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The Cognitive Demands of Intellectual Virtue

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My plan in this paper is to defend a ‘cognitive requirement’ on intellectual virtue. I shall argue that part of what is involved with possessing an intellectual virtue is having a certain cognitive perspective on or belief about the disposition in question. The argument will shed light on two main aspects of intellectual virtue. First, it will illuminate the positive psychological substance or character of intellectual virtue. Second, it will clarify the relation between the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue and various other widely acknowledged features of virtue proper.

I begin by clarifying how I am thinking about intellectual virtues and saying something about the motivation for my project. As I am conceiving of them, intellectual virtues are intellectual *character* traits like fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, attentiveness, carefulness and thoroughness in inquiry, and *intellectual* honesty, courage, integrity, and the like. They are not hardwired cognitive capacities or faculties on the model of vision, memory, introspection, and the like.¹ Furthermore, on the present conception, intellectual virtues are ‘personal excellences,’ meaning that they are traits that make their possessor good or admirable *qua person*.² This way of thinking about intellectual virtues, while perhaps not entirely familiar, should be familiar and intuitive enough. We often admire persons who are, for instance, reflective and thoughtful about important questions, careful and thorough in their reasoning, and willing to listen honestly and charitably ‘to the other side,’ not merely (if at all) because these

persons are thereby more likely to increase their stock of true beliefs, but also (or rather) *as such*—that is, on account of the very *persons* they are. It follows that if a given trait is epistemically useful or reliable, say, but fails to warrant the relevant kind of personal admiration or praise, this trait is not an intellectual virtue in the present sense.

My aim, again, is to defend a cognitive or doxastic requirement on intellectual virtue. This may seem like a rather unambitious task given that my concern is *intellectual* (rather than, say, moral) virtue. However, this suggestion underestimates the challenge at hand in at least two ways. First, most accounts of intellectual virtue in the virtue epistemology literature offer distinctively *affective* or *desiderative* characterizations of the traits in question, for they portray intellectual virtues as principally involving certain epistemically relevant desires or related emotional or affective states.³ Second, in recent years, there have arisen within the virtue ethics and moral psychology literature certain ‘anti-intellectualist’ objections to a cognitive requirement on moral virtue.⁴ My own view, which will be developed and clarified later in the paper, is that these objections are in most respects no less troubling or problematic for a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue than they are for a cognitive requirement on moral virtue. Because the objections have received considerable attention and enjoy at least some initial plausibility, it is appropriate that they be considered here.

1. The Psychological Structure of an Intellectual Virtue

One reason for accepting a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue is that doing so provides a plausible explanation of a fairly standard and intuitive view of the basic psychological *structure* of an intellectual virtue. In recent years, a number of virtue epistemologists (e.g.

Montmarquet 1993, Zagzebski 2006, and Baehr 2011) have either gestured at or explicitly endorsed something like a two-tier psychological model of intellectual virtue. The thrust of the model is that (a) all intellectual virtues have in common something like a ‘love of truth’ or desire for knowledge, but that (b) each individual virtue has its own distinctive and more immediate focus or motivation—a focus or motivation on account of which it can be individuated from other intellectual virtues. But the authors in question have also tended to stipulate a certain relation between these two elements of an intellectual virtue: they hold (c) that the immediate focus or concern characteristic of particular intellectual virtues is ‘grounded in’ or ‘flows from’ the more basic concern with truth, knowledge, or the like.

This is, I take it, a very plausible way of thinking about the basic structure of an intellectual virtue. My concern is with the *explanation* of the relevant grounding relation. On account of what is the immediate focus or concern characteristic of particular virtues ‘rooted’ or ‘grounded’ in a deeper concern with truth or related epistemic goods? In what sense, for instance, does an open-minded person’s readiness to consider viewpoints that differ from her own ‘flow from’ or arise ‘out of’ a desire for truth? One obvious and plausible reply involves attributing to this person a *belief* that ‘connects’ her disposition to consider alternative standpoints with her desire for truth. Specifically, we might think of this person as having a belief to the effect that engaging in the relevant cognitive activity is an effective or reliable means to reaching the truth. And we might think of this belief (together with the person’s desire for true belief) as explaining why she is disposed to engage in distinctively open-minded cognitive activity.

This suggests the following ‘connecting belief requirement’ on intellectual virtue:

(CBR) A person S's disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity A is an intellectual virtue only if (a) S believes that A is suitably related to S's more general epistemic goals and (b) this belief partially explains S's disposition to engage in A.

My claim, then, is that (CBR) provides a prima facie plausible explanation of a certain aspect of the psychological structure of an intellectual virtue. Indeed, while we will have occasion to revisit this issue below, it is far from clear what an alternative explanation might look like.

1.1. Clarifications

Before turning to consider additional support for (CBR), some clarification of its basic terms and demands is in order. First, the notion of "virtue-relevant" activity is meant to capture the idea, noted above and widely embraced in the literature, that for each individual intellectual virtue, there is a kind of intellectual activity or psychology characteristic of this virtue—an activity or psychology on the basis of which it can be individuated from other intellectual virtues. Second, I intentionally leave the ultimate aim or end of intellectual virtues somewhat open-ended by saying in (a) that S must believe that A is appropriately related to S's "more general epistemic goals." The most obvious such goal is truth or true belief. However, I do not wish to insist that this is the sole 'ultimate' epistemic end or goal.⁵ A third and related point concerns the claim that S must believe that A is "suitably related" to a more ultimate epistemic goal like truth. Here the most obvious and standard relation is that of epistemic *reliability*, whereby S believes that A is a reliable means to truth. I want to leave open the possibility, however, that certain other relations

might satisfy this condition. Consider the virtue of epistemic conscientiousness.⁶ Fourth, when I say that the belief in question must “partially” explain the disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity, I am gesturing primarily at the fact that it is this belief together with the more basic or general epistemic aim (e.g. a desire for truth) that play the relevant explanatory role.

