to be virtuously motivated according to this revised Stoic view.

With this revised Stoic view in hand, we can now clarify the difference between it and the excellence-based view of virtuous motivation. For starters, the EB view can be described as holding a twofold commitment: 1) agential excellence (i.e., the excellent functioning of human beings which entails excellence in action, character, and in living one's life overall) makes one *good* and 2) one is virtuously motivated only if excellence sufficiently motivates them. The first, put simply, acknowledges that virtue is central to being a *good* human being. But this does not require one to view excellence as the *only* good or that a virtuous agent needs to be motivated by it as such, which is what the Stoics claim. For example, an EB view would claim that respect for one's moral duties or a desire to produce beneficial consequences are ways to display excellence, but which are not, strictly speaking, virtuous acts or virtuous states of character. Also, external goods like health, relationships, and financial sufficiency can be considered good in a way that differs from excellence, given how they enable humans to live well in ways that extend beyond their rational nature and its exercise.[140] However, mere possession and usage of external goods does not make us *good*, but, rather, the virtuous use of such things contributes to our goodness, a point which the Stoic could agree on. The difference for the EB view is that what makes us good

[139] These appear in Hursthouse (1995; 1999, see chapter 6).
[140] However, this doesn't ignore the fact that health and good relationships, to name a few, enable us to develop and exercise virtue. Performing virtuous actions in many cases requires some external good or favorable circumstances.

is not identical to what makes us flourish. Thus, an EB view takes virtue and excellence as what centrally makes us good people who are capable of living morally excellent lives, even though more is needed for a fully flourishing life.

In addition, an excellence-based view can allow flexibility on how one should view and be motivated by virtue as it relates to the flourishing life. Because the Stoics view the virtuous and flourishing life as one and the same, the virtuous person is necessarily motivated by both, even if not explicitly, in every choice and action and in how they live their life overall. Failing to be motivated by both means that one is mistaken or ignorant about virtue as the only good and its sufficiency to make one flourish. As a result, the Stoics have a strict requirement on how one views and is motivated by virtue and flourishing, and the relation between these. In contrast, an EB view claims that what's most important and necessary for being virtuously motivated is that one is guided and motivated by an understanding of what excellence involves, how it makes us good, and how it enables us to live morally excellent lives.[141] This allows some measure of flexibility under an EB view for virtuous individuals to diverge in their understanding of the relationship between virtue and the flourishing life (e.g., whether they see virtue as necessary but not sufficient for flourishing, as sufficient for flourishing, or as unrelated to flourishing whatsoever).[142] The key for an EB view, however, is that one sees and is motivated by agential excellence, or one of its correlates (e.g., virtuous activity, a virtuous character, or a virtuous life), as that which makes them good and makes their life morally excellent. Anything further is not

[141] This is inspired by the Aristotelian distinction between the virtuous life and the flourishing life that an excellence-based view employs in chapters 1-3. Because the former can be conceptually separated from the latter and because a desire for the virtuous life is always something found in virtuous persons, then being motivated by virtue and what it entails, and not necessarily being motivated by flourishing, should be seen as central to our understanding of virtuous motivation.

[142] This should not be mistaken as claiming that one can have *any* such view of virtue, flourishing, or the relation between these two. The three options I've listed, which are by no means exhaustive, seem to be both philosophically defensible and plausibly acceptable to a wider audience on how one may view each life and their relation to each other.

required to be virtuously motivated on an EB view. Thus, an EB view recognizes various ways to display excellence that contribute to being good and virtuous, while maintaining that virtue is what centrally makes humans good. Virtuous motivation, on this view, will necessarily reflect this commitment in some form or other.

The flipside of this twofold commitment is that an EB view holds that virtue or excellence ought to sufficiently motivate someone for them to count as being virtuously motivated. This means that underlying any choice or action, the desire for excellence (in some form or other) should be enough to motivate a person regardless of the presence of other motivating factors. For instance, if someone is motivated to pursue virtue because they also see it as constituting a flourishing life, it is unclear whether they can ever be motivated by virtue itself or whether additional motivating reasons, such as eudaimonist reasons, are always needed to motivate them towards virtuous activity. And for the Stoics, because they identify virtue with flourishing, then it's fair to say that their view claims that virtuous persons are always motivated to be virtuous *because* that it is how they flourish.[143] A key distinction, then, between the Stoic and EB view is that it is simply not possible on a Stoic view to posit virtue in isolation as being sufficiently motivating due to the inseparable conceptual, cognitive, and motivational link between it and flourishing in the virtuous person's motives.

But on an EB view, unless one is sufficiently motivated by excellence itself or for its own sake one fails to be virtuously motivated. This is mainly because they fail to value and be motivated by virtue because of what it is irrespective of its relation to other things that are desirable. Another way of putting this is that unless one can be motivated to do the right thing for

[143] See the quotes by Brennan (2005, 35) and Cooper (1999, 428-429) on page 129.

that reason alone, then one's motives will not ultimately count as virtuous.[144] Now, an EB view is not saying that one ought to be exclusively motivated by excellence to count as being virtuously motivated. On the contrary, situations will regularly call for one to be motivated by other things in addition to excellence, such as benefitting others or promoting one's own flourishing. But, again, what matters is that one would choose and perform virtuous acts because these are excellent in themselves and not necessarily because they relate to other things one desires. Being virtuously motivated, on an EB view, requires that one sees virtue or excellence as that which chiefly makes them good, even if it doesn't also enable them to flourish, and that it is desirable and sufficiently motivating on its own.

Before considering some problems for the Stoic view, it will help to consider how their account explains virtuous motivation in the Letter-Writers case (as discussed in chapter 1). For one, the Stoic would claim that if the Letter-Writers viewed the virtuous life as a flourishing life, then eudaimonist considerations should have motivated them in those circumstances. For if virtue is the only thing needed to flourish, then eudaimonist considerations *were* relevant in the Letter-Writers case (and other similar cases) and, therefore, a necessary consideration to be virtuously motivated in that situation. Thus, on the Stoic view, if the Letter-Writers were motivated to remain virtuous because that was how they believed they would flourish, then they were virtuously motivated. And, conversely, if they were unaware that they could flourish in such circumstances, this would likely mean that they were mistaken about how virtue sufficed for a flourishing life. The Stoic should also add that the Letter-Writers' motives were based on an understanding that virtue is the only good and that all other supposed 'goods' were only 'preferred indifferents', being neither necessary for virtue nor flourishing. Despite their

[144] This is not claiming that one's motives are wrong or vicious if they fail to be sufficiently motivated by excellence. The point here is simply that one's motives fail to qualify as virtuous.

imminent death and foregoing a future where they might have enjoyed various 'preferred indifferents' (e.g., a longer life, family, friends, careers, other personal projects), they remained steadfast because virtue held incommensurable value over all other indifferents. And so, the Stoic should also claim that being motivated by this understanding is necessary for being virtuously motivated. According to a Stoic explanation of the Letter-Writers case, those individuals were virtuously motivated only if they were motivated by an understanding that living virtuously just is a flourishing life and that any loss of indifferents was inconsequential since their virtue was what truly mattered.

We can also imagine two different Letter-Writers in this same scenario, where one is a Stoic and the other is not. We can assume the Stoic Letter-Writer holds a Stoic view of virtue, flourishing, and indifferents, and these views necessarily motivate their choices and actions in any circumstance. The non-Stoic Letter-Writer, on the other hand, neither holds nor is motivated by Stoic views, but *is* motivated to act virtuously, maintain a virtuous character, and live an overall virtuous life. Both individuals, for example, are motivated to remain courageous and uphold their just convictions about the Nazi regime. Similarly, both individuals can be described as being motivated for reasons such as: "It was the right thing to do", "it was my duty", "someone must take a stand", "injustice and tyranny cannot be tolerated", "it would be shameful to back down at this point".[145] These are reasons that we can reasonably expect virtuous persons to be motivated by in the Letter-Writers' situation, namely because they can be seen as appropriate responses to relevant features of that situation. Taken together, both Letter-Writers, the Stoic and non-Stoic alike, display an unwavering commitment to virtue and are motivated by relevant features of their situation. However, on the Stoic view, because the non-Stoic Letter-

[145] These reasons surfaced in chapter 1 and were referred to as 'LW reasons' and resemble Hursthouse's 'X reasons' (see footnote 139).

Writer is not also motivated by Stoic views regarding virtue as the *only* good, that living virtuously *just is* a flourishing life, or that any loss of indifferents would not affect whether they flourished, then they fall short of being virtuously motivated. Whatever else might motivate the non-Stoic Letter-Writer, such as a commitment to virtue itself or those reasons mentioned earlier that reflect relevant features of their situation, the Stoic should still say that this is simply not enough to exhibit virtuous motivation. For on their view, being motivated by a Stoic understanding of virtue, flourishing, and indifferents in every choice and action is necessary for being virtuously motivated.

The main problem with the Stoic interpretation of the Letter-Writers case, and its account of virtuous motivation, is that the commitments it claims as being necessary for virtuous motivation are psychologically unrealistic for many people to adopt and live by.[146] More specifically, many people, among which we can expect to find morally mature persons, will find it unrealistic or undesirable to be motivated in the way prescribed by the Stoics, namely on the grounds that it is counterintuitive or inhumane to do so. This charge is not that the Stoics propose something which is psychologically impossible for anyone to be motivated by, or that no one has or ever will be motivated as a faithful Stoic. Rather, the problem is that what the Stoic prescribes, regarding motivation, is so counterintuitive and contrary to how reasonably minded persons

[146] What I mean here by "psychologically unrealistic" is informed by Flanagan's 'Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism" (PMPR), which states: "Make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or are perceived to be possible, for creatures like us" (1991, 32). To be clear, Flanagan states that PMPR can take different fofrms, for example, where a moral theory proposes something that is impossible for human beings due to intrinsic psychological limitations or that a moral theory might require a high degree of difficulty. The latter of which may be for a variety of reasons, such as: "it simply lies far from us in historical and sociological space. Or it might be that it requires us to override some very common and powerful inclinations and desires. Or it might be that it calls for some very unlikely contortion or realignment of our basic psychological equipment" (Flanagan 1991, 38). Put simply, a moral theory violates PMPR if what it demands is: 1) psychological unrealizable, or 2) too psychologically difficult. In the present discussion, I have in mind the latter of these two: that the Stoic view of virtuous motivation is demanding something far too psychologically difficult due to present views, values, or desires that many people currently possess.

value things, understand flourishing, and are motivated by these, that many will find the Stoic view as overly demanding and, therefore, unacceptable.

