MORALITY AS UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEINGS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation grew out of sharing Murdoch's deep dissatisfaction with the prevalent outlook on morality according to which "the centre of 'the moral' " is "the situation of a man making a definite choice". In the dissertation, I call this outlook to which most consequentialists, social contract theorists and Kantians subscribe, "the situation view". This dissertation can be seen as involving two processes carried out simultaneously; (i) arguing that the situation view is not just an alternate outlook on morality that is poor as Murdoch claims, but that it cannot have the necessary conceptual resources to be an outlook on *morality* to begin with; and, (ii) sketching a positive account of morality that resembles Murdoch's view in important ways. I argue that the prevalent situation view cannot be even an alternate outlook on morality because it employs the scientific world-view and thereby fails to leave conceptual space for the sort of *moral understanding* that plays the guiding role in and that gets expressed in moral behavior. On the account of morality that I propose, the center of 'the moral' is not the situation of a man making a definite choice but that of a human being *understanding* a human being against the backdrop of her life. One's moral behavior consists of treating human beings in certain ways, ways that are guided by and that express her purported understanding of them. Accordingly, making progress in moral behavior depends crucially on making progress in understanding human beings against the backdrop of their lives, including of course, understanding oneself against the backdrop of her life.

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maturation that I am aware of. Just to name a few, I learned to read more charitably; I learned to make continuous exploration of richer ways of writing and thinking -without compromising, as much as possible, clarity and precision- a part of my philosophical activity; I learned to prune, shape and work on my creativity so as to make its deliverances an intelligible part of a philosophical narrative without feeling that my spirit is broken; I learned to trust more and commit more to philosophical activity and to everything it demands; and I learned to appreciate philosophy in ways that were not familiar to me before. But I know that there are many other pieces of his contribution to my maturation that I will become aware of, name and appreciate in time. So this is only the beginning of my expression of my gratitude to Talbot Brewer.

CONTENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother Iffet Tekin.

INTRODUCTION

In her *Sovereignty of the Good*, Iris Murdoch characterizes the outlook on the moral life

that began to be prevailing in the modern period of philosophical ethics in the Western

tradition, an outlook whose predominance is still very much felt, as follows:

> …the moral life of the individual is a series of overt choices which take place in a
> series of specifiable situations. The individual's "stream of consciousness" is of
> comparatively little importance, partly because it is often not there at all (having been
> thought to be continuous for wrong reasons), and more pertinently because it is and can
> only be through overt acts that we can characterize another person, or ourselves,
> mentally or morally.[1]

This dissertation grew out of sharing Murdoch's deep dissatisfaction with this

outlook according to which "the centre of 'the moral' " is "the situation of a man making a

definite choice".[2] Let me call this outlook to which most consequentialists, social contract

theorists and Kantians subscribe, "the situation view".

The situation view of morality is based on a scientific world-view. According to

the scientific world-view, describing the world, capturing the reality as it is, is the task of

the natural sciences. So, it is thought, our attributions of evaluative terms to various

things cannot be taken to be our effort to describe reality –reality, after all, does not have

any evaluative properties or objects that admit of description. Contemporary

philosophical views of what we are doing when we attribute evaluative terms to various

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[1] Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice" in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*
(New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 77.
[2] Ibid., 81.

things diverge. First and foremost, there is no consensus as to whether evaluation is a

cognitive matter. Furthermore, cognitivists cannot agree among themselves as to whether

we are tracking anything in the world when we evaluate or whether there is nothing for us

to track. To provide just a brief sampling of this diversity, Moore thinks that when we

evaluate we are trying to track some non-natural property, namely, the property of

goodness/badness.[3] Mackie agrees but thinks that there is no such non-natural property

for us to track.[4] Scanlon thinks that we are trying to track the reasons to pursue/avoid or

to take a favorable/unfavorable attitude towards whatever it is that we are evaluating.[5]

For Blackburn, evaluation is non-cognitive, that is, when we evaluate we are not trying to

track anything; rather, we are simply expressing a non-cognitive sentiment.[6] To

accommodate all these different pictures of "pure evaluation", we might say that pure

evaluation is some cognitive or non-cognitive state the linguistic expression of which

involves no truth-apt description that aims at picking out a fact in the natural world.[7]

Rather, it is a cognitive or non-cognitive state the linguistic expression of which involves

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[3] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 161-163.

[4] J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 38-40.

[5] T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 95-100.

[6] Simon, Blackburn, "How To Be an Ethical Antirealist," in Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard and Peter Railton, eds., *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 167-178. Blackburn's view is one of the views grouped under the heading 'response-dependence'. This label is often used to refer to one of two drastically different ideas: Sometimes a 'response-dependence' theory is one according to which evaluation is nothing other than certain responses being elicited. But there are other views that are labeled 'response-dependence' theory according to which evaluation of certain things *merit* certain responses. While we can say of someone who endorses the former that she assumes a division of fact-value, it is an open question whether someone who endorses the latter assumes such a division. This is why I prefer to describe various evaluation accounts in more ample terms, without using this label. For further elaboration on various forms 'response-dependence' views can take, see Nenad Miscevic, "Moral Concepts: From Thickness to Response-Dependence," *Acta Analytica* 21 (1) (2006), 3-32.

[7] Cornell Realism does not fit this formulation well. For Cornell Realists, pure evaluation does boil down to picking out a fact in the natural world, though the aim of the evaluation is not to pick out a fact in the natural world. See for instance, Richard Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," in G. Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

only some ascription of purely evaluative terms such as "good", "bad", "right" or "wrong". Since many contemporary ethicists have followed their modern predecessors in adopting this scientific view, they have defended some form of the situation view of morality.[8] On the situation view, what someone has done or is doing can be picked out in the language of the natural sciences as it belongs to reality. Since reality is value barren, we can carve out various human situations that consist in human actions performed under certain circumstances and describe them in non-evaluative terms. We can *then* subject these situations to moral assessment whose standards we have established *independently* of what the reality is like since moral assessment has nothing to do with describing the world as it is. The very picking out or describing human actions performed under circumstances is taken to be *extraneous* to moral assessment. Finally, in light of the standards we have established independently of what the reality is like, we can categorize these situations as situations in which the human action in question is morally right, or wrong.