As these qualifications make clear, a simpler but less precise rendering of (CBR) would be that S’s disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity A (the activity characteristic of open-mindedness, say) is an intellectual virtue only if (a) S believes that A is a reliable means to truth and (b) this belief, together with S’s desire for true belief, explain S’s possession of the disposition.

One additional aspect of the belief required by (CBR) must be noted. (CBR) should *not* be read as saying that *as* a person engages in virtue-relevant activity, she must be thinking about or have present before her mind the relevant connection between the activity she is engaging in and her more general epistemic goals. Nor should it be read as requiring that she consciously *deliberate* about this connection prior to engaging in the activity. Such requirements are unnecessarily demanding. Finally, neither should (CBR) be understood as requiring that the belief in question be particularly conscious or occurrent at other times. A great many of our beliefs rarely (if ever) receive our explicit attention and I see no reason to think that the relevant connecting belief must be any different. What *is* required is that the person believe the claim in question enough or in the way necessary for satisfying the explanatory condition in (CBR), that is, for partially explaining her disposition to engage in virtuous or virtue-relevant activity. We will have occasion to return to this and related issues below. But it should be clear at this point that (CBR), while undeniably ‘intellectualist’ in some sense, is not strongly or extremely intellectualist.

2. Intellectual Virtue and *Phronesis*

I turn now to two additional and structurally similar arguments in support of (CBR). Here and in the section that follows, I identify a certain putative feature of intellectual virtue. I then proceed to explain how this feature tells in favor of (CBR). In the present section, my focus is the connection between intellectual virtue and *phronesis* or practical wisdom.

A close connection has long been drawn between *phronesis* and *moral* virtue. Some (most notably Aristotle) have held that *phronesis* is both necessary and sufficient for the possession of any particular moral virtue. Others have resisted this thesis while nevertheless acknowledging an important and close connection between *phronesis* and moral virtue.⁷

At a minimum, *phronesis* involves a knowledge of which ends are most valuable or worth pursuing and how best to balance and achieve these ends.⁸ This point, again, is typically understood in terms of *moral* ends and means. However, given that we are thinking of intellectual virtues as character traits, and thus as personal qualities that have a substantial active or practical dimension, it is very plausible to think of this point as applying to an understanding and pursuit of *epistemic* ends as well. That is, we can think of the *phronimos* or person of practical wisdom as (also) grasping which epistemic ends are most valuable, the comparative worth of these ends, which sorts of cognitive activities or undertakings are most likely to promote them, and so on. We may, then, stipulate a connection between *phronesis* and intellectual virtue that is at least roughly on par with the widely recognized connection between *phronesis* and moral virtue.

What might this connection entail with respect to a particular inquirer's cognitive perspective on her intellectual habits or activity? A practically wise inquirer presumably will have a grasp of how these things connect with her broader epistemic goals. More specifically, she will have a sense of how her intellectual habits or activity are *positively* or *appropriately* related to the most worthy epistemic ends. Where the activity in question is that characteristic of, say, intellectual carefulness or thoroughness, she will be aware of the fact that such activity is importantly instrumentally related to the goal of acquiring true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs. Moreover, this awareness presumably will play some role in explaining why she is disposed to engage in this activity. That is, her sense of the efficacy of this activity will not be causally isolated from but rather will form part of the very basis of her disposition.⁹

This just is to say, however, that the *phronimos* will satisfy the demands of (CBR). Is this a good reason for accepting (CBR)? This depends, of course, on the relation between *phronesis* and the possession of intellectual virtues. If one embraces a strong 'unity thesis' according to which *phronesis* is both necessary and sufficient for the possession of any particular intellectual virtue, then one indeed shall be forced to conclude that one can possess an intellectual virtue only if one satisfies the demands of (CBR). However, if one rejects such a thesis, then while it will remain that one possesses *phronesis* only if one satisfies (CBR), it will not immediately be clear whether one can possess an individual intellectual virtue without satisfying (CBR).¹⁰

I do not have the space here to resolve the question of how exactly *phronesis* is related to the possession of intellectual virtues. What we are in a position to see, however, is that (CBR) is capable of explaining the apparent fact that the relation in question (whatever its more precise nature) is a close and intimate one. For, again, if (CBR) is correct, part of what is involved with possessing intellectual virtues is possessing beliefs which in turn are also partly constitutive of

phronesis. This feature of (CBR) should, at a minimum, compel us to give this principle very serious consideration.

3. 'Appropriating' Intellectual Virtues

Consider the transition from what Aristotle describes as “natural virtue” to what would generally be recognized as genuine or full virtue.¹¹ I take it that a person’s natural virtues are her innate or inbred psychological qualities which, while not yet developed or cultivated into actual virtues, nevertheless bear a resemblance to, and give her an advantage relative to acquiring, the corresponding actual virtues.

One thing that presumably happens in the transition from natural virtue to genuine virtue is that the traits in question *become the person’s own*—they become *integrated* into her psychology or character in a relatively deep and personal way. Put another way, the person ‘appropriates’ these traits. While this idea of appropriating a personal trait or quality may be less clear or determinate than we might like, it can plausibly be thought of as involving at least two things.

First, a person ‘appropriates’ a given trait only if he *identifies* with or *endorses* this trait, which in turn would seem to require, at a minimum, that the person take a positive view of the trait or have some grasp or awareness of its value. This is necessary because barring such endorsement the person presumably would be ‘distanced’ or alienated from the trait in a way that would prevent the trait from reflecting well on him as a person or bar us from reasonably admiring or praising him for it. The trait, in other words, would fail to be a sufficient part of the person’s identity, such that the person himself might be good or better on account of it.