For example, the Stoic view would require the Letter-Writers to view the loss of their own lives and families as losing something of far lesser value than virtue. This means that, on one hand, the Stoic Letter-Writer would have been motivated to maintain their virtue *because* that is of far greater value than anything else in their life. On the other hand, someone who has dedicated much of their life to loving and raising a family must, as in the case of the Letter-Writers, recognize that nothing truly good is lost when permanently separated from them. For as we've seen, the Stoic's reason for this is that virtue is the only good and nothing else is of equal value, or put differently, the value of virtue is incomparable to anything else. This thought can also be extended, such that the Stoic would claim that we ought to view our own health or bodies, personal projects (e.g., education, careers, or professional and non-professional aspirations alike), and relationships (e.g., partners, spouses, children, relatives, friends) as being incomparably lower in value to that of virtue. But in demanding this, the Stoic forces us to adopt a view where we ought to undervalue things which we usually view as highly valuable, such as parental and marital relationships as well as friendships. Such a view also devalues one's own bodily integrity and health, since, for the Stoic, the virtuous exercise of rationality is the only thing truly good and capable of making our lives better. And, by extension, the health and constitutional well-being of others is not of comparative value to me choosing and acting virtuously. This view will come off to many as an inhumane way of valuing things, and, thus, difficult if not impossible to adopt and live by.

In addition, the Stoics demand that we view a virtuous life as a flourishing life, whereby nothing besides virtue makes our lives better or more worthwhile. This implies, for example, that

during the Stoic Letter-Writers' final moments, they would assess their life as being just as good, not worse, as when they were out of prison and in the company of their families (or, engaged in other endeavors like pursuing an education or their careers). Relatedly, the Stoic view demands that when we choose and pursue romantic relationships, starting a family, a career or personal project, and whatever else we may want to do in life, we ought to view such things as incapable of making a difference to our flourishing. But the problem with this is that it demands us to choose and act for reasons that are counterintuitive and unsupported by life experience. In large part, we choose to pursue an education, commit to a romantic partner, or start a family because we think that doing so will make our lives better and worthwhile. And through life experience and reflection, we realize that such things effectively make life better and, therefore, we come to view them as justifiably part of our conception of a flourishing life. So, although we start with mere intuitions about what a flourishing life involves, these intuitions are justified through experience and life reflection. Relatedly, we are very likely to find that a life in which we prized virtue above all else would be a deficient life, and living such a life would be accompanied by much regret. And though it is true that external goods (or, 'indifferents') may not perfect our rationality or its exercise and may even be problematic at various times and in various ways, they do make other areas of our life better and in ways that virtue alone cannot. But, in contrast, the Stoic claims that we should not view such things as capable of making our lives better or contributing to our flourishing. However, this runs counter to shared intuitions supported by life experience, which support understanding external goods as not merely indifferent to our flourishing but as essential to it.[147]

[147] The Stoic could push back against the claims made in this paragraph and the previous one in the following way: although the non-Stoic Letter-Writer (and others like them) may not be (or want to be) motivated by the broader range of Stoic commitments discussed, such people still exhibit virtuous motivation to some degree on account of their commitment and motivation to be virtuous. Though, on the Stoic view, this exhibits virtuous motivation to a

In effect, these considerations have two implications for the Stoic view. First, if being motivated by such commitments is psychologically unrealistic, then to require this of any moral agent is, in turn, overly demanding. In other words, the psychological difficulty of being motivated as the Stoic claims deflates it of normative weight. And, as we noted, this psychological difficulty of the Stoic view is most evident in demanding of us a counterintuitive view of the flourishing life and inhumane value assessments of things, whether for virtue or everything else. Secondly, if such commitments are psychologically unrealistic and lack normative weight, then we should jettison them from an account of virtuous motivation. This suggests that an account of virtuous motivation should be based on moral prescriptions that are grounded in a plausibly realizable picture of human psychology.

To restate what's problematic for the Stoic view: unless one holds Stoic commitments regarding virtue, flourishing, and indifferents, one cannot be virtuous nor virtuously motivated. And what we determined was that such commitments are psychologically unrealistic for most people, including those who are morally mature, to hold and be motivated by. The Stoic requirement, therefore, is more demanding than necessary, especially towards those who may still have a clear view of what virtue and excellence requires and are always motivated by such in how they act and live.

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lesser degree than the Stoic Letter-Writer, it still gets to the heart of the matter in terms of appreciating and being motivated by virtue itself. The problem with this response, however, is that it's unclear whether the broader set of Stoic commitments can be separated in this way, since they are usually characterized as hanging together and complementing one another. Although the modern Stoic can set aside those ancient Stoic commitments related to a divine being and the teleological nature of the universe, it's unclear whether the same can be done for those commitments related to virtue being the only good, the virtuous life being identical to the flourishing life, and that all else besides virtue are indifferents. Emphasizing a commitment to virtue or making it central to virtuous motivation still leaves the question unanswered about what to do with these other Stoic commitments. If they are not necessary for being virtuously motivated, then a Stoic view of virtuous motivation might not have anything uniquely Stoic that is central to it. But if these commitments cannot be isolated from one another, then they still appear to be necessary within a Stoic account of virtuous motivation, whether they motivate in an implicit or deeper way, or as a background commitment.

Before concluding this section, we should address two things to avoid misconceptions about the excellence-based view. First, an EB view is *not* advocating an account of virtuous motivation that is completely detached, or 'floats free', from other commitments one may have besides a commitment to virtue. As we noted earlier, one can exhibit virtuous motivation primarily by being motivated towards excellence, even though this motive can sit alongside other commitments they may have and if these commitments do not distort one's view of excellence. And, as we saw with the comparative example of the Stoic and non-Stoic Letter-Writers, an EB view would claim that both are virtuously motivated on account of their commitment to excellence, even though the Stoic Letter-Writer may hold other additional commitments beside their commitment to excellence. We can say something similar whether one is a Roman Stoic, monotheist, or 21st century atheist. A virtuous person who is any one of these may, and probably will, have additional commitments besides a commitment to virtue, and there is no prima facie reason to think that simply having other commitments is inherently problematic. However, some commitments may undercut or confuse one's understanding of virtue or excellence, but such exceptions are not ultimately threatening to the more general claim that we can have additional commitments alongside our commitment to virtue. And neither does this entail that an EB view collapses into any alternative account of virtuous motivation. All it means is that people with a variety of worldviews and background commitments can be motivated by excellence and be considered virtuously motivated primarily because of how that commitment motivates their life and actions.

Secondly, what an excellence-based view *is* advocating for is an account of virtuous motivation that can be used to establish substantive agreement between different views. For example, whether someone is a Stoic or not, there can be substantive agreement on what justice

is, how it should be exercised as a moral community, and that we should be motivated by it in our choices and actions as individuals. This shouldn't come across as a surprise, since existing pluralistic societies demonstrate that people with differing beliefs can find agreement (at least to some degree) on important political and social issues. Similarly, people coming from different backgrounds can agree on what generosity looks like and that it should motivate us, even though one person may also be motivated to be generous because it pleases God and another from more humanistic concerns. In this spirit, an excellence-based view could be seen as an account of virtuous motivation where people with varying background commitments can converge on a shared understanding of excellence, how this can and should motivate us, and how we can evaluate motives based on this shared understanding.

Ultimately, an excellence-based view of virtuous motivation fairs better than Stoic views, whether old or new. This is due, in part, to the fact that the EB view is more parsimonious in the commitments it claims are necessary for virtuous motivation, which is, namely, a commitment to agential excellence in some form or other. In other words, a strength of the EB view is that it advocates for less rather than more in its account of virtuous motivation. Because a Stoic view of virtuous motivation requires being motivated by commitments that stipulate virtue as being the only good, that virtue alone is sufficient for flourishing, and that all else besides virtue is of lesser value and deemed 'indifferents', this entailed counterintuitive and inhumane ways of viewing things and being motivated. Ultimately, such commitments would be psychologically unrealistic for most people to be motivated by. After further consideration of what the Stoics claimed to be necessary for virtuous motivation, it was determined that these need not be so after all.

2. An Empathy Care-Based View of Virtuous Motivation

So far, we've examined two eudaimonist accounts of virtuous motivation, one inspired by Aristotle (as seen in previous chapters) and the other by the Stoics (as seen in the previous section), and how an excellence-based view differs from these. We can now turn to other contemporary virtue-ethical approaches to see whether they provide better options for constructing an account of virtuous motivation. One approach can be found in the work of Michael Slote (2001, 2007, 2009, 2013), where *caring* and *empathy*, or empathic care/concern, are foundational for moral motivation. On this view, virtuous motivation centralizes the motive of empathic care and makes it the basis for all morally relevant motives. His view also claims that such motives do not require guidance from practical rationality so long as they originate from the feeling or sentiment of empathy. The resulting view is one in which the presence and operation of empathic care ultimately determines whether an agent's motives, and any subsequent action, are correct or virtuous.

Before diving into Slote's view, we should note the general differences between it and the other views which have been the focus of previous chapters: the eudaimonist view and excellence-based view. According to the eudaimonist, the virtuous person is ultimately desirous for *eudaimonia*, or a flourishing life, and all their motives connect to this ultimate end in some way. When they perform virtuous actions, they do so from motives that reflect both an appreciation of the present situation as well as their ultimate desire to flourish, though the latter of these need not consciously nor explicitly motivate them when they act. We saw this in chapter 1, where we discussed the eudaimonist claim that the demands of practical rationality require all of one's proximal motivating reasons to connect to their final end of eudaimonia, which necessarily functions as the terminus of their reasoning. Against this, I proposed the excellence-

based view, which stipulated that virtuous motivation need not entail a connection to one's desire to flourish so long as one was guided and motivated by agential excellence, which can be parsed in terms of virtuous action, a virtuous character, and living a virtuous life. This view also demonstrated that when practical rationality is guided by agential excellence it could produce virtuous motives for any situation. For the present, what matters is that for either view being virtuously motivated depended on one's practical rationality being guided by flourishing or excellence, and that one's reasons for acting virtuously could be connected to either concept.