What underlies Murdoch's dissatisfaction with the situation view is that it does not portray the relationship between human beings and morality as it is. To show this, Murdoch argues that, "people are not like that" and "people ought not picture themselves

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[8] For some consequentialist representatives of this view see, Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life: On the Nature, Varieties, and Plausibility of Hedonism* (Oxford University Press, 2004); Peter Railton, "Moral Realism" *Philosophical Review* 95 (1986), 163-207. For some social contract theorist representatives of this view see, David Gauthier, *Moral Dealing: Contract, Ethics and Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Jan Narveson, *The Libertarian Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). For Kantian representatives of this view see, Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1995); *The Sources of Normativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

in this way".[9] I will argue that our dissatisfaction with the situation view should run deeper. It is not just that we fail to capture much of our moral life when we adopt the situation view. This dissertation can be seen as involving two processes carried out simultaneously; (i) arguing that the situation view is not just an alternate outlook on morality that is poor as Murdoch claims[10], but that it cannot have the necessary conceptual resources to be an outlook on *morality* to begin with; and, (ii) sketching a positive account of morality that resembles Murdoch's view in important ways. I will argue that the prevalent situation view cannot be even an alternate outlook on morality because it employs the scientific world-view and thereby fails to leave conceptual space for the sort of *moral understanding* that plays the guiding role in and that gets expressed in moral behavior. On the account of morality that I will propose, the center of 'the moral' is not the situation of a man making a definite choice but that of a human being *understanding* a human being against the backdrop of her life. One's moral behavior consists of treating human beings in certain ways, ways that are guided by and that express her purported understanding of them. Accordingly, making progress in moral behavior depends crucially on making progress in understanding human beings against the backdrop of their lives, including of course, understanding oneself against the backdrop of her life.

This view resembles Murdoch's view since it takes human beings to be its primary focus, and because it treats the moral cognition that plays the guiding role in moral behavior as personal and private to some extent. Yet, this view departs from Murdoch's in

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[9] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 9.
[10] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, Part I, especially 9 and 43.

two important ways. First, Murdoch attempts to capture the moral cognition that plays the guiding role in moral behavior by employing the metaphor "moral vision" that she construes as consisting of "moral imagination and moral effort".[11] I will argue that "moral understanding" is better suited to capture the moral cognition that plays the guiding role and that gets expressed in moral behavior. For moral understanding can involve different modes of representations, including but not confined to, imaginings. It also captures better the inter-relatedness of these representations, and thereby helps to make better sense of why moral changes in our guiding moral cognition typically happen, as Murdoch herself highlights, *gradually*.[12]

The second departure of my account from Murdoch's concerns her appeal to the form of the Good. Murdoch repeatedly claims that she is against the idea of a *telos*, that goodness is an independent form.[13] Yet, on my account, the two are conjoined: understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life demands that we understand (i) the evaluative properties of hers that manifest how and to what extent she approximates her *telos*, (e.g. her kindness) (ii) the evaluative properties of her life that manifest how and to what extent her life approximates its *telos* (e.g. the richness of her life), including (iii) the evaluative properties of her relationships with others that manifest how and to what extent these relationships approximate their *telos*. (e.g. the abusiveness of a relationship of hers). Accordingly, our purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life necessarily involves a nest of inter-related

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[11] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 36. By 'moral effort', Murdoch means the effort to counteract "false pictures of the world" by continuously focusing one's "attention" on it. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 36.
[12] Ibid., 17.
[13] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, see especially, 4, 40-1, 59, 67, 76, 95, 99-100.

representations that purport to capture *these evaluative properties*.

Below is a preview of the following chapters:

Chapter I

I begin by turning attention to causal theories of human action and the objections raised against them to bring out the requirements that a tenable account of human behavior must meet. The most important requirement is that the account in question must portray human behavior as involving cognition that guides the non-accidental bodily movements and omissions involved in behavior. I conclude that a causal account of human behavior might well be satisfactory on certain conditions that are very hard to satisfy. What non-causalists do not realize is that the real problem with causal theories of human behavior is not that they are causal theories but that they presuppose a scientific world-view that is not sufficient to assign a guiding role to cognition involved in human behavior. I point out that this scientific world-view is not internal to causalism, hence, any satisfactory account of human behavior should abandon it, be it causal or non-causal. I set out to show, in the second chapter, that once we reflect on what kind of cognition can guide the *morally* relevant bodily movements and omissions, we realize that this cognition is not compatible with the scientific world-view that goes hand in hand with the situation view of morality described above.

Chapter II

In this chapter, I argue that a detailed examination of moral trauma shows that the most serious of moral harms are harms that are initiated through ways of treating a human being, not through actions that can be picked out in isolation from those ways. Even

when an interaction brings together for a very brief time two human beings who have never met before, it is how they treat one another that captures the moral quality of their interaction rather than a series of bodily movements and omissions isolable from certain ways of treating a human being. We surely can list a series of bodily movements and omissions that exhibit a certain moral quality, but that *presupposes* that we have already picked out the relevant manners of treatment by determining with which view of the other they are performed. Thus, the very picking out of moral behavior is not extraneous to moral assessment, as the advocates of the situation view would have us believe. Once a series of bodily movements and omissions are picked out as partaking in moral behavior, they are picked out *with* their moral qualities (e.g. they may be humiliating, inattentive, kind, supportive, acknowledging, dignifying, respectful etc.), moral qualities that they carry in virtue of belonging to a certain way of treating a human being. When we scrutinize what kind of cognition can play the role of guiding different ways of treating human beings, we realize that it is, loosely put, our "view of a human being" (i) that is directed at a particular human being against the backdrop of her life, (ii) that involves a nest of inter-related judgments, emotional feelings, and construals about the particular human being and her life.