I see no reason to doubt that this point applies to the acquisition of intellectual virtues as well as moral virtues. Assuming this is right, what does it suggest about a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue? According to part (a) of (CBR), a person S's disposition to engage in a certain virtue-relevant activity A is an intellectual virtue only if S *believes that A is appropriately related to his epistemic goals*. This just is for S to recognize the cognitive *value* of his disposition. Furthermore, S satisfies part (b) of (CBR) only if S is disposed to engage in A and S's belief concerning the value of A partially *explains* this disposition. The satisfaction of these two parts of (CBR) would appear to be entirely sufficient for 'identifying' with or 'endorsing' a given trait, which in turn is essential to the trait's being 'appropriated' in the manner required by genuine virtue.¹²

The point can also be made going in the other direction. First, it is plausible to think that one identifies with or values a given intellectual trait T in the sense required for 'appropriating' T only if one is aware of the fact that the activity characteristic of T is suitably related to one's broader epistemic goals, that is, only if one satisfies part (a) of (CBR). This is due to the fact that the primary *value* of such activity presumably consists in the very relation in question, such that one could not relevantly 'endorse' T without being cognizant of the fact that the activity characteristic of T instantiates this relation. However, identifying with or endorsing a trait in the relevant sense is not merely a matter of having a favorable belief about it. It is also a matter of a certain readiness to act in accordance with the belief—a disposition to engage in the activity characteristic of the trait in question. Moreover, it is reasonable to think that the relevant belief and disposition must not be causally disconnected from each other, and specifically, that the readiness to engage in the virtue-relevant activity must be at least partially grounded in the person's favorable view of this activity.¹³ But, again, this is just to say that a person S identifies

with or endorses a trait T in the sense required for appropriating T only if S also satisfies part (b) of (CBR). Given that such appropriation is essential to the possession of a genuine intellectual virtue, this is a compelling reason for accepting (CBR).

A second thing that presumably occurs in the transition from natural virtue to genuine virtue—or in the ‘appropriation’ of a natural character trait or virtue—is that the person herself becomes a significant part of the *explanation* of her possession of the trait in question. To see why, suppose that I have been raised by my parents and community to possess a certain virtue-relevant trait T and that at present these influences are the sole explanation of my possession of T. I am not in any way to credit for this fact. If you were to ask me why I have T or why I regularly act in ways characteristic of T, I could, if speaking honestly, say little more than: “That’s just how I was raised.” These are the words of a (merely) naturally virtuous person. If I am not at all responsible or creditable for my possession of T, it stands to reason that I have not yet appropriated T, and thus that my possession of T does not yet amount to the possession of a genuine virtue.

How, then, might I become part of this explanation? Here again (CBR) is extremely relevant. Suppose that as time passes I come to understand the value of T: I begin to see, say, that the sorts of activities I am led to engage in out of T play an important role in my success at reaching the truth and avoiding error. Suppose further that this belief now goes a considerable way toward explaining why I am disposed to engage in T-relevant activity. Thus if you ask me why I tend to act in T-relevant ways, I am now likely to say something like “because I think T is valuable” or “because I see that T is an effective way of achieving certain ends that are important to me.” I have, in other words, come to satisfy the demands of (CBR) relative to T. The important thing to note is that once I have done so, it will then be reasonable to think of me as

entering in a significant way into the explanation of my possession of T, that is, as having ‘appropriated’ T in the relevant sense.

Moreover, it is difficult to see how I could become part of the explanation of my possession of T *without* having satisfied the dual requirements of (CBR), that is, without being aware of the value of T and without this belief’s playing a role in explaining why I am disposed to engage in T-relevant activity. For it is difficult to imagine what *other* psychological state or states might do the relevant causal or explanatory work in a way that is consistent with T’s making a positive contribution to my own personal intellectual worth. So here again it appears that in order to ‘appropriate’ a given intellectual trait in the sense relevant to acquiring a genuine virtue, a person must first satisfy the demands of (CBR).

4. An Anti-Intellectualist Objection

We have thus far examined three considerations in support of a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue. We have seen that such a requirement explains the putative psychological structure of an intellectual virtue, that it explains the relation between intellectual virtue and *phronesis*, and that it follows from the fact that intellectual virtues must be ‘appropriated’ by their possessor. I turn now to address a recent objection aimed at an analogous requirement on *moral* virtue.

4.1. The objection articulated

Drawing on a well-known article by Jonathan Bennet (1979), Nomy Arpaly (2003) and Julia Driver (2001) have recently appealed to the case of Huckleberry Finn—a Missouri farm boy who undertakes the liberation of his slave friend Jim—and similar cases in an effort to argue against something like a connecting belief on moral virtue. In what follows, I will focus on Arpaly’s discussion, both because it is a bit more precise than Driver’s on the relevant points and because it seems more capable of posing a problem for a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue. While my immediate focus here will be the cognitive demands of moral virtue, it should eventually be clear both how a closely analogous objection could be raised against a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue and how my reply to Arpaly could be recast so as to overcome this objection.¹⁴

In Arpaly’s terminology, Huck Finn suffers from “inverse akrasia,” which occurs when “an agent does the right thing but does so against her best judgment” (75). This is because Huck, being a product of the slave-holding South, believes that his efforts to liberate Jim are morally *wrong* (indeed that they amount to stealing his neighbor’s property). It is important to be clear that, according to Arpaly, Huck really does not believe *at all* or at *any* level that his actions enjoy positive moral standing. Indeed, Arpaly goes even further, claiming that “[t]he belief that what he does is moral need not even appear in Huckleberry’s *unconscious*” and that “he does not have the belief that what he does is right *anywhere* in his head” (77; the first emphasis is mine and the second is Arpaly’s). Despite his badly mistaken perspective on his actions, Arpaly claims, Huck still merits a favorable moral evaluation: “Huckleberry Finn, then, is not a bad boy who has accidentally done what is good, but a good boy.” The reason, she says, is that Huck is responding to what are *in fact* the morally relevant features of the situation (*ibid.*).¹⁵