Slote's view of moral motivation is distinct in two ways. First, caring motives are the source of moral rightness, whether for actions they bring about or for motives themselves. Regardless of whether one's motives connect to some further desire to flourish or concern for excellence, Slote believes that caring motives are admirable in themselves and determine the rightness of any subsequent actions.[148] When translated into the language of virtue: a virtuous action, virtuous motives, and even virtuous persons are such because caring is the dominant attribute within each. Second, one's motives are genuinely caring and, therefore, morally correct if they are produced from the emotion or feeling of empathy, rather than practical reason. Although Slote does not claim that practical reason is immoral or useless, he does claim that being moved to care for others by sharing their feelings is a more direct and humane basis for caring than practical reason, or any principles or rules it generates. In the former way, our care is a direct response to others, whereas for the latter our care is a direct response to the dictates of

[148] We should note that Slote is advocating an agent-based view of virtue wherein he situates his account of moral motivation. According to an agent-based view, specific motives, dispositions, or inner qualities determine whether an agent's character and actions are morally correct and virtuous. Relatedly, these views do not rely on an independent concept to ground or explain the virtuousness of motives or traits; such as the concept of flourishing or excellence. Slote describes these views in the following way: "[an] agent-based form of virtue ethics…treats the moral or ethical status of actions as entirely *derivative* from independent and *fundamental* ethical/aretaic facts (or claims) about the motives, dispositions, or inner life of moral individuals" (Slote 2001, 7). From this, Slote thinks we can and should judge the moral quality of actions "in relation to *an agent's total or overall motivation*" (2001, 33). See also Slote (2001, 23).

practical reason. In this sense, empathic care is necessary and sufficient for acting and being motivated rightly, whereas practical reason does not even appear to be necessary. More needs to be said about each point in what follows. But for the moment, we can say that according to Slote's account motives are virtuous if they are generated, guided by, and express empathic care.

Up to this point, we have not discussed how an excellence-based view accounts for the role of emotions or sentiments. But given how prominent these feature in Slote's view, some brief remarks can be made here. An EB view would claim that emotions play an important role in virtuous acts, virtuous character traits, and living an overall virtuous life. From an Aristotelian perspective, the virtues and their appropriate expression involve fitting emotional responses or emotion regulation.[149] A generous act needs to be accompanied by a measure of gladness (hence, being a 'cheerful giver'), feeling anger towards injustice is fitting, and feeling an appropriate measure of sorrow is necessary for showing compassion to others who are suffering. And empathy will be needed in many situations where caring for others is relevant. In much the same way that a virtuous action entails having virtuous motives, we can also say that virtuous actions entail having virtuous emotions. Thus, exhibiting agential excellence, in the fullest sense, will require an agent to have and express virtuous emotions. In addition, an EB view would claim that emotions can and should motivate us in many situations. As mentioned, being virtuously motivated may stem from being moved by sorrow for another, or anger when others are treated unfairly, or by enthusiasm at the opportunity to give to others. We can similarly describe these as motivating reasons, such as: "I felt a burden for them and wanted to help", "I'm outraged when

[149] For example, Aristotle describes the brave person as someone whose "actions and feelings with what something is worth, and follow what reasons prescribes" (*NE* 1116a19). Similarly, the temperate person is someone who "does not feel pain at the absence of what is pleasant, or at refraining from it" (*NE* 1118b35). And the generous person is described as giving "with pleasure, or at any rate without pain; for action in accord with virtue is pleasant or at any rate painless, and least of all is it painful" (*NE* 1120b27-28).

people are treated like that," or "I was excited and glad to contribute in some way." This allows us to say that a virtuous person will be motivated by emotions in many virtuous actions, which, relatedly, qualifies them as being virtuously motivated. However, a fuller treatment of the role of emotions in virtuous motivation needs to be developed in future work on the EB view.

It should also be recognized that Slote provides a plausible interpretation for what does and should motivate people to care for others in many cases. In other words, if we are to provide a plausible explanation for virtuous motivation in such cases, we will need to employ elements of Slote's account. But the key difference between Slote's view and the EB view is that the former makes caring central and empathy necessary for *every* instance of virtuous motivation. The EB view, in contrast, claims that virtuous motivation involves a broad range of emotions, and no single one is necessary for every instance to be motivated correctly. Additionally, the EB view advocates the necessary accompaniment of practical rationality (or, practical wisdom) to guide one's emotional responses. The main reason for this is that our emotional responses often guide us wrongly as they do rightly, and so, we need another psychological mechanism (e.g., practical wisdom) to guide them appropriately. After I discuss Slote's view, I will describe several counterexamples to his view that motivate why an excellence-based view should be preferred.

We can begin by observing how Slote makes the notion of care central to his view of moral motivation.[150] This is especially vivid in his criterion of right action, which is stated in the following way: "An action is morally permissible, and even good, if it exhibits caring on the part of its agent…Actions, on the other hand, that display indifference or malice toward (relevant) others count, ethically, as wrong or bad" or, "we act rightly or permissibly if our actions express or exhibit an attitude/motive of caring toward others", and, similarly, "An action is morally

[150] We should note that Slote also employs other terms like 'benevolence', 'compassion', 'love', 'concern', and 'help', to name a few. However, these appear to be varied expressions of his central notion of care.

wrong if and only if it expresses or exhibits a lack of full empathic concern for others" (2007, 10; 2013, 110).[151] To see how this criterion works, imagine a situation where we are confronted with killing one person to save several others. Slote thinks that the morality of the act will ultimately depend on whether the willingness to do so is guided by empathic concern for those we are trying to save. A willingness to kill one person in absence of such care is simply wrong. On the other hand, if one maintains an awareness and concern for how their act will affect the well-being of others, then even in this case one can act rightly since they do so from caring motives. Slote applies this same thought to the moral permissibility of abortion. He remarks that "the rightness or wrongness of abortion decisions is not a matter of conformity to independently existing human/political rights or moral rules, but derives instead from the character or motivation that lies behind such decisions" (2007, 17). In such cases, the presence or absence of empathic care determines whether an act of abortion is permissible or blameworthy. Lastly, Slote demonstrates how some paternalistic acts are justified because an agent may act caringly. An example he gives of this involves a concerned mother who manipulates her son's motorcycle to only work when he is wearing a helmet, since the latter protests wearing a helmet because he enjoys the feeling of wind blowing through his hair while riding (Slote 2009, 120). Fully aware of and despite his protests, the mother takes steps to ensure her son wears a helmet while riding his motorcycle. In many cases, we object to paternalism because it fails to respect the autonomy of others. But in this case, Slote thinks the mother's paternalism is justified because she acts from caring motives. At the heart of Slote's account is the fact that an act and its underlying

[151] See also Slote (2001, 78). Slote also remarks that "we can evaluate institutions and laws as expressions of those who create and/or sustain (and/or administer) them, just as acts are assessed in terms of what motivation *they* express; and, using that criterion, we can say that institutions and laws are just when and only when they reflect or express motivation that is sufficiently close to universal benevolence on the part of (enough of) the relevant people" (2001, 119).

motive are right if they express some form of empathic care. Similarly, we could say that virtuous motivation, on Slote's account, characteristically expresses or exhibits empathic care and concern.

The centrality of caring also extends to his description of what a virtuous person looks like. For instance, Slote claims that "a good human being can be thought of as being concerned about (the welfare of) people s/he knows intimately, and also, to a lesser extent but still substantially, concerned about (the welfare of) human beings generally" (2001, 65).[152] Here, Slote claims that a good person strikes a balance between these forms of caring, the former of which he calls "intimate caring" and the latter "humanitarian caring" (2001, 66). But alongside these two forms of caring, Slote adds a third: self-concern. He remarks that a view of caring naturally entails "moral obligations to ourselves and to our own happiness, [and] that it is wrong to always sacrifice oneself and one's well-being for (the good of beloved or unknown, etc.) others" (2001, 77). This "self-assertiveness", he remarks, is both attractive and should be regarded as a moral virtue. In turn, Slote believes that "we can think of the moral individual as exemplifying a three-way balance among these kinds of caring" (2001. 77). Slote's view of caring, therefore, entails care for *ourselves*, care for those 'near and dear', and care for more *distant* persons. The person who strikes a balance between these different kinds of caring is both motivated correctly and well-guided to act rightly in any context.

Another prominent feature of Slote's view of moral motivation is the role that empathy has within it. [153] According to Slote, empathy "involves having the feelings of another

[152] Slote makes similar remarks about the morally good life, which "depends on our being altruistically concerned with others and on refraining from harming them and treating them unjustly, and I shall be arguing that empathy makes all of this possible" (2009, 14).

[153] Both the sentimentalist tradition and care ethics inspire Slote's view on the centrality of empathy (2013, 6). For example, Slote draws on the sentimentalist work of James Martineau, which he describes in the following: "Martineau held a very pure form of virtue ethics according to which the rightness of actions depended solely on

(involuntarily) aroused in ourselves, as when we see another person in pain. It is as if their pain invades us" (2007, 13).[154] This feeling requires receptivity on the part of the agent, meaning they are both aware and responsive to the feelings and circumstances of other persons.[155] How this empathy looks in genuine instances of care is described by Slote in the following way: "someone who cares for another not only focuses on a particular individual, but is *engrossed* in that other person. That means, roughly, that someone who cares deeply or genuinely about someone else is open and receptive to the reality – the thoughts, desires, fears, etc. – of the other human being" (2007, 12). But what's important is that Slote argues for the feeling of empathy, rather than practical rationality, as being a better source for caring motives and evaluating the moral worth of actions.[156]

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their underlying motives, and the value or validity of underlying motives was based on their intrinsic character as motives, rather than on any relation to good consequences" (2018, 347). Another element of Martineau's sentimentalist morality that influences Slote is that motives like compassion or (universal) benevolence are the highest motives an agent can have and should serve as the basis of rightness for all else. Also, this motive functions as a regulative or 'master' motive, which settles conflicts that arise between different motives and justifies other motives insofar as they approximate to or exemplify benevolence. Slote also draws on Nel Noddings' care ethics. Noddings' work puts a premium on caring and caring motives in the moral life, which Slote similarly prioritizes in his view of virtue and right action. Another important takeaway from Noddings for Slote is the importance of partiality in one's caring, that is, caring for some people *more than* others. The basis for this is the claim that we are naturally drawn more to those we are in close relationship with (family, spouses, children, friends, etc.), and so we should devote ourselves more to caring for them and acting for their benefit. This naturally entails caring more for those who are 'near and dear' than expressing equal care to all persons. Slote thinks this element of care ethics gives it an advantage over other views, such as Martineau's, which emphasizes impartial or universal benevolence only. Furthermore, Slote also derives from Noddings the thought that "caring itself [is] a fundamental form of moral excellence" and, thus, that caring can serve as foundational for "an agent-based theory of the moral value of caring" (2001, 30).

[154] See also Slote (2007, 12-13; 2013, 34). We should also mention that Slote draws a distinction between empathy and sympathy, where the former is described as feeling *with* someone and the latter as feeling *for* someone (2007, 13). For example, we may feel bad for someone whose dog just died but do not share those same feelings of loss with them in the moment. Here, I think Slote would agree that although we may not empathize with the other person, strictly speaking, sympathy can be an appropriate alternative and morally correct form of response.

[155] Slote also remarks that "we are capable of empathizing with a lot more than feelings and emotions. We can also empathize with someone's attitudes, belief system, or point of view, and I argue that we must be willing and able to empathize with the beliefs and viewpoints of others if we are to be said to be (being) objective and fair minded—and therefore epistemically rational—in defending our own beliefs" (2013, 14).