Chapter III

In this chapter, I argue that understanding is a cognitive achievement that cannot be reduced to beliefs or other supposedly more basic cognitive states, a cognitive achievement that can involve many different modes of inter-related representations depending on the kind of thing that is to be understood. I draw a distinction between

teleological understanding and non-teleological understanding. Teleological understanding is directed at teleological particulars that can be characterized as particulars that must have some goodness *qua* their kind to be the particular they are. Accordingly, understanding teleological particulars consists in understanding their manner and degree of approximating being perfectly good *qua* their kind. This in return requires having inter-related representations that involve evaluations. As an example of teleological understanding, understanding human beings consists in understanding their manner and degree of approximating being perfectly good *qua* their kind, and hence it requires having inter-related representations that involve evaluations. At the end of this chapter, understanding a human being stands out as the best candidate to capture the cognition that gets expressed and that plays the guiding role in moral behavior, the cognition that I had called a 'view of another' in Chapter II. In the next chapter, I investigate whether the situation view of morality can capture this moral cognition.

Chapter IV

In this chapter, I investigate whether the scientific world-view that goes hand in hand with the situation view of morality can leave enough conceptual space for moral understanding as understanding human beings. One way in which the advocates of the situation view might wish to do this is to concede that one's purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life requires having a nest of inter-related representations that involve evaluations, but, they might add, these inter-related representations that involve evaluations such as seeing Ida as *selfish*, or judging that Ray treats Patricia in a *condescending* way, can be analyzed by appealing to two components

that are in line with the scientific world-view. The analysis involves employing a non-evaluative representation that can be captured in the language of the natural sciences (e.g. seeing Ida as having some non-evaluative property) and a pure evaluation concerning this non-evaluative representation (e.g. seeing Ida as *good* due to the non-evaluative property in question). I argue in this chapter that inter-related representations that involve evaluations, regardless of their mode, cannot be analyzed in this way since they cannot involve pure evaluations. Rather, these inter-related representations that involve evaluations that are required by understanding a human being against the backdrop of her life, purport to capture the inter-related thick evaluative *properties* of that human being due to their teleological nature. Consequently, by presupposing the scientific world-view, the situation view of morality not only fails to capture the inter-related evaluative representations that are required by moral understanding, but also lacks the resources to pick out human beings and their lives at which moral understanding is directed.

Chapter V

In this chapter, I discuss how construing morality as understanding human beings can explain in detail the three criteria that Murdoch puts forward for capturing the moral cognition that plays the guiding role in and gets expressed in moral behavior. These criteria are (i) that this cognition be directed at a human being, (ii) that one very natural way to describe it is "by the use of specialized normative words" (i.e. thick evaluative concepts)[14], and finally (iii) that there is a sense in which it is peculiarly one's own.[15] I argue that moral understanding not only can meet these criteria, but it can also *explain*

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[14] Her examples are concepts expressed by 'bumptious' or 'gay'. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 22.
[15] Ibid., 22.

why they are necessary to capture the moral cognition that plays the guiding role and that

gets expressed in moral behavior. I end this chapter by explaining in what ways morality

as understanding human beings differs from Murdoch's view as well as from Kantianism

and Virtue Ethics.

CH. I. THE ROLE OF COGNITION IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR

One can study movements of the body for different purposes. A physiologist, for instance, might study movements of the body to understand the muscle contractions of the face. From the physiological point of view, a particular piece of bodily movement is distinguished from another in virtue of a change in one's physiology. For instance, someone's smile that takes place between t1-t2 is a different bodily movement from her crying at t2-t3 since different facial muscles are made use of between t1-21 and between t2-t3.

When we attempt to understand human behavior therefore it might be tempting to try to think like a physiologist. After all, human behavior typically involves bodily movements. Our bodies move as we smile with gratitude, as we revise our papers or as we converse with our friends. Thinking like a physiologist to illuminatingly characterize human behavior, however, is destined to fail. No doubt human behavior typically involves bodily movements. Yet, there are many movements our bodies can exhibit that have no place within the realm of human behavior. Think of bodily movements such as sneezing upon smelling pepper, reflexively squinting, falling upon being tackled by someone, or one's anesthetized arm being raised by a doctor during a surgery. Such bodily movements certainly are not examples of human behavior. If one's facial muscles are contracting in a certain way caused by the intake of a certain drug, that piece of bodily movement is not a piece of behavior even though something is happening to the body in question. By contrast, the same kind of contraction of the same muscles does

constitute a piece of human behavior if it takes place as one smiles with gratitude. The immediate challenge that philosophers that embark on human behavior face is therefore to find a way to characterize human behavior so that bodily movements such as sneezing or reflexively squinting do not show up as human behavior.

It is clear why we cannot hope to understand what exactly makes a bodily movement an action rather than a mere unintentional movement by simply focusing on what sorts of movements are involved in them: one's body can move *exactly the same way* both during an unintentional movement, such as the tilting of one's head due to a neck injury, and during an intentional action, such as one's tilting her head with puzzlement. It may be argued that there will always be a difference between what is physically involved in an unintentional movement and in action. For instance, the proponents of this view may argue that different neurons in the brain will be fired in these two cases even if the observable overt movements look exactly the same. However, even if that is true, scientists would be able to discover that difference after they use an independent criterion to set action and unintentional movement apart.

A more helpful strategy is to focus on the deployment of one's mind in action and unintentional movements. Regardless of how unrefined this thought might initially be, it is something like the following: in actions, such as when we give a gift to a friend, our mind plays a special role whereas in unintentional movements, it seems that our mind either plays a different role compared to the one it plays in actions, or it simply plays no role whatsoever. In unintentional movements like falling off a motorbike due to unforeseen road conditions, our mind can be said to play a role, but obviously its role is

different from the one it would play when one deliberately throws herself off a

motorbike. In other unintentional movements such as someone's arm being raised by a

doctor during a surgery that involves general anesthesia, the person's mind plays no role

in the movement of her arm.