Arpaly's position can easily be parlayed into an objection to a connecting belief requirement on moral virtue. Such a requirement might stipulate, roughly, that a person's disposition to engage in the activity characteristic of a particular moral virtue is itself a moral virtue only if (a) the person in question believes that such activity is suitably related to her morally relevant goals and (b) this belief partially explains the disposition in question. Thus, if Huck *were* to satisfy this requirement, he might (at some level) believe that his efforts to liberate Jim are likely to promote a genuinely good cause (viz. Jim's freedom), and this belief, together with Huck's basic concern for Jim's well-being, might go at least some way toward explaining why Huck behaves in the relevant way. This, however, is precisely the sort of belief that Arpaly denies is possessed by Huck.

4.2. An assessment of the objection

What should we make of Arpaly's suggestion that Huck might be genuinely morally virtuous despite the fact that he is entirely oblivious to the moral status of his actions? Given that our concern is with a 'personal worth' or 'admiration-based' conception of moral virtue, I find this a very dubious claim.

To get at why, it will be helpful to attend to some of the details of Huck's psychology. I just noted that there is a sense in which Huck is 'well-motivated' or 'has a good heart.' It can be tempting, on this basis, to think that while he may not exactly rise to the status of moral exemplar or paragon, he does belong squarely in the camp of the morally virtuous (perhaps alongside Forrest Gump, Lennie Small, and other familiar and endearing characters). Bear in mind, however, that Huck is *not* 'well-motivated' or possessed of a 'good heart' insofar as these states

require any kind of awareness of the value or worth of what one is actually motivated to do or the ends on which one's heart is actually set. For instance, Huck is not 'well-motivated' in the sense that he is, say, doing his best to accomplish what he thinks is the right thing, despite having a naïve, skewed, or even grossly mistaken moral perspective. Indeed, in light of this, it would be a mistake to describe Huck as either 'well-meaning' or 'well-intentioned.' While, as Arpaly explicitly remarks, there is a sense in which Huck's actions are not 'accidentally' good, there is another, equally familiar sense in which they *are* accidentally good. In particular, *from Huck's own point of view*, it is a complete and unequivocal accident that his actions are morally right. For these reasons, I find it very difficult, despite the objective worth or rightness of Huck's actions, to regard Huck himself as a very admirable or excellent person and thus to treat him as genuinely virtuous in our sense.

To pursue this matter further, let us stop to consider the basic principle or principles that apparently underlie Arpaly's assessment of the case. As indicated earlier, Arpaly seems to accept something like the following claim:

(V1) A person is morally virtuous only if and to the extent that she is motivated by ends that are *in fact* morally good.¹⁶

Moreover, by parity of reasoning, it is plausible to think that Arpaly would also accept the following thesis about moral *vice*:

(V2) A person is morally vicious only if and to the extent that she is motivated by ends that are *in fact* morally bad.

While not without some initial plausibility, closer inspection reveals that both (V1) and (V2) have objectionable implications. To see why, imagine two politicians A and B. A has recently defeated B in a tight and heated race for a political office. B is filled with contempt and spite for A. Thus B takes it upon himself to try to get A thrown out of office. As it turns out, A is profoundly morally corrupt and if left in office will drive his community into financial ruin within a few months' time. Accordingly, A's removal from office would *in fact* be a morally good thing. However, B is entirely oblivious to this fact. Neither he nor any of A's constituents have any reason to doubt the uprightness of A's character or A's likely success in his new post (we can imagine that during his campaign A managed to project a public image according to which he is uniquely honorable, responsible, and so on, and therefore especially unlikely to do what in fact he is bent on doing).

B seems clearly to qualify as morally virtuous according to (V1). Again, his aim is to get A thrown out of office, which in fact is a morally good end. The problem is that B is *not* morally virtuous. While he is attempting to bring about what is in fact a morally good end, he completely fails to recognize it as such. Indeed, not only does B seem less than morally virtuous, he seems downright vicious. One way of explaining this appearance is that, while he is motivated by an end that is in fact good, he nevertheless has morally bad or vicious intentions.

Now imagine a third person C, who is one of A's most loyal and generous supporters. Again let us imagine that C has been given every reason to trust and be enthusiastic about A's candidacy and potential impact on her community. On the basis of these reasons, C has given generously of her time and money to A's campaign. Given that A's empowerment is *in fact* a bad thing, C apparently counts as morally *vicious* according to (V2). But again, for all she knows or

could be expected to know, C is giving generously to a very good and worthy cause. Her intentions are morally impeccable. Accordingly, (V2) appears to generate precisely the wrong conclusion. C's generosity would appear to be indicative of moral virtue rather than vice.¹⁷

These considerations provide cogent grounds for thinking that cases like that of Huck Finn fail to pose a problem for a cognitive requirement on moral virtue. Indeed, closer inspection of the cases has clarified the need for such a requirement. Moreover, though I will not develop the point here, it should be clear how an intellectual or epistemic analog of something like the Huck Finn case could be constructed in objection to (CBR) and how an adapted version of the reply just noted could provide a sufficient rebuttal.¹⁸

4.2.1. First rejoinder: 'pure' *de re* motivation

I turn now to consider two possible rejoinders to the argument of the previous section. It might be claimed, first, that being motivated by ends that are in fact morally good—that is, what we might call '*de re* good motivation'—is indeed the real crux of moral virtue but that it is not the *whole* of moral virtue. Specifically, it might be said of person B above that while he is *de re* well-motivated, he nonetheless possesses certain other psychological states (e.g. certain false beliefs and bad intentions) that *defeat* or *undermine* his claim to virtue. Accordingly, it might be held that moral virtue is a matter of *de re* good motivation together with the *absence* of countervailing beliefs, intentions, and the like. Likewise, it might be said that moral vice is a matter of being motivated by ends that are in fact morally bad—of *de re* bad motivation— together with the absence of conflicting beliefs, intentions, and so on. This view, which I shall refer to as the 'pure' *de re* motivational view, would imply (plausibly) that person C, who gives

generously to what she is firmly and reasonably (though erroneously) convinced is a good cause, is not morally vicious.