[156] See also Slote (2001, 36). Slote makes a more general claim related to this when he says: "the ethics of care sees moral motivation and justification as growing out of the emotional or sentimental side of our nature rather than as rooted in and justified by reference to reason or rationality" (2013, 6).

One reason for this is that when we rely on practical rationality as the source for our caring motives and behavior, our responsiveness becomes too far detached from the very people we are trying to care for, and, therefore, not genuinely other-regarding.[157] For example, if we recognize a person in pain or in need and then immediately proceed to deliberate about what to do, Slote's concern is that we are having "one thought too many" to determine whether we should help or care for the person.[158] Any resulting motives or actions can be described as responses to practical reason and deliberation, rather than being directly responsive to another person and their need. Relatedly, the same could be said for principles or rules we acquire through practical deliberation. If our caring behavior results from respect for specific principles or rules rather than empathizing with others, then, similarly, our care for others is not a direct response to them. In either case, Slote's primary concern is that our caring responses for others should be based on feeling for them and their situation, rather than because practical rationality ultimately demands it of us.

Perhaps Slote would be amenable to the idea that in some cases practical rationality can help us determine how best to care for someone or that we may draw practical inferences from our empathic care. However, he makes no explicit remarks on how this would look nor that it would be necessary to do so. To be fair, Slote does not eschew practical rationality altogether from our moral lives, so there might be some room for its use on his view.[159] But he includes no description of how practical rationality informs or guides empathic concern to produce right

[157] Slote argues this in greater detail in his (2013, chapter 3). It should also be mentioned that although Slote is specifically responding to Enlightenment views of rationality, he extends his critique to "any other sort of rationalism" (2013, 100). Given the emphasis he places on empathy, his comments extend to any moral theory that gives a prominent position to practical rationality.
[158] See Slote (2013, 100). This phrase originally comes from a related though experiment proposed by Bernard Williams (1981, 18).
[159] On this point, Slote writes: "I am no irrationalist, if by that term one means someone who thinks or imagines that reason has no serious or important place in our lives and thinking" (2013, 7).

motives and actions. In fact, because of the centrality of empathic care and how it ultimately justifies right motives and actions, it's fair to interpret Slote as claiming that practical rationality will not be necessary if our empathic responses are working properly, such as in an individual with "fully developed empathic concern" (2007, 31).[160] Basically, for the person with developed and properly functioning empathy, there may be no need for practical rationality to provide moral guidance. And when we couple this with his criterion of right action, which only requires expressing or exhibiting an attitude of empathic care and concern for others when acting, it is consistent with Slote's view that a right act can be performed without any involvement of practical rationality. Again, Slote may be open to the idea that practical rationality can be pulled in from time to time, but he makes no explicit remarks either for its importance or its necessity in producing right motives and actions.

On Slote's view, however, caring behavior is morally correct and genuinely altruistic when it is grounded in the feeling of empathy. As he remarks:

> genuine acts of caring involve an emotional/motivational sensitivity to particular other people. One is concerned about the situation a given person is in, and one's focus is on the individual herself rather than on any abstract or general moral principles that someone might want to consult in order to determine how to act toward that individual (2007, 10-11).[161]

[160] This latter item suggests that "as an individual's cognitive sophistication and general experience increase, she becomes capable of more and more impressive or sophisticated 'feats' of empathy" (2007, 15, 31-32). To add to this, at one point Slote suggests how empathy can be strengthened: "So we are…aware of three different ways in which empathy can be strengthened: through perceptual and/or temporal immediacy, through family connection, and through the kinds of sharing that occur between friends and life-partners. In all of these cases, moral obligations to help seem intuitively stronger than when such factors are absent, and this constitutes strong support, I think, for the idea that empathy and differences of empathy can plausibly function as criteria for moral evaluation and moral distinction-making" (2007, 28). In no point in developing our empathic care does Slote suggest the importance of developing or incorporating practical rationality.

[161] See also Slote (2007, 12-13, 15).

Imagine, for example, perceiving a person in pain or in need, being empathically receptive to their situation, and then being motivated to care based on this empathic response. In this way, one's caring act is a direct response to the other person, rather than a response to practical reason or derived action-guiding principles. And this is because empathy directs our attention and subsequent response *to the person* whom the caring behavior is for. Nothing else is needed to mediate or justify our caring responses if we *feel with* them and their situation. This tends to appeal to commonsense intuitions about what genuine altruism involves, especially in terms of the feelings or sentiments we think underlie genuine acts of caring. We are more likely to think that caring for others should come from feeling *with* or *for* them, rather than resorting to a deliberative process to determine whether or how we should care. And coupled with the fact that cases where empathy is absent fail to be genuine cases of altruistic concern, Slote believes that his view serves as a better basis for caring.[162] The point, then, is that Slote is advocating for an account of moral motivation where empathy, rather than practical rationality, is a better source for producing and guiding caring motives and actions.

However, Slote's insistence that empathic care is central to virtuous motivation makes his account vulnerable to several counterexamples. What they show is that we can think of plausible instances where empathic concern is either not necessary for virtuous motivation or insufficient to produce it. Imagine, for example, a virtuous person, whom we will call Clarice, who has unknowingly made a substantial clerical error at work which could lead to significant financial

[162] We might wonder what Slote would do with a case where (i) person A knows they should care about person B and their plight, (ii) person A does not feel care for person B, but (iii) person A still acts caringly towards person B because they know it's the right thing to do. I imagine Slote would say that person A's action and motives fail to be correct or virtuous. The main reason being that their act fails to satisfy his criterion of right action, which requires one to express empathic care in one's action, which, person A does not express. This also goes back to Slote's view on practical rationality. Person A acts on a principle of caring rather than as a direct response to person B and their plight. Basically, person A acts mainly out of respect and responsiveness to a principle rather than a person, which fails to count as a right act on Slote's view.

losses to the company and its clients. Upper management has discovered the error, has fixed it before any damage results or any client notices, and is now inquiring into the responsible party. Clarice ultimately realizes that she is responsible for the error and knows that coming forward will result in her termination. However difficult it is, Clarice comes to terms with her fault and admits it to upper management. Let's imagine further that she is motivated to admit her fault because she cares about telling the truth, being honest, and refuses to be deceptive to save herself. Perhaps her immediate motivating reasons are of the sort: "They deserved the truth", "It would not have been honest to stay silent", or "I'm not going to lie to save myself". These thoughts motivate her to tell the truth about her error to the company. And we can also imagine that no thought or feeling of 'care' may occur to her or motivate her honest action, whether such care is directed towards the company, its clients, or her fellow employees who could be falsely blamed. Instead, Clarice is motivated by truth, honesty, openness, and finds deceptiveness shameful. But in response, Slote would claim that Clarice's motives are not fully virtuous because she lacks empathic care for the impacted parties (e.g., upper management, her company and colleagues, and the customers). But this interpretation can be seen as problematic because no matter how virtuous Clarice is and no matter how much her motives express an appreciation for truth, honesty, and avoidance of deception, she does not exhibit virtuous motives due to a lack of empathic concern. However, an alternative way to view the situation is that we have a virtuous person who is not motivated by empathic concern but still appears to be virtuously motivated on account of being motivated by other relevant concerns.[163]

[163] We can also add the following remarks to address some concerns that may arise. First, perhaps Slote could modify his view to say that Clarice is virtuously motivated because she expresses *care* about honesty and chooses to act from that reason. Although this is not the kind of empathic care that he champions throughout his work, perhaps he could incorporate other forms of care, such as caring for moral principles and values. However, this suggestion undermines Slote's emphasis on being directly receptive and responsive to others when acting on their behalf. Slote would then have to claim that morally correct and virtuous actions can be performed from caring about moral principles or rules. But the obvious problem is that this is a form of responsiveness which is too distanced from the

An excellence-based view, in comparison, is not susceptible to this problem. First, it does not require any one specific motivating reason or emotion (such as empathic care) to be virtuously motivated in a situation. What it does require is that our reasons and emotions be connected to or grounded in agential excellence, or some related concept. With the example of Clarice, empathic care did not motivate her and yet she still exhibited motives that appear virtuous. An EB view would explain this due to Clarice's response being dictated by morally relevant features of the situation coupled with considerations of what excellence looks like in that situation. In that case, displaying excellence may only have required that Clarice's emotional response be one of resolute calm. In other cases, excellence or virtuous responses may involve other emotions, but these would be shaped by the situation and not predetermined based on prioritizing empathic care. We can also think of cases where the wrong or vicious response would involve empathic caring, such as sharing someone's feelings of hatred towards a specific people group. Genuine caring, in that case, will not involve empathy or feeling *with* such a person. Such instances of care would be excluded from what it means to exhibit excellence in caring for others. A more appropriate way to express care for them would be to feel grieved by their hatefulness coupled with persistent attempts to reform their hateful attitude. And this could also be accompanied by care for those harmed by their hateful actions. But aside from these

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very people we should be caring and acting for (see the discussion on pages 156-158). Second, the present case is one in which Clarice can be viewed as epistemically limited or unaware of who or what might be harmed by her action. Clarice is a virtuous person but perhaps is new to her job, such that mistakes are quite possible on her end. She may not be sure about how the company or any clients could be harmed, but she can be sure once she is aware of her mistake that she does not want to be dishonest but wants to be truthful about her error. Third, we can imagine an alternative scenario where Clarice is also aware of the potential harm of her error to relevant parties and is motivated to confess because of this. I take it that this is one way a virtuous person could respond, but this doesn't automatically warrant the interpretation that Clarice in the original scenario fails to be motivated correctly or is less virtuous than Clarice in this alternative scenario. In the original case, Clarice is responding to what is immediately relevant in her situation, namely her error and the need to be honest about this. Harm to others can be considered relevant but may not be as conspicuous as other concerns. Some comparison will be at work here in terms of how to weigh each person's response and motives based on whether they considered relevant facts of the situation or whether they considered possible consequences of their action.

considerations, what Slote's view does get right is the fact that empathizing with another person and being motivated by this is, in many situations, exactly what is morally relevant and necessary for acting virtuously. In fact, given the pervasiveness of contexts where caring is morally relevant, we have reason to think empathy will be essential to genuine acts of care in those situations. And this insight can easily be incorporated within an EB view, since excellence and virtuous motivation in many situations will involve being moved by empathic care towards helping and caring for others.[164]

Another problem for Slote's view is that when empathic concern operates alone it may fail to produce a virtuous act or may even produce a harmful act. Consider, for example, Clarence who is moved by empathic concern to help a friend in substantial debt due to a gambling addiction. Perhaps Clarence truly and deeply empathizes with his friend's plight, which subsequently motivates Clarence to act generously by writing his friend a sizable check. Clarence's seemingly generous act is only temporarily helpful to his friend, who simply uses the money for more gambling and plunges himself into further debt. Although Clarence meant well, his empathy motivated him to act before he could fully appreciate the nuances of his friend's situation and deliberate about how best to help them. In the end, Clarence's seemingly generous

[164] To be clear, several problematic forms of emotional response do not exhibit excellence and are excluded from an EB view. For example, someone motivated to give a generous donation to help others but who is also bitter about parting ways with such a substantial amount of money fails to be virtuously motivated. Although they are motivated to help others, the accompanying frustration undercuts the admirability of their motives. In other cases, having no emotional response is problematic for being virtuously motivated. We can imagine a case where someone attempts to be helpful and supportive, but is not emotionally engaged or moved by sympathy or empathy, for a friend who has tragically lost their spouse. Here, the lack of emotional response on the former person's part is problematic because their actions are not motivated by any responsiveness to their friend's tragic situation. Lastly, we can exclude emotional responses that are excessive or deficient. For instance, being outraged over a minor infraction (such as being charged twice when purchasing a meal) or expressing frustration, rather than outrage, over an egregious abuse of vulnerable persons are both forms of emotional response that prevents one's actions (however fitting they turn out to be) from being virtuously motivated.

act did more harm than benefit for his friend. [165] To be clear, Clarence's problem was not that he empathized with his friend. The problem was that his empathy led him to act before he considered other important features of the situation, balanced his care with other morally relevant forms of response, or deliberated about how best to act.