Contemporary philosophers working on action theory attempt to shed light on just

how the mind is supposed to be involved in human behavior for a bodily movement to

constitute human behavior. Since causalism is the dominant view, it goes under the name

'The Standard Story' in the contemporary philosophical literature on action.[16] Causalists

share the view that what makes a bodily movement an action (or, as we shall see, part of

an action) depends on its causal history.[17] Sneezing does not deserve the name 'human

action' whereas pretending to sneeze to make someone laugh does. According to

causalists, the difference is to be found in the respective causal histories of these bodily

movements. There are different styles of causalism depending on how the "right" cause is

cashed out. Typically, the right cause is captured by some combination of cognitive and

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[16] J. H. Aguilar, and A. Buckareff, "The Causal Theory of Action: Origins and Issues" in Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, eds., *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 1-27; Michael Smith, "The Standard Story of Action: An Exchange (1)," in Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, eds., *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 45-57; Jennifer Hornsby, "The Standard Story of Action: An Exchange (2)," in Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, eds., *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 57-69.

[17] Fred Adams, and Alfred Mele, "The Role of Intention in Intentional Action," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1989), 511-532; Myles Brand, *Intending and Acting: Toward a Naturalized Action Theory* (Mass: MIT Press, 1984); John Bishop, *Natural Agency: An Essay on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robert Audi, "Intending," in his *Action, Intention and Reason* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 56-94; Berent Enc *How We Act: Causes, Reasons, and Intentions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Alfred Mele, *Springs of Action: Understanding Intentional Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Alfred Mele, *Motivation and Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Alvin I. Goldman, *A Theory of Human Action* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970). For agent causation theories, see Richard Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966); Maria Alvarez and John Hyman, "Agents and Their Actions," *Philosophy* 73(2) (1998), 219-245.

conative states such as wishes, desires, beliefs, reasons, decisions, and intentions.[18] Non-causalists, by contrast, argue that causalism is not a tenable view.[19] What underlies their various attacks on causalism is their conviction that causes fall short of accounting for how the bodily movements that constitute (or, partly constitute) human behavior are guided from the beginning to the end. There are two reasons why non-causalists hold on to this conviction. The first one is pertinent to the metaphysical nature of the relata of a causal relationship. Some non-causalists draw attention to omissions that are intentional such as when one intentionally does not make eye contact with another person. In such cases, it becomes harder to speak about a specific event that can count as the effect that has been caused. The second reason as to why causalism cannot capture how one's cognition guides bodily movement, according to non-causalists, has to do with the metaphysical nature of a causal relationship itself. Many non-causalists take for granted that causality requires a temporal separateness between its relata. When such temporal separateness is assumed, it is easy to see why non-causalists can convincingly contend that a series of causal *antecedents* (cognitive and/or conative) can never achieve the task of guiding the bodily movements in human behavior. How can they guide the relevant

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[18] For example, Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff write, "Any behavioral event A of an agent S is an action if and only if S's Aing is caused in the right way and causally explained by some appropriate nonactional mental item(s) that mediate or constitute S's reasons for A-ing". Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, "The Causal Theory of Action: Origins and Issues," 1.

[19] Carl Ginet, *On Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stewart C. Goetz, "A Noncausal Theory of Agency," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1988), 303-316; Hugh J. McCann, *The Works of Agency: On Human Action, Will and Freedom* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Scott R. Sehon, "Deviant Causal Chains and the Irreducibility of Teleological Explanation," *Pacific Philosophical* Qua*rterly* 78 (1997),195-213; Scott R. Sehon, *Teleological Realism: Mind, Agency, and Explanation* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005); George M. Wilson, *The Intentionality of Human Action* 2nd edn (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Jing Zhu, "Passive Action and Causalism," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 119 (3) (2004), 295-314.

bodily movements if they need to occur *before* their effects? One of the difficulties that arise out of the guidance problem is the insufficiency problem. Non-causalists put forward many examples in which, as we will shortly see, the required mental items occur yet the bodily movements that result *after* the occurrence of these mental items do not constitute actions.

In what follows, I will argue that the non-causalists' objections against causalism can be overcome by causalists so long as their commitment to the scientific world-view is not brought into question. As will become clear, causalism can be a viable option so long as there is a satisfactory account of causation (i) that does not require temporal separateness, (ii) that can allow relata beyond events and (iii) that explains the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in behavior by an overarching intention in action that guides and sustains them. I will argue that non-causalists are right in doubting whether causalism can capture the guiding role of cognition involved in human behavior. But they go astray in pinning down the reason behind this failure. I hope to convince my reader, by the end of this dissertation, that what undermines causalism's failure to capture the guiding role of cognition, at least in the case of moral behavior, concerns the scientific world-view according to which evaluative properties do not belong to the furniture of the natural world.

As I mentioned earlier, different causalists tell the standard story differently. They appeal to different combinations of cognitive and conative mental items such as desires, beliefs, volitions and intentions in specifying the kind of cause that makes for action, and they flesh out these items differently. For the sake of simplicity, I will focus on causalists

that pack everything needed, -cognitive and conative-, into "intention". But a brief critique of a common assumption about intention is in order.

It is generally assumed that in adopting an intention, one represents an event one takes to not have taken place, one that she thinks she can bring about. When, for example, one forms the intention to raise her arm, one represents raising her arm, takes her raising her arm to not have taken place and thinks that this is something she can bring about. This is not all there is to an intention since we can represent many events as not having taken place and as things we can bring about, without having the slightest bit of interest in bringing them about. Consequently, it is commonplace to hold that one must have an attitude towards the representation in question. This attitude is something like "*Let me make it true"* that, say, I raise my arm.