While I think a pure *de re* motivational view represents a minor improvement on the view considered in the previous section, I think there are at least two major problems with it. First, much of what can be said against Huck Finn and similar characters can also be said against certain persons who satisfy the conditions of the pure *de re* view. Consider, for instance, a variation on the Huck Finn case in which Huck does not possess any beliefs that run contrary to his actions, but where he still fails to believe—at all or at any level—that his actions have a *positive* moral status, that is, where his beliefs are entirely *neutral* with respect to the moral standing of his efforts to liberate Jim. Call this version of Huck Finn “Simple Huck” and the earlier version “Confused Huck.” Like Confused Huck, Simple Huck is neither well-motivated nor possessed of a good heart insofar as these things require having some sense or awareness of the value of what one is motivated by or the object of one’s desire. Nor does Simple Huck ‘mean well’ or have good intentions, for again, he does not in any way or at any level take himself to be doing anything good or appropriate or right. His actions, while perhaps not positively *irrational* (they do not involve an outright violation of his moral principles or conscience), clearly are not *rational* either, at least in the sense of enjoying any support from his moral beliefs or judgments. Accordingly, I find Simple Huck’s claim to virtue not much more promising than that of Confused Huck.

Second, and more importantly, the view we are considering fails to do justice to the actual implications of the cases considered above. In the case of person B (the spiteful but *de re* well-motivated politician), for instance, the point was not merely that B lacks moral virtue. Rather, it was also that B’s actions are indicative of moral *vice*. Likewise, the point about person

C (the reasonable and well-meaning but *de re* poorly motivated political supporter) was not merely that C fails to count as morally vicious, but rather that his actions seemly clearly to be an indication of moral *virtue*. The pure *de re* motivational view is incapable of accommodating either of these judgments. For, again, B is not *de re* ill-motivated at all; and C is not *de re* well-motivated.¹⁹ In short, the cases suggest not only that *de re* good motivation is not sufficient for virtue, but that it is not necessary either, and likewise that *de re* bad motivation is neither sufficient nor necessary for moral vice.

4.2.2. Second rejoinder: moral reliability

A second rejoinder involves shifting the focus from *de re* good and bad motivation per se to a certain positive effect or outcome of such motivation. Someone with a favorable view of Huck Finn, for instance, might argue that what is morally commendable about Huck is not merely the fact that he is motivated by ends that are in fact morally good, but rather that given such motivation, he is likely to be a reliable or systematic *producer* of morally good states of affairs. Huck is, in other words, a morally *reliable* agent; and this is sufficient for thinking of him as morally virtuous.

This basic conception of moral virtue (as well as the correlative account of moral vice) is in a much better position to handle some of the cases we have been considering. For it can be said with some plausibility of person B, for instance, that while in the present case his psychology is aligned with an end that is in fact morally good (viz. A's removal from office), this psychology is such that in general B is likely to bring about states of affairs that are morally *bad*. Likewise, it can be said that person C's psychology, while presently oriented toward an end

that in fact is morally bad (viz. A's remaining in office), is such that C generally will produce states of affairs that are morally *good*. As this suggests, the present view, unlike the one considered in the previous section, is capable of making sense, not just of the idea that person B is not virtuous and person C is not vicious, but also of the further plausible claim that person B is vicious and person C is virtuous.

Contrary to what was suggested above, it is not clear that this view would render a positive assessment of Huck Finn or similar characters. For Huck's psychology seems quite unstable: it is not difficult to imagine that there are nearby possible worlds in which he surrenders Jim to the authorities; nor is it difficult to imagine that he might have helped Jim even if Jim were his friend but also a dangerous criminal. On my view, this is a *correct* assessment of Huck and similar characters. Therefore, let us turn to a more pressing problem with the rejoinder.

In order to circumvent some of the issues just alluded to, it will be helpful to focus our attention on reliable moral agents whose psychology is 'simple' rather than 'confused,' that is, who lack any beliefs about the moral status of their virtue-relevant dispositions but whose psychology is not conflicted in ways that are likely to raise questions about their reliability. Again, the question is whether such persons might be morally virtuous—and, specifically, whether they might be morally virtuous in a personal worth or admiration-based sense.

There are, in fact, several reasons in support of a negative reply to this question. First, there are the intuitive considerations noted above in connection with both the Confused and Simple Huck cases to the effect that these characters are not well meaning, that they lack good intentions, that the rightness of their actions is entirely reflectively lucky, and so on. As noted earlier, it seems implausible to consider any such person morally good or virtuous in the relevant personal worth or admiration-based sense.

A second and related point is that moral reliability seems clearly to be too much a matter of *luck* (of a metaphysical and not merely a reflective or epistemic sort) to form the basis of moral virtue understood in the relevant way. Whether our actions are morally successful or unsuccessful, whether we affect the world or others positively or negatively, is often and to a very significant extent outside of our control. It can require that we not be deceived or misled in various ways, that we receive the cooperation of other moral agents, that events unfold in ways that we have reason to expect they will, and more. The basis of personal worth, on the other hand, while not immune to luck of every sort, would seem to be immune to luck of *this* sort.²⁰ As noted earlier, when a person's moral efforts fail on account of factors that are well beyond her control, while this may affect our judgment of the moral status of these efforts, it does not affect our judgment of the moral status of the agent herself. We do not allow bad luck of this sort to diminish our estimation of persons *qua* persons. Assuming we are right in doing so, it is reasonable to conclude that moral reliability, which is shot through with luck, cannot form the basis of moral virtue understood in personal worth terms.