Let's consider the same example from a different angle. Imagine if Clarence were practically wise, that is, he is reliably disposed to excellently perceive what's morally relevant and deliberate about how best to act in any situation. In this scenario, Clarence perceives that his friend has landed himself again in substantial gambling debt and needs to be helped in some way. Clarence's practical wisdom leads him to empathize with his friend and generates a desire to act generously towards him. But because Clarence wants to help his friend in the best way possible, he also deliberates about what generous action will effectively help his friend while avoiding the potential for him to fall into further debt. At one point, Clarence considers writing a substantial check but realizes that in his friend's current state this will only lead to further gambling problems. Instead, Clarence considers his friend a good fit for a job opening at his work, which will financially provide enough for this friend to stay afloat while not providing too much for profligate gambling. In this way, because Clarence used his practical wisdom, or practical rationality, he was able to both empathize with his friend and excellently care for him.

Because an excellence-based view insists that practical rationality, or practical wisdom, is necessary for being virtuously motivated, it avoids the problems that surfaced when Clarence relied solely on his empathy. The importance of practical wisdom within an excellence-based view was seen partly in chapter 2 and chapter 3. In chapter 2, we saw the example of Teresa and

[165] It is entirely possible and compatible with the present examples that Clarence has "fully developed empathic concern", but this situation is entirely new to him or that his empathy has successfully guided him in the past so that he readily relies on it without a second thought.

how she exhibited virtuous motivation in part because of the role that practical wisdom played in generating her other-regarding motives. And in chapter 3, we saw how practical wisdom enabled its possessor to both perceive and deliberate excellently about how best to act in a situation. From both chapters, it was shown how someone could effectively determine the best way to respond when guided by practical wisdom and considerations of agential excellence. In the first scenario of Clarence, his empathy alone failed to produce a fully generous action and even led to him harming his friend. But in the second scenario, Clarence's empathy coupled with practical wisdom balanced his empathic care alongside other important features of that situation.[166] Similarly, his practical wisdom enabled him to deliberate about such features to determine what kind of generous action best fit the situation, which could not be determined by empathy alone. Only in this way were his subsequent motives fully virtuous, and his actions effectively helpful to his friend.

On top of this, an excellence-based view would claim that Clarence's case is one in which empathic care is indeed relevant and necessary for being virtuously motivated, thus supporting Slote's view to some degree. But because unguided empathy could prove problematic, another mechanism is required to compliment and guide one's affective responses.[167] Here, an EB view would say that practical wisdom is the mechanism needed to

[166] To be clear, I am not the first to suggest the need for some other mechanism or guide to assist our empathic responses. Hume claims that empathy (or, what he calls sympathy) ought to be corrected by a "some steady and general points of view", rather than acting upon sentiments governed solely by our own "peculiar point of view" (1739/2000, 371-372). Adam Smith, in like manner, suggests that empathy (which he likewise refers to as sympathy) should be guided by the view of an 'impartial spectator' (1759/2009, 137). In psychological literature on empathy, some have suggested that reason, or a more "reflective empathy", is a much-needed guide to avoid the problems that usually accompany empathy (see Decety and Cowell 2015, 12-14; Persson and Savulescu 2018, 187-188; these problems are briefly mentioned in footnote 167). Others have discussed various "empathic regulatory strategies" that can also direct empathy (Zaki 2014, 1613-1614). These suggestions all carry a degree of merit, but I prefer practical wisdom as dispositional excellence to guide empathy that is broad enough to include these various suggestions.

[167] There are other problems related to empathy that have been discussed at length in both Prinz (2011a, 2011b), Bloom (2016), and Decety and Cowell (2015). For example, several findings show that empathy can lead to preferential treatment of those in close proximity or in-group biases (which Bloom refers to as the 'spotlight feature

direct and balance empathic (or other affective) responses in consideration of what is best to do in the situation. In this role, practical wisdom neither replaces nor undermines the importance of empathy but works to produce excellent empathic care. In turn, an EB view would say that for Clarence's cases and others like it, empathy is both morally relevant and necessary for being virtuously motivated but requires practical wisdom to ensure that it results in excellent acts of care.

However, we should recognize that engaging in practical deliberation will not always be necessary. For as seen in chapter 3, sometimes a person has deliberated in a similar past situation and can rely on that insight to guide them in future situations. Another possibility is that because practical wisdom entails a wealth of experience and accurate perception of what's morally relevant in a situation, the practically wise person may be able to perceive effortlessly what needs to be done without deliberation. Virtuous persons, who we can assume are practically wise and reliably caring, may rarely have to deliberate to see how best to care for others in a situation. Given their experience, a developed moral perception, and reliable emotional responses, they are most able to directly empathize in a way that leads to excellent caring. Put differently, the practically wise person possesses, what Slote refers to as, fully developed empathic concern. The important point, however, is that excellent empathy is inseparable from possessing practical wisdom.

In any case, practical wisdom is often necessary for figuring out how one should respond in the first place. And, important for present purposes, it is essential for knowing what to care

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of empathy'), how in-group biases can lead to violent treatment of out-groups, being short-sighted regarding long-terms effects of empathic responses, and how empathy can be affected by the 'cuteness effects' (where we have stronger empathic responses to those we find more cute or attractive, whether these are people or animals), to name only a few. In reference to Slote's account, some of these problems are more damaging than others. However, space prevents an in-depth discussion of all those problems mentioned by these authors which are particularly damaging to Slote's account.

about and how best to express that care. The excellence-based view, therefore, regards practical wisdom and the concept of agential excellence as inseparable in the motivational guidance it provides, especially for our affective responses. With the latter example of Clarence, when he was guided by practical wisdom his resulting motives involved a balance between his empathy, other situational considerations, and what the best or most effective response was. And in such a case, he exhibited virtuous motives and acted virtuously in helping his friend. Ultimately, because we cannot dispense with practical wisdom in our empathic or other affective responses, we need an account where these work together to produce virtuous motives. At present, an EB view is better positioned than Slote's empathic-care based view to explain how empathic care and practical wisdom work together in a way that respects both.

3. A Target-Centered View of Virtuous Motivation

Another contemporary virtue-ethical account that can be used to construct a view of virtuous motivation is Christine Swanton's target-centered virtue ethics. According to a target-centered view, "What makes actions right, feelings appropriate, and traits of character virtues is understood through the notion of the targets of the virtues. Target Centredness is the distinctive feature that makes Target Centred Virtue Ethics opposed to other forms of virtue ethics, notably neo-Aristotelianism" (Swanton 2021, 6-7). When thinking specifically of right motives or virtuous motivation, Swanton approaches the subject differently than the Aristotelian-inspired views we've discussed so far. Recall that the eudaimonist would claim that a virtuous person's motives are ultimately oriented towards human flourishing, which guides and grounds their motivating reasons. In turn, eudaimonist reasons necessarily motivate the virtuous person in some capacity. An excellence-based view claims that virtuous motivation can be grounded in and

explained by the concept of agential excellence, whether this concept is thought of in terms of a virtuous character, virtuous actions, or a virtuous life. A person may not necessarily be motivated by eudaimonia, but still display virtuous motivation through a commitment to living excellently. Basically, the starting point for the eudaimonist in conceptualizing virtuous motivation is eudaimonia, and the starting point for an EB view is agential excellence. Each view then proceeds to explain everyday virtuous motives by tying them to either concept.

Swanton approaches the topic from a different direction. Rather than constructing an account of virtuous motivation based on an ultimate end or centralized concept, such as eudaimonia or agential excellence, Swanton starts from considering what the point or aim of each virtue is and how our motives should be oriented towards these. In other words, her view starts with the 'targets' of the various virtues and prioritizes these in a description of virtuous motivation. What follows is that aiming for these targets ultimately determines whether one's motives are correct or virtuous. Any further role played by eudaimonia or excellence in a virtuous person's motives when acting is either unnecessary or peripheral to aiming for the targets of the virtues.

As we'll see, Swanton's account has much to offer. Her description of the targets of virtue is not only highly informative but also indispensable for anyone attempting to explain virtuous actions and virtuous motives. But as we will also see, there are shortcomings to her view. One is that her account doesn't seem to make room for deeper commitments that are characteristic of virtuous persons and partly explain the virtuousness of everyday motives. Also, she does not seem to incorporate how the motive for virtue or excellence itself factors into virtuous motivation. Though there is a lot to like in Swanton's view, the excellence-based view can incorporate its insights without being vulnerable to its shortcomings.

The obvious starting place for understanding Swanton's view is the concept of a virtue's target (i.e., it's point or aim), which is rather familiar to us.[168] For example, the target of generosity is to provide some sort of gift to benefit someone, or the target of compassion is to affectively share another person's pain and try to alleviate it if possible. Swanton provides further examples:

> the target of a virtue of love is to have excellent loving bonds with people, neither to excess or deficiency, in the right manner, and so on according to the nature of the virtue of love, whether romantic love, friendship, filial love, or parental love; the target of benevolence is to promote the good of another in an excellent way, for the right reasons and so on; the target of a virtue of creativity is to be creative in the production of, for example, an art work with the right instruments, satisfying standards of originality and integrity, and so on (2021, 7).