It seems odd to think that when we adopt an intention, we have some attitude towards some *proposition*, if by way of proposition we understand something that can be true or false depending on the way the world is. It is natural to think that when I intend to bring about the event of raising my arm, my attitude is not towards some proposition that describes that event but towards this very event that I take not to have taken place. Yet, many have thought that phenomena such as intending, desiring, fearing etc. are propositional attitudes along with believing. Just to pick a representative of this view, let us look at what Robert Brandom says of these attitudes:

> To be sapient is to have states such as belief, desire, and intention, which are
> contentful in the sense that the question can appropriately be raised under what

circumstances what is believed, desired, or intended would be true.[20]

However, as Trenton Merricks highlights, if we take seriously the thought that when we desire, intend or fear, we have some attitude towards propositions, propositions construed as entities that can be made true or false by the way the world is, we turn out to be quite pathological. On this received view, the attitude we have when we fear is always towards some proposition, *never* towards dangerous looking dogs, snakes, or people. In fact, on this view, it is *impossible* for the object of fear to be dangerous looking dogs, snakes, or people. Yet who would fear a proposition?[21]

In the case of believing, speaking of having some attitude towards a proposition does not seem similarly odd. Its phenomenology does suggest that as we believe, our attention is on some representation. The phenomenology of intending along with desiring, fearing etc. is not quite like that. When we are in the grip of these phenomena, our attention is not on our representations but rather on what those representations represent.[22] It might be suggested that in the case of intending, what our representation represents is not yet part of the world. This does not mean however that we turn our attention to the representation, it just means that our attention is on some possible reality, namely, the possible reality that will make our representation true if all goes well. When I intend to give a gift, my attitude is not towards the proposition that I shall give a gift, it is

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[20] Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5. For those who take desires to be propositional attitudes, see David Velleman, *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182; Michael Platts, "Moral Reality and the End of Desire," in *Reference, Truth and Reality* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Company, 1994), 107.

[21] Trenton Merricks, "Propositional Attitudes?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109 (2009), 207-232.

[22] Merricks's diagnosis is different; he thinks that the oddness is to be attributed to the fact that the attitude in question is directed at something abstract. Trenton Merricks, "Propositional Attitudes?", 214.

towards the gift, or the giving of it. True, if I bring that about, my representation of this event will become true. But that is no reason to say that my attitude was towards the representation of the event before it became true. My attitude might possibly get its object by way of the representation, but its object could not possibly be the representation itself. Hence, contra Brandom, its object is not typically the sort of thing that can be made true.

There is another way to insist that intending, desiring, fearing etc. are propositional attitudes. Merricks points out that if we think of propositions as possible events, not as descriptions of them, then it no longer seems odd to think that we have various attitudes towards propositions when we fear, desire or intend. After all, on this "Identity View", to fear the proposition that a certain snake will bite just *is* to fear the event of a certain snake's biting. Or, to intend to make true the proposition that I raise my arm true just is to want to bring about the event of raising my arm. Merricks convincingly argues that the Identity View should be rejected on several grounds. Let me cite here the one that I take to be the most convincing: The Identity View renders distinct propositions identical.

> I seem to be a truth maker for both that a human exists and that Merricks exists.
> So, given the identity theory of truth, I am identical to both that a human exists and that
> Merricks exists. So, given the identity theory, the proposition that a human exists is
> identical to the proposition that Merricks exists. But this is absurd since the first of
> these propositions could be true even if the second were false.[23]

If we reject the Identity View, we also have to abandon the idea that forming an intention involves an attitude towards some proposition with a representational content.

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[23] Trenton Merricks, "Propositional Attitudes?", 217.

We can think of several remedies at this point. One suggestion could be that the attitude involved in intending is not just towards some propositional representation of some possible reality but towards that representation and reality at once. In more ample terms, it might be suggested that in intending, one wants her propositional representation and reality to be in accordance with each other. We might call this the "quasi-propositional" analysis of intentions. If we want to allow non-propositional representation in the formation of intention, we can resort to a less restrictive characterization. We might say the attitude involved in intending is towards some representation —be it propositional or non-propositional— and reality at once: One wants her representation that might be propositional or non-propositional, and reality to be in accordance. This less restrictive attitude can be called, "quasi-representational". Finally, we can totally do away with representation in characterizing the attitude involved in forming an intention. We might think of intention as involving some representation of some possible reality, but think of the involved attitude as one that is directed at what this representation represents, not at the representation itself. To exemplify, my intending to raise my arm consists of some representation of this possible event and an attitude towards this possible event, not towards its representation. As a result, a satisfactory account of human behavior, be it causal or non-causal, that packs up everything cognitively and conatively needed into intention should be revised so as to avoid the absurd conclusion that intention is a *propositional* attitude.

One last cautionary remark before we proceed to causalism: there are many philosophical problems surrounding causality. I will put some of these problems aside.

One such problem, for instance, concerns whether mental items can cause bodily movements unless they can be reduced to brain states.[24] I will charitably assume either that mental items are reducible to brains states and they do their causing in this way, or that they can do their causing despite being irreducible to brain states. Another problem that might be taken to infect causalism has to do with the very idea of a causal relationship. A consensus on what exactly this relationship consists in has not been established. Reductivists think that a causal relationship is not a primitive relation that is part of the furniture of the world; non-reductivists argue otherwise.[25] No agreement has been reached concerning whether this relation is fundamentally among singular events (or other singular entities), or whether it holds among singular events (or other singular entities) due to holding among general events (or other general entities).[26] Fortunately, we do not need to settle any of these issues here. For regardless of whether causal relation can be reduced, and regardless of whether it holds between singular events primarily or derivatively, it remains true that it is some sort of a relationship that holds between two distinct singular events. And this is all we need to proceed.

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[24] Scott R. Sehon, "An Argument against the Causal Theory of Action Explanation," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (1) (2000), 67-85.
[25] For a defense of primitivism see, Sydney Shoemaker, "Causal and Metaphysical Necessity," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (1998), 59-77. For a defense of eliminitivism see, Bertrand Russell, "On the Notion of Cause," orig. 1912, in J. Slater, ed., *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell v6: Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-1913*. (London: Routledge Press, 1992),193-210.
[26] For a defense of general causation see for instance, John Carroll, "Property-level Causation?" *Philosophical Studies*, 63 (1991), 245–70. For a defense of singular causation see Elliott Sober, "Two Concepts of Cause," in Peter Asquith and Philip Kitcher eds., *PSA 1984, Vol. II* (East Lansing: Philosophy of Science Association, 1995), 405–424.