A third problem concerns the reliability view's ability to generate the right result in the cases of persons B and C above. Again, on the face of it, a major advantage of this view is that it has this ability, for B's psychology does not appear likely to systematically produce morally good states of affairs and C's psychology does not appear likely to systematically produce bad states of affairs. We can, however, imagine worlds in which B's psychology *does* systematically produce good states of affairs and in which C's psychology systematically produces bad states of affairs. For instance, we might imagine a world in which all persons in positions of power are corrupt and deserve to be ousted but are also especially adept at concealing their corruption. In this world, B's psychology presumably would be systematically productive of morally good

states of affairs and C's psychology would be systematically productive of morally bad states of affairs. While there may be a sense in which B would have a virtue in the world in question, I take it that this would not and should not cause us to rethink our estimation of B as a person. After all, while motivated by objectively morally good ends, B's intentions remain putatively vicious. Likewise, while there may be a sense in which C's generosity is a moral vice in the world in question, I take it that we would not cease to admire C from a personal worth standpoint. Again, C is firmly disposed to do what she has every reason to think is good, right, beneficial, and generous.

A likely move at this point would be to claim that moral reliability in the *actual* world—in *our* world—is what matters for moral virtue, not reliability in worlds different from ours. I do not have the space for an exhaustive reply to this suggestion. Thus I shall limit myself to two brief remarks. First, it is difficult to imagine what a non-ad hoc motivation might be for privileging reliability relative to our world or for disregarding a trait's reliability in one or more other worlds, particularly when the trait under consideration is, as a matter of hypothesis, possessed in one of the worlds in which it is reliable.²¹ A second and related problem, which I have elaborated on elsewhere (2007), concerns the fact that when we make the sorts of judgments just noted in connection with the modified versions of the B and C cases, we do not tend to do so with a *mind* to or on the *basis* of the probable efficacy of the relevant traits in worlds very different or far removed from the worlds in which they are possessed. Rather, the persons in question typically strike us as virtuous or vicious in the worlds in which they exist and on account of who they are or what they are like in these worlds (*not* on account how they might affect the world in other very different environments closer to our own). This is a further reason

to think that ‘real-world’ reliability is not the basis of virtue understood in a personal worth or admiration-based sense.

5. The Putative Basis of Personal Worth

My main concern in the paper is whether there is a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue understood in personal worth or admiration-based terms. We have considered several reasons for thinking that there is. However, our approach thus far has largely been indirect: we have mainly been concerned with certain aspects or features of intellectual virtue that are not obviously or immediately connected with matters of personal worth or admiration per se. In the present section I want to pursue a more direct argument in support of (CBR). Specifically, I suggest that we attempt to identify the putative *basis* of personal worth and to consider what if anything it suggests about a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue.

Let us begin, then, by considering in a more or less direct way when or under what conditions we tend to admire or praise persons *qua* persons. In other words, what is the apparent basis of personal worth? We have already considered reasons for thinking that this basis is *not* a person’s actual accomplishments or successes. This is not to deny that we sometimes praise such things or even the persons to whom they can be credited. It is, however, to deny that we praise or admire such persons *qua* persons. This again is evident in the fact that when a person fails to succeed or accomplish something on account of factors that were unforeseeable or otherwise well outside of her control, it is precisely from a personal worth standpoint that we still feel confident making a favorable assessment of the person.

A related suggestion, which was also alluded to at several points in the previous discussion, is as follows:

(PA1) A person S is good or admirable *qua* person only if and to the extent that S attempts to achieve what S regards as (epistemically or morally) good.

(PA1) has a lot to recommend it. It fits well with the intuitive judgments just noted; and it offers an explanation of several of the cases discussed in the previous section. For instance, it provides an explanation of why we think well of person C, who gives generously to the political campaign of a candidate whom she believes is very worthy but who, as a matter of fact, is morally and politically corrupt.

Yet (PA1) is problematic as it stands. To see why, consider a case like Heinrich Himmler. According to Jonathan Bennett (1979), Himmler committed unspeakable moral atrocities *on principle*. That is, he acted in ways that he regarded as morally acceptable. In that case, according to (PA1), Himmler was admirable or good *qua* person.²²

One way of avoiding this problematic conclusion would be to strengthen (PA1) as follows:

(PA2) A person S is good or admirable *qua* person only if and to the extent that S attempts to achieve what is *in fact* (epistemically or morally) good.

Given (PA2), Himmler and similar characters fail to count as personally admirable. The problem is that we have already considered decisive grounds for rejecting (PA2). For (PA2) is very

similar to (V1) above, according to which a person is morally *virtuous* only if and to the extent that she is (suitably) motivated by ends that are *in fact* morally good. We have seen, however, that a person can be motivated by ends that are in fact good while nonetheless being far from personally admirable or virtuous. Thus while (PA1) is objectionably weak, (PA2) is objectionably strong.

A suitable middle ground between (PA1) and (PA2) is not too far to find. Consider the following:

(PA3) A person S is good or admirable *qua* person only if and to the extent that S attempts to achieve what S has *good reason to believe* is (epistemically or morally) good.²³

(PA3) lays down what we might think of as a ‘rationality’ or ‘reasonability’ constraint on the basis of personal admiration. This constraint is strong enough to overcome the difficulty with (PA1) but weak enough to avoid the problem with (PA2). For instance, (PA3) would count person C (the generous but misled political supporter) as personally admirable, but would not generate a favorable evaluation of Himmler (given the plausible assumption that his moral beliefs were not supported by good reasons). Likewise, it would issue a negative judgment of person B, who is motivated by what in fact is a morally good end (A’s removal from office), but who is oblivious to the relevant good-making properties.