As we can see, Swanton's view of what virtues aim at and how they do so is quite extensive. And we can also see elements of Aristotle at work in her view, specifically his requirement that hitting the target of a virtue must be done in the "right manner", where this involves what is appropriate for a situation and neither excessive nor deficient (Swanton 2003, 8-9; 2021, 137). In

[168]Another way to understand the target of a virtue, is to situate it among the other components of what Swanton calls a virtue's 'profile'. These components are: 1) the *field* of a virtue, 2) the *modes* of moral responsiveness, 3) the *bases* of moral responsiveness, and 4) *items* or *targets* within a virtue's field. The field of a virtue "consists of those items which are the sphere(s) of concern of the virtue, and to which the agent should respond in line with the virtue's demands" (2003, 20). We can understand the field of temperance, for example, as that of bodily pleasures, the field of justice is social relations, and the field of courage is fearful situations. The modes of moral responsiveness refer to the various ways we can respond or acknowledge the items within a field of virtue (2003, 21-22). For Swanton, what matters is not simply hitting or attaining the targets of the virtues but also the *way* in which we do so. In many cases, hitting the target involves the mode of response, such as in instances of caring where both caring behavior and one's emotional state are of equal importance in acting rightly. The bases of moral responsiveness are the morally significant features of items within the field of the virtue, which Swanton identifies as: value, status, good (or benefit), and bonds. When responding to an item in a field, it could be because the item has a particular value, or we may be respecting the status of persons, their rank, or special relationship to us. In other ways, an item may benefit a person and may even promote their flourishing in a significant way. Or, we may be respecting a bond between people, such as when someone aims for fidelity in their marriage.

other words, hitting the target of a virtue will involve acting in the right way, towards the right person, at the right time, and through the right means (Swanton 2021, 42).

How Swanton's target-centered view departs from Aristotle, and other Aristotelian-inspired views, is that there is no necessary connection between the targets of the virtue and eudaimonia.[169] In some cases, a connection may be evident. But flourishing, or what is 'good for' an agent, is only one ground among others for what makes a target worth aiming at.[170] It may be *one* ground among others, but it is not *the* ground of virtue or its targets. As she describes it, "If the *point* of a virtue such as benevolence is other regarding, how can it be that in order to be a virtue at all benevolence must somehow characteristically benefit the benevolent agent?" (2021, 127). In other words, whether a character trait or its target are conducive to flourishing does not determine the virtuousness of either. Instead, a trait of character, on a target-centered view, is a virtue if it enables its possessor to reliably hit the targets of the virtues, and the latter of these need not be conducive to flourishing.

We could also describe a target of a virtue in the following ways. For one, what specifically counts as a target of benevolence will depend upon facts about the agent performing the benevolent act, the person to whom that act is directed, and other situational factors (2003, 236-237). Basically, targets are situationally specific. For example, if I am to perform a

[169] We should note how an excellence-based view specifically differs from Swanton's view on this point. Although an EB view does not require one's motivating reasons to be connected to or grounded in their desire to flourish to be virtuous, it still maintains the view that the targets of virtue can be conceived as constituents of eudaimonia. Swanton, in contrast, believes that some grounds (e.g., status, bonds, and value) of virtue and its targets are conceptually distinct from eudaimonia. An EB view would claim that, under favorable circumstances, the virtues and their targets are necessarily part of a flourishing life. But in unfavorable circumstances, being virtuous and hitting the targets of virtue may not lead to a flourishing life. All this to say that an EB view recognizes a necessary conceptual link between the virtues, their targets, and a flourishing life, while also recognizing that there are circumstances in which one can be virtuously motivated to hit the targets of virtue without also being motivated to do so for the sake of one's own flourishing.

[170] Swanton's view allows for a plurality of what grounds a virtue. These are also referred to as 'bases of moral responsiveness,' and are mentioned in footnotes 168 and 169.

genuinely benevolent act towards my neighbor (who is aging and incapable of completing household chores), then I should act in a way that actually benefits *him* (most likely by helping him complete household chores). In an alternative scenario, perhaps where I am busy but financially well-off, an equally fitting way to benefit my neighbor would be to hire a housecleaner for him (if he is open to that). Other cases of benevolent acts may have nothing to do with helping someone with their household chores, but in this situation that's exactly what benevolence will call for. In any case, what counts as a virtue's target will be shaped by the relevant facts of that specific situation.

In addition, targets may be either external or internal to the agent and be pluralistic within a situation (2003, 234-235). The target of benevolence, for example, is typically thought of as external to the agent, such as benefitting another person. Similarly, the target of justice is largely external, where the aim is to treat others fairly or equitably. Other targets may be internal to an agent, such as for temperance, where the target is to regulate bodily appetites. The target for temperance, in many situations, will largely be a manner of self-control or proper regulation of one's desires for things like food, drink, and sexual activity. Even without observable behavior, an agent may hit the target of temperance through efforts of self-control. Similarly, the target of courage in some situations is simply control of one's fear in a dangerous circumstance. But also, some situations may involve a plurality of targets, such as when a parent attempts to be generous but fair when giving gifts to their children. Or hitting the target of compassion requires performing acts that bring comfort to a hurting individual and doing so with the appropriate affective attitude, such as feeling empathy for the person being comforted. For this latter point, hitting the targets of virtue is as much a matter of *what's* being done as it is a matter of *how* it is being done.

We should pause here and acknowledge that a target-centered view is not entirely unique in how it employs the targets of the virtues. What I mean by this is that other views, namely Aristotelian-inspired views, can and do employ this concept of the targets of virtue in their description of virtuous actions and motives. For instance, both eudaimonist and an excellence-based view describe a virtuous action or virtuous motive in terms of what the target of a particular virtue is in a specific circumstance. But because Swanton's view centralizes the targets, she dedicates ample space to detailing them. In fact, a notable contribution Swanton makes to the virtue-ethical tradition is her robust concept of the targets of the various virtues. Nevertheless, both Swanton and Aristotelian-inspired views include the targets in their description of what virtuous motives entail.

Despite this, target-centeredness is the definitive feature of Swanton's account of right action, and, subsequently, her account of right motives. For her, "the virtuousness (and thereby rightness) of an act depends on its hitting the relevant targets of relevant virtues" and "one acts rightly (or correctly) if one *hits* the targets of the virtues" (2021, 6, 7). This contrasts with a common interpretation of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, which is thought to consider an action right if it were what a virtuous person would characteristically do in the circumstances.[171] Swanton's view, in contrast, conceptualizes right action in terms of whether it hits the relevant targets of a relevant virtue: "What *makes* actions right on the target centred view is *not* that they are chosen or would be chosen by the virtuous: actions are right because they constitute a payment of a debt or are acts of helping someone in a kind manner in a way that hits the targets of respectively justice and kindness" (2021, 145-146; italics added). As seen in the example of

[171] See Hursthouse (1999, chapter 1).

helping my elderly neighbor, the act I perform is right or virtuous only if it hits the relevant targets in that situation, for example, helping my neighbor with his household chores.

Right or virtuous motives for a target-centered view follow suit. Swanton claims that "what makes actions right is hitting the targets of (relevant) virtues in relation to action, what makes traits virtues is determined by their targets or aims, and what should *motivate* an agent at both fundamental and everyday levels are these very features" and, similarly, "one acts in a well-motivated way if one is motivated by hitting the targets" (2021, 7, 134; italics added). These remarks follow from the target-centeredness of Swanton's view. If virtues are defined and qualified by their relevant targets, and if a right or virtuous act is one that hits the target, then it follows that one's motive is right or virtuous because it aims at hitting the relevant targets in a situation. Furthermore, having correct or virtuous motives is multidimensional. Swanton argues that a well-motivated agent will desire to hit a target of a virtue and to do so through the appropriate mode, or modes, of responsiveness. For example, correct motivation in an instance of caring will involve being motivated both to act caringly but also to have a caring attitude while acting. Thus, to be correctly or virtuously motivated, on a target-centered view, one should be motivated to hit the relevant target, or targets, through the relevant modes and with respect to the significant features that make those targets worth aiming for.

To further explain her view, Swanton draws on Hursthouse's discussion of X reasons and how these are 1) helpful for understanding a virtuous person's reasons for acting and 2) explain the rightness of such motives because they reflect the targets of virtue. X reasons, as Hursthouse describes them, are the kinds of reasons that motivate virtuous persons when performing a virtuous action (1999, chapter 6). For example:

"Someone had to volunteer"

"One can't give in to tyrants"

"You need it more than I do"

"He's my friend"

"It was the truth"

"I owe it to her"

What's important for a target-centered view, is that "the source of an agent's reasons, ultimate or otherwise, is the target or aim of a relevant virtue" and, relatedly, "reasons of type X derive from the target of X" (2003, 79). What this means, for Swanton's view, is that the reasons which characteristically motivate virtuous persons to act should be understood primarily through the various targets of the virtues. Put differently, "a person who wants to do what the virtuous person would do should characteristically be motivated not by a motive under the description "promoting my own virtue or happiness" but under the description "repaying a debt," for example" (2021, 131). Being motivated correctly, on Swanton's view, does not require any further connection to or justification of such reasons from a more fundamental concept, such as eudaimonia. Rather, because such reasons reflect the target of a relevant virtue in that situation and motivate the agent to hit the target in an appropriate way, then one's motives are correct or virtuous. The broader concepts of eudaimonia or even agential excellence need not motivate an agent in order to be virtuously motivated in a given situation.

But at this point, it's evident that the target-centered view does not provide a distinct account of virtuous motivation at the everyday level. For as we saw in chapters 1 and 2, both the eudaimonist and excellence-based views can agree on what a virtuous person's explicit motives may look like in a given situation, which were also phrased as X reasons. Additionally, these views can agree that such motivating reasons reflect the target, or targets, of the relevant virtues

in a situation. Basically, Aristotelian-inspired views agree with the target-centered account on what explicitly motivates a person when acting virtuously. Swanton's view, then, is not providing a novel understanding of virtuous motivation at the everyday level.

Nevertheless, a proponent of the target-centered view could push back and say that being motivated by the targets of virtue at the everyday level *just is* what matters for being virtuously motivated. So long as someone is reliably disposed to being motivated by the targets of virtue when relevant in a situation, then they exhibit virtuous motivation in those instances. Perhaps this could be seen as an advantage of a target-centered view. Perhaps our everyday motives (i.e., those occurrent to the agent when acting, or what we've referred to as X reasons in several instances) are what matter most when evaluating actions and agents. How these are connected to or grounded in any deeper motives may be beside the point, unless, however, there is something clearly problematic about one's underlying motives. For example, a person motivated to hit the targets but whose underlying motives for doing so are egoistic would fail to count as virtuous and warrant disapproval. But aside from cases like this, whether someone is additionally motivated by some deeper moral consideration (e.g., something like excellence or flourishing) in addition to being motivated by the targets of virtue does not seem necessary for being virtuously motivated. So long as one aims to hit the targets of virtue when acting, they are motivated appropriately and virtuously, at least on a target-centered view.