I.(i) Causalism: The Product View

Fred Adams categorizes causal views of action under two groups, namely, the 'Product View' and the 'Causing View'.[27] According to the Product View, action does not involve any mental items, it consists only in bodily movements that are caused by mental items that are external to them and hence to action. The Causing View on the other hand, takes action to involve both mental items and the bodily movements. But, the relationship is still the same; the former cause the latter. Those theorists that subscribe to some stripe of the Causing View do so in the hopes of avoiding the difficulties that the Product View theories have not been able to avoid so far. Let us then first consider the problems of the Product View.

A number of philosophers argue that causalism cannot account for omissions. Since our immediate focus is the Product View, I shall put the worry in the Product View terms. It is rightly thought that there is a difference between, say, me not having met with the President yesterday and me not having met with a friend of mine yesterday. Both are true, but I am involved in the latter in a way I am not in the former. I intentionally avoided meeting with a friend of mine yesterday whereas I am not even in a position to avoid meeting with the President. There are infinitely many things that did not happen yesterday, but obviously I did not play a role in every single non-happening. Certain non-happenings, where someone does not do something intentionally, such as me not meeting with a friend of mine yesterday, are called 'omissions'.

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[27] Fred Adams, "Action Theory Meets Embodied Cognition," in Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, eds., *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 230.

A number of philosophers argue that omissions put a serious strain on causal theories of action, including the Product View. Jennifer Hornsby, for example, claims that in omissions such as A who decides she shouldn't take a chocolate, and refrains from moving her arm towards the box; or B who doesn't want to be disturbed by answering calls, and lets the telephone carry on ringing; or C who, being irritated by someone, pays that person no attention[28], "there is simply no event –no particular- which is the person's intentionally doing the relevant thing."[29] Surely, the Product View advocates can claim that their theories are theories of action and that omissions are not actions. But even then, the difference between a bodily movement that is not an action and a bodily movement that is one is analogous to the difference between the absence of a bodily movement that has nothing to do with someone omitting to perform it and the absence of a bodily movement whose performance is omitted by someone. The Product View of action would lose its appeal if it could not be expanded so as to become a causal theory of all human behavior including omissions. Imagine for instance, an adherent of the Product View saying that actions are those bodily movements that are caused by intentions, but omissions are not caused by intentions. The non-causalist's expectation that a causal theory account for omissions is well placed, but it is by no means an immediate threat to the Product View.

As Carolina Sartorio notes, the Product View need not presuppose that the relata of a causal relationship are events. It is not hard to find other proposals for the relata of a

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[28] Jennifer Hornsby, "Agency and Actions," in John Hyman and Helen Steward eds., *Agency and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.
[29] Ibid., 5.

causal relationship in the contemporary metaphysical literature.[30] According to David Hugh Mellor, for instance, facts are the relata of a causal relationship.[31] Such a view can be employed in causally accounting for omissions: A fact involving my intention caused another fact, namely, the fact that I did not perform the bodily movements required to meet with a friend of mine yesterday. Or, as Rudolph Clarke notes, omissions can be taken to be absences while retaining the idea that absences can be caused. [32] My point is just that The Product View advocates are not in immediate danger of failing to adopt a causal story about omissions, *if* the only problem about omissions is taken to concern the metaphysical candidacy of omissions for being the effect of a causal relationship.

There is however another problem, insufficiency problem of The Product View whose discussion has occupied most of the literature on action theory. And in fact, the first philosopher to admit this problem was himself an advocate of the Product View – Donald Davidson. The insufficiency problem emerges when a bodily movement shows up as unintentional despite the fact that there was a prior intention that involved the representation of that bodily movement and a causal link between the prior intention and the bodily movement.

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[30] For those who take relata to be events see Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* and David Lewis, "Events," in *Philosophical Papers 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 241-69; for those who take relata to be features see Fred Dretske, "Referring to Events," in P. French, T. Uehling, Jr., and H. Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy II.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 90-9; for those who take them to be aspects see L. A. Paul, "Aspect Causation," *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2000), 223-34; for those who take them to be state of affairs see D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); for those who take them to be situations see Peter Menzies, "A Unified Account of Causal Relata," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1989), 59-83; and finally for those who take them to be tropes see Keith Campbell, *Abstract Particulars* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

[31] D.H. Mellor, *The Facts of Causation* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[32] Randolph Clarke, "Intentional Omissions," in Jesus H. Aguilar and Andrei A. Buckareff, eds., *Causing Human Actions: New Perspectives on the Causal Theory of Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 146.

In the third chapter of his *Intentionality*, John Searle puts forward a series of examples to argue that there is something wrong with the Product View:

Example (1): A climber might want to rid himself of the weight and danger of holding another man on a rope, and he might know that by loosening his hold on the rope he could rid himself of the weight and danger. He forms the intention to loosen his hold and his intention might make him so nervous that he loosens his hold.[33]

Example (2): Suppose Bill intends to kill his uncle, he is out driving thinking about how he is going to kill his uncle, and suppose his intention to kill him makes him so nervous that he accidentally runs over and kills a pedestrian who happens to be his uncle.[34]

In both of these cases, there is a prior intention that causes bodily movements corresponding to it, yet those bodily movements are not intentional actions. We do not want to say that the climber intentionally loosened his hold and we do not want to say that Bill intentionally killed his uncle. After these characters form their prior intention that involves the representation of certain bodily movements, the causal chain continues in such a way that the represented bodily movements do indeed occur. Nonetheless, they do not constitute intentional actions. Hence, a causal relation between a prior intention and a corresponding bodily movement that is caused by it is not sufficient to make it the case that the bodily movement constituted an action.