Let us, then, suppose that something like (PA3) successfully captures the basis of personal admiration. What does this, in turn, suggest about the plausibility of (CBR)? (PA3) and (CBR), while not identical, nevertheless converge in an important and illuminating way. (PA3) is

about the basis of personal worth or admiration (not, immediately at least, about virtue) and it is intended to range over both the moral and intellectual dimensions of this domain. (CBR), on the other hand, is about virtue (not, immediately at least, about personal worth or admiration) and its scope is limited to *intellectual* (not moral or other kinds of) virtue. Nevertheless, (PA3) apparently requires the possession of a connecting belief of precisely the sort that is also required by (CBR).

To see why, note that according to (PA3), a person's habits of inquiry, say, will make her admirable *qua* person only if they compel her to do her best to achieve what she has good reason to believe is epistemically good. This requires that she have some kind of perspective on or awareness of the epistemic quality of her inquiries, including the epistemic quality of the sorts of activities she tends to engage in as she inquires. This in turn requires that she possess precisely the sort of connecting belief described in part (a) of (CBR). Specifically, it requires that she believe that the intellectual activity in question is a suitable means to her epistemic goals. What this suggests is that one of the main conditions laid down by (CBR) is embedded within the requirements of (PA3), in which case, if we are committed to thinking of intellectual virtues as traits that merit personal admiration or that contribute to personal worth, we ought also to embrace a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue.²⁴

Note, however, that this relation between (CBR) and (PA3) indicates the need for a particular revision of (CBR). For the connecting belief required by (PA3) must, for reasons discussed above, be a *reasonable* one. Given our conception of intellectual virtues as traits that merit personal admiration, we can revise (CBR) as follows:

(CBR*) A person S's disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity A is an intellectual virtue only if (a) S reasonably believes that A is suitably related to S's more general epistemic goals and (b) this belief partially explains S's disposition to engage in A.

In the present section we have attempted to get at the basis of personal admiration or worth. In doing so we have found that the value in question supervenes in part on the sort of connecting belief that is the primary concern of this paper. This provides an additional reason to think that insofar as intellectual virtues are conceived as traits that contribute to personal worth, a cognitive constraint along the lines of (CBR*) is in order.

7. A Final Qualification

The discussion thus far suggests that a person cannot possess an intellectual character virtue (understood in personal worth or admiration-based terms) without possessing a certain belief about or cognitive perspective on the trait in question. But in fact this claim is not entailed by (CBR*). And, indeed, I wish to leave it an open question whether the claim is correct.

To make sense of this, we can begin by noting that some intellectual virtues can be manifested in *negative* or *passive* psychological occurrences. Bob Roberts and Jay Wood (2007, Ch. 9), for instance, offer a lengthy characterization of intellectual humility, according to which this virtue is primarily a matter of *not having* certain concerns or desires (e.g. a concern with intellectual status or a desire to dominate the thinking or beliefs of others). Given the foregoing discussion, and the content of (CBR*) in particular, we would do well to consider whether, to possess intellectual humility in this sense, a person must believe (at some level) that her *lack* of

the relevant desires or concerns is useful for achieving her broader epistemic goals. This strikes me not only as unnecessary but indeed as a rather odd way of thinking about the psychology of a genuinely intellectually humble person. At a minimum, I see no reason to think that an intellectually humble person *must* have a belief of this sort. Similarly, some intellectual virtues can be manifested in *passive* psychological occurrences, for instance, in the passive ‘noticing’ of certain logical or empirical details or in one’s being *moved* by certain sorts of epistemic considerations. Here again I would not want to say, with respect to these expressions of intellectual virtue, that the person in question must possess a connecting belief. The intellectually observant person, for instance, might habitually be struck by certain features of her environment even though she has no belief whatsoever about the tendency of such occurrences to promote her epistemic goals.

How, then, are these considerations to be squared with the foregoing argument in support of a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue? My claim is that a connecting belief requirement holds only with respect to the *active* dimensions or expressions of intellectual virtue. That is, I maintain that where a particular intellectual virtue V has an active expression E, a person’s disposition to manifest E is an instance of V only if the person possesses a connecting belief with respect to E—only if she (reasonably and at some level) believes that E is appropriately related to her broader epistemic goals. This requirement is entirely consistent with (CBR*), which pertains only to dispositions to “engage in virtue-relevant activity.” Finally, the present point underscores the idea noted earlier that intellectual virtue (as with moral virtue) involves a kind of *practical rationality* or *integrity*. (CBR*) makes this requirement explicit. However, since the negative and passive aspects of intellectual virtue presumably are not part of

such rationality or integrity, they need not (and indeed should not) fall within the scope of a belief requirement on intellectual virtue.

Does this mean that it is possible to possess an intellectual virtue without possessing a corresponding connecting belief? This depends primarily on whether any intellectual virtues are such that they can be manifested exclusively in non-active ways, that is, virtues the full range of expressions of which are passive or negative in character. This is not something I will attempt to resolve here. Again, what I do maintain is that insofar as an intellectual virtue has an active dimension, a person can possess this virtue only if she possesses a corresponding connecting belief.²⁵

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¹ Thus I align myself with so-called virtue "responsibilists" rather than virtue "reliabilists." For a discussion of the relationship between the two approaches, see Baehr (2006).

² For an elaboration and defense of this way of thinking about intellectual virtues, see Chs. 6-7 of Baehr (2011).

³ See e.g. Zagzebski (1996, 134) and Montmarquet (1993, 30).

⁴ See esp. Arpaly (2003), Driver (2001), and Hurka (2001).

⁵ For broader accounts of the epistemic goal, see Zagzebski (1996; 2001), Grimm (2006), Kvanvig (2003), and Roberts and Wood (2007).