There are, however, several problems with this view. To see one, let's look back to an example we used in chapter 2. The example of Teresa, from that chapter, was used to illustrate something characteristic of good and virtuous people: they care *deeply* about others. Although they exhibit this care when acting for others in specific situations, there is also a deeper psychological level where this other-concern exists in their character and motives. So, aside from

being reliably disposed to act for others in everyday situations, we expect virtuous people to have deep other-concern that partly constitutes their character. This other-concern not only guides their motives when acting but also shapes their goals in life. As we saw with Teresa, she exhibited such deep care for others and this care shaped her life and efforts to help others. And we could expand this thought by identifying other deeper concerns that are characteristic of virtuous persons. For example, we also expect virtuous persons to care *deeply* about truth, justice, integrity, and their self-worth alongside their concern for others. These, however, are not reducible to nor need be narrowly conceived as targets of virtue. Nevertheless, virtuous persons care deeply about such things, which partly explains why they are admirable.

One question this raises is whether focusing on the targets of virtue can capture this deeper care and concern that is characteristic of virtuous persons and partly constitutive of virtuous motivation. To illustrate this further, let's consider Teresa's brother, Frank, who also appeared briefly in chapter 2. As mentioned, Frank performs caring actions when it seems like the right thing to do in a situation, such as when an elderly person is struggling to put groceries in their car. Frank is reliable in noticing such things and goes to help them. However, for Frank there is no deeper care or commitment to helping others. Perhaps Frank's other-concern operates as a kind of 'rule of thumb', such that when people need help Frank is inclined to help because he generally thinks that's the right thing to do. We can also add that Frank may not have some ulterior or egoistic motive for helping others. He tries to help when helping is called for and what underlies his actions is a recognition that helping is morally right. But that's as deep as Frank's caring motives go.

The problem for the target-centered view is that its insistence on motives being evaluated in reference to the targets of virtue precludes its ability to account for the depth of care that

virtuous persons display, and which we seem to expect of them. And as we mentioned, this deeper care need not be construed as caring about the targets of virtue, though we can reasonably assume that deeper concerns are instrumental for motivating the virtuous agent to hit the targets of virtue when they act. Relatedly, a target-centered view cannot explain the relevant difference between persons like Teresa and Frank, whose underlying motives matter for being virtuously motivated overall. Basically, if we think virtue goes 'all the way down' to a person's deeper psychological makeup, then, similarly, virtuous motives will also incorporate one's deeper concerns. Swanton's view, therefore, does not seem to identify the importance of deeper concerns and how these play a role in virtuous motivation.[172]

[172] At one point, Swanton seems to come close to suggesting this when she writes: "what makes actions right is hitting the targets of (relevant) virtues in relation to action, what makes traits virtues is determined by their targets or aims, and what should motivate an agent at both fundamental and everyday levels are these very features. The motivations which provide ultimate sources of justification for the theory (attaining the targets of virtue in right action, living a life of virtue in general), are one and the same as the everyday moral motivations of the virtuous agent living such a life: repaying debts because it is just, being a good parent, appreciating nature for its own sake, and so on. There are not two levels of motivation" (2021, 134-135). What she is saying here is that when one is motivated to hit the target of a virtue, one is also motivated by the very thing that justifies that motive and related action (see also the discussion on pages 171-172 of how X reasons reflect the targets of virtue in a situation and, thereby, include the source of justification for such reasons). That is, in this quote she is explaining what *justifies* an act or motive, rather than what goes into being virtuous at a deeper psychological level. If anything, Swanton discredits talk of "two levels of motivation" and, thus, a deeper more fundamental psychological level of motivation. However, in context she is providing a target-centered response to the "deeper level" self-centeredness objection mentioned by David Solomon (1988). According to this objection, an agent's motive for cultivating "personal virtue" may still be self-centered if it is ultimately grounded in and justified by their ultimate end of attaining a flourishing life. Swanton's remarks are intended to show how a target-centered view can avoid this objection because it doesn't necessarily rely on two different levels of justification: an everyday level and a (lower) level of justification. So, although one could attempt to connect these remarks to the question of psychological depth, she is making an altogether different point. To illustrate this differently, we can refer to everyday motives and the sources of justification as linear (such as in a chain) rather than hierarchical (such as in levels). For example, we can imagine a chain of justifying reasons that also function as motives, where M1 (an everyday motive) is justified by M2 (a source of justification); and, if needed, we can pose motives, such as M3 or so on, that further justify M2 and M1. M1 can be something like "she needed help" and M2 as "helping people is important." We could say that M2 justifies and partly explains why the agent was motivated by M1. But the existence of M2 or M3 in a chain of justifying reasons does not imply psychological depth. That is, an agent who exhibits something like M2 ("helping people is important") doesn't entail that they care deeply about helping others, have this concern as part of their self-conception, or care about others in a way that shapes and guides their goals and projects in life. This is seen in the example of Teresa and Frank, where both may exhibit being motivated by a chain of reasons like M1, M2, and M3, but only Teresa is *deeply motivated* by M2 or M3. Frank, on the other hand, illustrates how one can be motivated by appropriate sources of justification but not be motivated by them at a deeper psychological level.

A related problem can be seen in the following way. Consider, again, Teresa and her deep other-concern. Though she acts caringly across a variety of situations over time, what grounds and partly unifies this behavior is her deep-seated care for other people. To add to this, we could say that her practical rationality (or, practical wisdom or *phronesis*) also unifies her caring behavior across a variety of situations. Within caring-relevant situations, her practical wisdom in conjunction with her deep other-concern are activated to produce caring-relevant behavior that is also virtuous. Whether Teresa acts compassionately, generously, honestly, or in how she generally views and treats others, these can all be traced to and are motivated by her deeper care. In this way, Teresa's care for others, alongside her practical rationality, also functions to unify her other-regarding virtues. And when we also consider how Teresa lives her life as a whole and her personal goals, these seem to be driven by Teresa's desire to live in a way characterized by care for others. Basically, Teresa's other-concern is important for grounding and unifying her other-regarding virtues which, in turn, manifest caring behavior in a variety of situations. The point, then, is that Teresa's character and other-regarding virtues are sufficiently integrated because she is both practically wise and manifests deep other-concern.

In comparison, Swanton describes the virtues and their various modes of responsiveness as being integrated through practical wisdom. For instance, she writes: "although virtues are individuated through their fields (domains of concern) so that at the level of concept there are many virtues, they cooperate with one another to the point that *in re* they are not really separable. Virtue is thus unified through practical wisdom" (2021, 228).[173] However, she does not consider how deeper concerns integrate character and virtuous modes of responsiveness, which is also

[173] Elsewhere, Swanton remarks that "the plurality of modes of practical reason or rationality does not imply fragmentation; virtues are seen as excellences permitting rational integration of these modes" (2015, 216).

relevant to virtuous motivation. This may seem like a minor omission, but it carries problematic implications. For example, we could imagine that Frank has something resembling practical wisdom, which enables him to excellently perceive and deliberate about how to help others effectively in any situation. This practical rationality of his also works in conjunction with his 'rule of thumb' for helping others, so that both integrate Frank's caring behavior and motives. In effect, Frank is able to reliably perform caring behavior across a wide variety of situations, and effectively hit the relevant targets of virtue (both in his actions and motives), in a way that is unified in his character and practical reasoning.

But Frank still lacks something we tend to expect of virtuous persons. His motives to help others may be integrated but are, nonetheless, still superficial. In effect, he does not exhibit the kind of deep care for others that is characteristic of virtuous persons and partly unifies their caring behavior and motives. For Teresa, however, her concern for others is a deep part of her character that shapes how she acts and the way she lives. Not only does it unify her caring behavior across situations, but also grounds her other-regarding virtues. This more aligns with what we would expect of virtuous persons and their other-regarding motives. And much like we said earlier, the same thought can extend when we consider other things virtuous persons care deeply about, such as truth, justice, integrity, and their self-worth, to name a few. Virtuous motivation entails deep care for these also, and in a way that is integrated within one's character and manifests itself in various situations through various virtues. A target-centered view, however, only accounts for the role of practical wisdom in character integration and only considers one's motives when acting and whether these aim at hitting the targets of virtue. Whether such motives entail any deeper integration within one's character and what this might look like is largely unaccounted for on a target-centered view.

Another problem for Swanton's view surfaces in the following way. We tend to think that having a good character or being a good person are important features of the moral life. One way to think about this is that among the range of moral goods we should value or bring about, being a good or virtuous person and having the traits which constitute that person are clearly within that range. Moreover, from an Aristotelian perspective, the virtues enable us to function well as the kind of creatures we are and make us *good* human beings. As such, the virtues perfect human nature. Virtue, then, can be seen as an important moral end we should seek to realize in the world. These considerations partly explain *why* virtue is valuable. However, it's important to recognize that virtue is instrumental for realizing other moral goods, that is, it is instrumentally valuable. But this fact should not be the only reason why we value virtue, for as we noted, it seems to be highly important in its own right. And so, we should also recognize that virtue is valuable *for its own sake* or as an end in itself, much like other moral goods.[174] Conversely, if we failed to see virtue as a morally good end worth bringing about for its own sake, then our moral outlook would be missing something important. What follows is that failing to recognize the intrinsic value of virtue indicates a moral deficiency in one's outlook. Where moral goods are appropriately viewed as being intrinsically valuable, we should not reduce their value to that of being instrumental to others. And this is certainly true regarding virtue and excellence.

We've also seen in several accounts of virtuous motivation that virtuous persons are characteristically motivated by virtue or excellence *for its own sake* or *as an end itself*. For example, eudaimonists of either the Aristotelian or Stoic camp will claim that being motivated by virtue is necessary for being virtuous, and this entails valuing virtue both for its own sake and for the sake of attaining a flourishing life. Similarly, an EB view claimed that virtuous

[174] This view of the value of virtue traces back to Plato and Aristotle. See Plato's *Republic* (358a) and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1097b1-5).

motivation entails this motive for excellence itself, since it is a common attribute of virtuous persons and connects with their motivating reasons whenever they act virtuously. Because the motive for excellence is common throughout cases of virtuous motivation, an EB view claimed that this should be understood as the central feature of virtuous motivation and, thus, necessary for being virtuously motivated. A common thread among various accounts is that virtuous motivation entails a commitment to virtue *for its own sake*.