In his critique of causal theories, George M. Wilson writes,

…an appropriate pair of desire and instrumental belief [i.e. intention] can, in proper circumstances, be a cause of a range of wholly involuntary responses: e.g., blushing,

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[33] John Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 83. This example is just the slightly revised version of Davidson's own example he considers against his own theory.
[34] Ibid. 82-3.

sweating, fainting, and uncontrollable crying, But such responses could always include involuntary movements performed by the agent. What is more, it is always possible –no matter how unlikely it may be- for one of these involuntary movements or series of movements to satisfy *purely by accident* the descriptive content of the antecedent of the instrumental belief that rationalizes it. This will remain true no matter how much one tries to restrict the scope or character of what that content may be. The general consequence of this fact is that causalist analyses seem, in the end, to do *nothing* to mark the difference between, on one hand, a mere behavioral effect of a desire-belief pair [i.e. intention] that satisfies a designated content by sheer happenstance, and, on the other, a piece of behavior which is genuinely intended by its agent to achieve or promote an end.[35]

It might seem that the failure of the Product View is on the margins. After all, the insufficiency problem concerns only a portion of actions: *some* unintentional bodily movements show up as intentional actions though they are not. Though not recognized in the literature however, the Product View suffers from two more problems. I will call these problems the 'proliferation of intentions' and the 'random fragmentation' respectively.   Take any intentional action –as it is construed within the scope of the Product View. Consider, for instance, walking from point X1 to X10. If this walking is intentional, it follows on this theory that a prior intention to walk from X1 to X10 must have been formed and the bodily movements performed in walking from point X1 to X10 must have been caused by that very prior intention. But if one walks from X1-X10 intentionally, one must have walked from X1-X5 intentionally. On the Product View, this means that a prior intention to walk from X1 to X5 must have been formed and the bodily

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[35] George M. Wilson, "Davidson on Intentional Action," in Ernest Lepore and Brian McLauglin eds., *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Wiley, John & Sons, 1986), 39.

movements performed in walking from point X1 to X15 must have been caused by that very prior intention. If one has walked from X1 to X5 intentionally, one must have walked from X1 to X2.5. This in turn implies, on the Product View, that a prior intention to walk from X1 to X2.5 must have been formed and the bodily movements performed in walking from point X1 to X2.5 must have been caused by that very prior intention *ad infinitum*. The Product View therefore, implausibly gives rise to a proliferation of prior intentions.[36]

Further, the Product View has no way of stopping deriving different sets of prior intentions. Take walking from point X1 to X10 again. If one has walked from X1 to X10 intentionally, one must have walked X1 to X2 intentionally, from X2 to X3 intentionally, from X3 to X4 intentionally…from X9 to X10 intentionally. According to the Product View, walking from X1 to X2 intentionally can happen only if it is caused by a prior intention to walk from X1 to X2 and walking from X2 to X3 intentionally can happen only if it is caused by a prior intention to walk from X2 to X3…If we continue the sequence this way, we end up with 10 distinct intentional bodily movements caused by 10 distinct prior intentions. Therefore, intentional action of walking from X1 to X10 can be fragmented as follows:

prior intention1   causes   bodily movement1

prior intention2   causes   bodily movement2

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[36] Michael Thompson points out an infinite regress problem in his *Life and Action*, but the problem he is referring to is not about the proliferation of intentions. His point there is that there is a problem about finding out the smallest distance that can be covered intentionally. Michael Thompson, *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2008), 107-8.

…

prior intention10   causes   bodily movement10

$\longrightarrow$

|_____|
INTENTIONAL ACTION
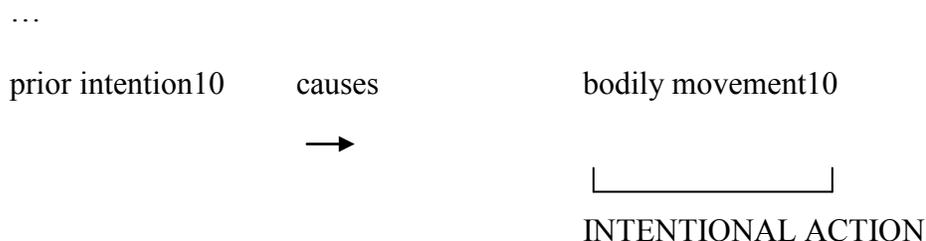
We can, however, fragment the original walked distance in other ways. Walking from X1 to X1.1 intentionally can happen only if one forms a prior intention to walk from X1 to X1.1, walking from X1 to X1.2 intentionally can happen only if one forms a prior intention to walk from X1 to X1.2… We can keep fragmenting walking from X1 to X10 in yet other ways and end up with different sets of prior intentions. Walking from X9.9 to X10 intentionally can happen only if one forms a prior intention to walk from X9.9 to X10. Walking from X9.8 to X10 intentionally can happen only if one forms a prior intention to walk from X9.8 to X10. This time we get 100 distinct intentional bodily movements caused by 100 prior intentions…Consequently, what is absurd about the Product View is not simply that a person can end up having formed millions of prior intentions simply to walk, say, from one sidewalk to another, but also that how many prior intentions are to be attributed to her depends on how *we* fragment her walking. This result is implausible since there is usually a difference between how many bodily movements a 2 year old might need to represent to bring about the required bodily movements as she walks from X1 to X10 and how many bodily movements a grown up might need to represent to walk the same distance.

It might be objected that not all intentional actions will involve covering some distance. So a better way to show the problem is to fragment walking from X1 to X10 using different fixed temporal periods. After all, all events span a temporal period. Consider this time organizing a bookshelf from t1 to t10. If we fragment this action using longer temporal increments, the person will show up as having formed fewer prior intentions; if we fragment it using shorter temporal increments, she will show up as having formed millions of prior intentions. In fact, this view implies that *both* the former set of prior intentions and the latter set of prior intentions are formed. We discover the first set when we use longer temporal increments, we discover the second set when we use shorter temporal increments.