⁶ An epistemically *conscientiousness* person, for instance, might view the activity characteristic of this virtue as constituting the fulfillment of his epistemic duties. For more on this virtue, see Roberts and Wood (2007, 78-80).

⁷ For a sampling of the various views that have been defended, see Watson (1984), Cooper (1998), and Sreenivasan (2009).

⁸ For a classic treatment, see Book 6 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. For an overview of recent work on *phronesis*, see Whitcomb (2010).

⁹ This is important because otherwise the person would lack a kind of *wholeness* or *integrity* that is plausibly regarded as an essential part of *phronesis*. The present point is reminiscent, not just of Aristotle's general view of the connection between *phronesis* and character virtues, but also of his narrower and very plausible claim in Book 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the effect that a genuinely virtuous person, by contrast with, say, a mere virtuous-person-in-training, acts "in a certain state," one which involves, among other things, a certain kind of *knowledge* (1105a).

¹⁰ Doing so would require getting clear on whether something *approximating phronesis* or any of its elements is required for the possession of any particular intellectual virtue; and, if so, whether the psychological state in question involves something like a connecting belief.

¹¹ See especially Book 6 of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1144b - 1145a).

¹² Here and elsewhere the appearance of plausibility is intended to be intuitive and theory-neutral; that is, one need not have a prior commitment to (CBR) or anything like it in order to appreciate the force of the relevant claims.

¹³ The person could value the relevant activity on other, *non-epistemic* grounds and thus 'endorse'—and be disposed to engage in—this activity in ways that do not require the satisfaction of (CBR). While this might be sufficient for 'appropriating' the relevant trait in some sense, it would not be sufficient for appropriating it in the sense required for the trait's being a genuine *intellectual* virtue. For more on the distinguishing features of intellectual virtues (as compared, say, with moral or other kinds of virtues), see Ch. 6 and the appendix of Baehr (2011).

¹⁴ Arpaly's discussion of the general issue at hand is much richer and more complex than I can do justice to here. I will limit my focus to her arguments against a cognitive requirement of the

specific sort that I am defending (thereby leaving open that she successfully refutes similar requirements that others may have some interest in defending).

¹⁵ He is, as Arpaly says, responsive to moral reasons in ‘*de re*’ rather than a ‘de dicto’ sense. See pp. 73-79.

¹⁶ Pp.73-79. I say “to the extent” because virtue is not an ‘all or nothing’ affair, that is, because one can be more or less virtuous or virtuous to a greater or lesser degree.

¹⁷ At one point, Arpaly appears to want to make room for the possibility that certain figures resembling person C can exhibit personal worth. The relevant remarks come in the context of a discussion of cases involving a “misguided conscience,” in which a person acts conscientiously but nevertheless is motivated by ends that in fact are bad. Arpaly indicates that in at least some such cases she would not want to deny that the person could exhibit moral worth (112). This suggests that her actual view is that *de re* good motivation is *sufficient* but not *necessary* for moral worth. There are, however, serious problems with this interpretation. The first is that it contradicts many of Arpaly’s other explicit statements. For instance, elsewhere she explicitly rejects the idea that moral worth is a matter of “doing what one feels or believes, even as a background belief, that one morally ought to do.” She adds: “For a right action to have (positive) moral worth, it is neither sufficient nor necessary that it stem from the agent’s interest in the rightness of his action” (73). This seems clearly to conflict with the former claim, since the reason for making a favorable moral evaluation of a person with a misguided conscience presumably would be that she is attempting to do what (by her lights) she has good reason to think is right. A second problem is that this weaker formulation of her position has implications that Arpaly apparently would want to repudiate. For instance, it entails that person B noted above merits a favorable moral assessment (for again he is motivated by an end that in fact is good). This implication is implausible on its face; and given her interest in making a favorable assessment of person C, it seems especially clear that Arpaly would want to deny a similar assessment of person B (who again is a kind of mirror *opposite* of person C). My suggestion, then, is that Arpaly’s concession relative to cases involving a “misguided conscience” introduces a deep instability to her view, and thus that she is best interpreted as holding that *de re* good motivation is both necessary and sufficient for moral worth.

¹⁸ Such a case might, say, involve a characterological version of one of Larry BonJour’s (1985) well-known clairvoyance cases. My suggestion is that while the trait in question might qualify as an intellectual virtue in an externalist or reliabilist sense, if the person in question had no grasp whatsoever of the connection between his intellectual activity and the truth-conduciveness of his clairvoyant activity, the trait would not qualify as an intellectual virtue in a personal worth or admiration-based sense.

¹⁹ Recall that B is motivated by A’s *removal* from office (a good end) while C is motivated by A’s political *success* (a bad end).

²⁰ Personal worth is not, however, immune to so-called “constitutive” luck. See Williams (1981).

²¹ See Driver (2001, 78-83) for a relevant discussion.

²² See Arpaly (2003,98-114) for a related and illuminating discussion.

²³ In fact, for reasons I will get to in the final section of the paper, this principle stands in need of an additional refinement. For further illustrations of the need for the kind of ‘rationality constraint’ just introduced, see Arpaly (2003, 101-111) and Hurka (2001, 178-180).

²⁴ Whether part (b) of (CBR) is also embedded within (PA3) is less clear. The question here is whether if S were to believe that some virtue-relevant activity A is likely to be helpful for

promoting his broader epistemic goals G, do his best to engage in A, but do so for reasons entirely independent of the forementioned conviction, S's actions would still bear favorably on his personal worth. I find this very dubious. However, I will not stop here to explore or defend the point.

²⁵Many thanks to Susanne Mantel, Ernest Sosa, Jennifer Lackey, and other participants in the conference "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action," which took place in Jena, Germany, in the fall of 2010 for helpful comments and conversation on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks also to Bob Roberts and Stephen Grimm for (independently) raising serious doubts about an even earlier (much quicker and underdeveloped) version of some of this material.