The problem for Swanton's view is that it is not clear where she stands on the value of virtue and its role in virtuous motivation. Although there is no explicit stance on this issue, something close to it may be deduced from the following:

> if the point of a virtue is to meet its targets (a central claim of a target centred virtue ethics) then what is most important to a virtuous agent is not to posses virtue herself but to meet the targets of virtue. She has as her highest commitment living a life of virtue. That life is a life of acting, being motivated, and so on as virtue *demands or commends*. This demand is meeting the *targets* of virtue (2021, 133).[175]

Along these lines she adds:

> a virtuous agent may value her possessing virtue above all other desirable and meritorious *traits* such as being a good athlete. As part of her commitment to leading a life of virtue the acquisition of virtue as a stable character trait is highly important to her since (on standard Aristotelian views of the nature of virtue) doing what virtue demands or commends optimally requires practical wisdom, and that in turn requires virtue.

[175] According to Swanton, "The features which *make* traits of character virtues are determined by their targets, aims, or point" (2021, 133; see also 2003, 19). And, what makes these targets, aims, or points worth aiming at are the features or, what Swanton calls, 'bases of moral responsiveness'; which are "value (properties of objects which make those objects worth respecting, appreciating, creating, preserving, loving, promoting, and so forth), bonds (relationships in which various kinds of attachment and identification are expressed), status (in virtue of which individuals can make authoritative demands on people), and the good for an individual" (2015, 213).

> Without virtue or sufficient virtue, attaining virtuous ends—the targets of the virtues—on a continuing, highly reliable, and sophisticated basis is impossible. Thus, virtue as a character trait is indeed something to be developed and worked on, and an agent should be committed to such ongoing work (2021, 133).

Several things stand out from these quotes. First, Swanton distinguishes between 'personal virtue' and the 'targets of virtue'. Personal virtue is, for Swanton, helpful for enabling its possessor to hit the targets of virtue reliably, where the latter are the ultimate aims or moral goods we should strive to realize. Because of this, virtue should be valued and cultivated due to its ability to help one hit the various targets, and so, it has an important role within a target-centered view. At minimum, what is clear is from Swanton's view is that virtue is, at least, instrumentally valuable for hitting the targets of virtue.[176] Secondly, we have no clear indication, from the above quotes or anywhere else in Swanton's work, as to whether virtue is valuable for its own sake and, relatedly, whether virtuous persons are characteristically motivated to pursue personal virtue as an end itself, especially since the whole point of being virtuous seems to be for the sake of hitting the targets. And because this seems to be the goal of virtue, at least on

[176] This, however, raises the question of whether Swanton's target-centered view would be better described as a type of virtue consequentialism. A view of this type defines a trait as a virtue (or vice) depending on the value of the consequences which that trait tends to produce. A contemporary example of this view can be found in Julia Driver's work *Uneasy Virtue* (2001). Like consequentialist theories in general, specific circumstances or states of affairs are of fundamental importance and any rules, duties, actions, or character traits are defined or valued in terms of their ability to produce such outcomes. As one author describes it, "on the virtue consequentialist approach, virtue is a *derivative* notion, not a fundamental one. Within a consequentialist framework, considerations of *intrinsic value* are fundamental; virtues are understood in terms of their conduciveness to the value of the world" (Bradley 2018, 409). Despite apparent similarities, categorizing Swanton's view as consequentialist would be misguided. The main reason being that Swanton describes the value of virtue in terms of its ability to aim at and hit the targets of virtue, of which only some are consequences or outcomes of actions. Several targets of virtue are, in fact, internal to the agent when acting, whereas consequences are targets which are external to the agent (see pages 167-169 for a brief description of the targets being either internal or external). At best, Swanton's view can be described as having consequentialist elements without thereby being a full-blown consequentialist theory of virtue.

Swanton's view, then appreciating virtue as valuable for its own sake appears to be either unnecessary or of little importance.[177]

With all this in view, the problem, put simply, is that virtue is not clearly understood as a moral good or end in itself on Swanton's target-centered view. Instead, it is understood as a means to hitting or attaining other moral goods, or as deriving its value from something external to it, which are the targets of virtue. If virtue is thought to be a moral good, on Swanton's view, it is only such because it is conducive or related to other moral goods, among which we don't find virtue itself. Relatedly, virtue is not valued, nor pursued for its own sake, but only for the sake of hitting the targets of virtue. This means that virtue is only or primarily valuable in an instrumental sense and, thus, not truly valuable for its own sake or as an end in itself. Ironically, on Swanton's view, virtue is not something we ultimately aim at in our actions, with our character, or in how we live our life. Rather, we aim at the targets, and we need virtue to help us hit them.

But if we go this route, we run the risk of placing the value of a good and virtuous character on the same level as other instrumental means capable of hitting the targets of virtue.

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[177] Another option that could be used to explain the value of virtue on Swanton's target-centered view is called the conditional view (this originally comes from Hurka 1998; see also Kagan 1998 and Bradley 2002). On this view, "the source of [a thing's] value is not purely internal, it is not purely external" (Hurka 1998, 303-304). For example, we tend to value a beautiful painting because it inspires appreciation and contemplation in those viewing it. But this does not fully explain *why* the painting is valuable, since an ugly painting would fail to elicit a similar response. So, part of explaining why a beautiful painting is valuable must also account for the intrinsic properties of the painting itself; namely, that it is beautiful rather than ugly. This allows us to say that the painting is valuable both because of intrinsic and extrinsic properties. Hurka takes this a step further and claims that the painting's external value of inspiring appreciation in fact adds to the intrinsic value of the painting. So, on the conditional view, a beautiful painting's intrinsic value may increase when it is contemplated or appreciated, since the latter only occurs because of intrinsic properties of the painting. For Swanton's view, we could attempt to explain the value of virtue in a similar way. Swanton could argue that although virtue is valuable because it enables its possessor to successfully hit the targets of virtue, there must be some internal properties to virtue that account for this and it is in these internal properties where we may locate the intrinsic value of virtue. But the obvious problem with this view is that it requires Swanton to identify those internal properties of virtue that give it intrinsic value. To be fair, Swanton could provide such. But at present, her account only identifies external properties or 'bases of moral responsiveness' which function as the sources of virtue's value. So, in order for the conditional view to be useful for explaining how virtue is intrinsically valuable on Swanton's view, we would first need an explanation from her of those internal properties of virtue that give it intrinsic value.

It's no secret that the virtues are not the only means available for hitting the targets of virtue, for we could also hit the targets of generosity or temperance without possessing the corresponding virtue. For example, possessing financial shrewdness can enable someone to hit the external targets of generosity just as good as the virtue of generosity. And, perhaps, one can hit the internal target of generosity by constantly reminding oneself of what others (perhaps parents or mentors) taught them about giving cheerfully and selflessly. In this way, one can benefit or promote the good of a friend, through appropriate handling of an appropriate thing (such as a financial gift), and with an attitude that is positive and directed towards others, and all this without doing so from the virtue of generosity. Here, financial shrewdness and reminding oneself to have a cheerful, selfless attitude when giving could prove to be just as effective as hitting the targets of generosity, and, therefore, prove to be just as valuable as the virtue of generosity. Similarly, having a good sponsor could be an effective way for someone to hit the targets of temperance. A good sponsor can both guide someone to properly control (or abstain from) specific bodily appetites and, simultaneously, mentor them in their thought processing and emotional state during moments of temptation. In this way, a good sponsor may be just as effective, and therefore just as valuable, as the virtue of temperance in enabling someone to hit the targets of temperance. In either case, a collection of skills, habits, or an accountability partner, among other things, may be just as effective for hitting the targets of virtue. This would, subsequently, force us to recognize that such means are just as valuable as virtue given their effectiveness for hitting targets. However, I doubt Swanton would agree that skills or other such means are just as valuable as virtue (as is evident from the above quote) and equally necessary for being a good and virtuous person as the virtues themselves. Nevertheless, this is a consequence of her view and one we have reason to avoid. If we are to avoid it, we should

recognize virtue as intrinsically valuable and as equal in importance to other moral goods they aim to hit. In doing so, we place virtue as more valuable than other means to hitting the targets, as something necessary to be motivated by for its own sake, and as something we should be motivated by if we desire to exhibit virtuous motives.

An excellence-based view has clear advantages over Swanton's view in these areas. As we saw, an EB view claims that being motivated by virtue for its own sake is both an important and necessary part of being virtuously motivated. As mentioned, the targets of the virtues are good and demand response, but virtue is also a moral end which ought to be valued for its own sake, despite not, strictly speaking, being a target. Failing to appreciate virtue appropriately leads to a deficient moral outlook and moral life as well as a deficient account of moral motivation. Furthermore, virtuous motivation seems to involve deep commitments to things like caring for others, valuing truth and justice, and a commitment to excellence for its own sake. A virtuous person does not merely aim for such things when they act, but they have a deeper appreciation and devotion to such things as part of their character, which also guides, integrates, and shapes their life. These are key aspects of an EB view that are missing in a target-centered view. And so, in its present form a target-centered view has several shortcomings. An EB view avoids these shortcomings while incorporating the insights Swanton provides on what the targets of virtue look like and how these factor into being virtuously motivated. Because of this, an excellence-based view stands as a preferable alternative to Swanton's target-centered view.

Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to illustrate how an excellence-based view of virtuous motivation fares better than alternative views currently available. And the way we illustrated this was in

showing how an excellence-based view captures what we see in every instance of virtuous motivation, incorporates the attractive elements of alternative views, and avoids the problems and shortcomings of such views. What surfaces in each instance of virtuous motivation and what characteristically motivates the virtuous person is excellence in some form or other. An excellence-based view recognizes this stable feature of virtuous motivation and, therefore, makes it central to explaining such motives. This view also avoids unnecessary additional commitments or motivating reasons, such as eudaimonist considerations or other Stoic commitments. In some cases, they are unnecessary because they do not contribute to nor explain why the motives of virtuous persons are admirable. In other cases, as we saw for some Stoic commitments, it is inhumane or counterintuitive to be motivated by them. On this point, less is better in terms of the normative expectations that need to be met to display virtuous motives. Furthermore, we saw how an excellence-based view could account for the importance of emotions without prioritizing one over others and where emotional responses are complimented, rather than hindered, by practical wisdom. Although this needs development in future work, an EB view can say that when our emotions are coupled with practical wisdom this reliably produces excellent emotional responses, which is necessary for some cases of virtuous motivation. Lastly, we saw how an EB view is strengthened by its use of the targets of virtue, where this is essential to describing virtuous motives. However, we also showed how this view proved to be a more robust account of virtuous motives by complimenting the role of the targets of virtue in one's motivating reasons with the need for deeper concerns, such as other-concern or truth, and a desire for excellence as an end in itself. In the end, it is for these reasons that an excellence-based view proves to be a more plausible and inclusive account of virtuous motivation than the alternatives.

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