To block the random fragmentation problem, the Product View advocate might claim that only one of these fragmentations is the "right" one. But if this modification is not going to be *ad hoc*, it has to rest on something like, "the fragmentation that captures the actual fragmentation of the intentional action in question is the right fragmentation". And that would be viciously circular. Intuitively, one suspects that there must be something wrong with construing "performing certain bodily movements *intentionally*" as "performing certain bodily movements that are caused by a prior intention to bring the bodily movements in question".

I.(ii) Causalism: The Causing View

The insufficiency problem of the Product View, namely, certain unintentional bodily movements showing up as intentional actions, leads John Searle to put forward a

more sophisticated causal account. Not considering the proliferation of intentions problem and the random fragmentation problem, he holds that the insufficiency problem demands that we abandon the Product View. According to his 'Causing View', we should not construe action as a bodily movement caused by a prior intention that involves the representation of that bodily movement. Instead, we should construe action as an intention's causing a bodily movement.

An intention in action is, by definition, part of an action. For this reason, its object cannot be the action it is part of. For Searle, what is left over when we take away an intention in action from an action is typically some limb movement. For actions that involve limb movements therefore, the object of an intention in action is some limb movement. That is, an intention in action involves the representation of some limb movement(s) required to perform the very action that the intention in action is in. Consequently, his Causing View looks like this:

intention in action   causes bodily movement

⎣_____→_____⎦
          INTENTIONAL ACTION

If an action has a prior intention, then that prior intention causes some intention-in-action (or many intentions-in-actions depending on what the action is), and that intention-in-action causes the limb movement required to perform the action. Searle schematizes this causal chain as follows:

Prior intention   causes   intention in action   causes bodily movement [37]

INTENTIONAL ACTION

Searle's picture is not that there is one overarching intention in action, say, when one is driving somewhere that causes all the necessary bodily movements. Rather, he thinks that for *each* required bodily movement involved in action, there will be a distinct intention in action that causes it. He writes,

> The relative indeterminacy of prior intentions is most obvious in case of complex actions. In the earlier example of carrying out my intention to drive to my office, there will be a large number of subsidiary acts that are not represented by the prior intention but are presented by the intention in action: I intentionally start the engine, shift gears, pass slow-moving vans, stop at red lights, swerve to avoid cyclists, change lanes, and so on with dozens of subsidiary acts that are performed intentionally but need not have been represented by my prior intention. This difference has also been a source of confusion in philosophy. Several philosophers have remarked that not everything I do intentionally is something I have an intention to do. For example, the particular movements of my hand when I brush my teeth are done intentionally, even though I had no intention to do them. But this view is a mistake that derives from a failure to see the difference between prior intentions and intentions in action. I may have had no prior intention to make just these hand movements but I had an intention in action to make them.[38]

A more accurate portrayal of Searle's Sophisticated Causal Theory then is as follows:

intention in action1   causes   bodily movement1

intention in action2   causes   bodily movement2

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[37] See John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, 94.
[38] John Searle, *Intentionality*, 94, fn. 10.

intention in action3   causes   bodily movement3

$\cdots$

$\longrightarrow$

INTENTIONAL ACTION

Since Searle's Causing View treats prior intentions neither as necessary nor as sufficient, Searle thinks that his Causing View bypasses the insufficiency problem of the Product View. To return to the climber example, recall that the climber forms a prior intention to loosen his hold, and his intention makes him so nervous that he does loosen his hold. The climber shows up as having loosened his hold intentionally, though his bodily movement was unintentional. Searle thinks that his Causing View does not yield the same result. He explains, "the reason the climber's loosening of his hold is unintentional in the case as described is that he has no intention in action of loosening his hold. There is no moment at which he could say, "I am now loosening my hold," as a way of articulating his intention in action…even though he might say just that as a way of describing what is happening to him."[39] The climber's prior intention to loosen his hold does not cause an intention in action to loosen his hold, though it perhaps causes other intentions in action that cause other limb movements, say, an intention in action to open his hand a bit –not enough to loosen his hold- that causes his hand to open a bit. Yet, his prior intention to loosen his hold does not cause an intention in action to loosen his hold. Thus, the bodily movement described as loosening his hold is not part of an action.

In his *Rationality in Action*, Searle claims that he is not satisfied with his previous characterization of the prior intention in his *Intentionality*. He writes,

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[39] John Searle, *Intentionality*, 108.

"In that book I represent the prior intention as ceasing to exist once the intention-in-action begins. But that is a mistake. The prior intention can continue to be effective throughout the performance of an act."[40]

Searle's dissatisfaction with his previous characterization of the prior intention arises due to thinking of cases where one is engaging in "some complex pattern of activity such as writing a book or swimming the English channel".[41] He rightly points out that one has to "keep making an effort to carry out to completion" the pattern of activity that one originally planned in the formation of the prior intention.[42] Consider for instance, writing a book. If the prior intention to write a book were to cease to exist after it causes the formation of the first intention in action, say, to write for a few hours the first day, the formation of the second intention in action, say, to read what one has written the day before, or the formation of a third intention in action after that, say, to delete what one has written, these latter intentions in action would not show up as intentions in action that are caused by the same persisting prior intention to write the book in question. In that case, there are two implausible alternatives; taking them to be caused by new prior intentions, or, taking them to be initiators of new actions. Consequently, the unity of the intentions in action involved in writing a book cannot be captured.

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[40] John Searle, *Rationality in Action (Jean Nicod Lectures)* (Mass: MIT Press, 2003), 51, fn. 5.
[41] Ibid., 50. Seale does not make a distinction between activities and actions. He uses the term 'action' interchangeably with the term 'activity' in this passage. Talbot Brewer, by contrast, convincingly argues that human actions can be picked out only as belonging to human activities whose goods lie within them. For this point, see Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, especially Ch.2.
[42] Ibid., 51.

This admission needs supplementation however. First, as Searle has argued, not all actions have prior intentions. Thus, if an intentional action is one that lacks a prior intention, obviously, what continues to be causally effective throughout the performance of an act cannot be a prior intention. Consider for instance hugging a friend you have not seen for a long time after a long wait at the airport. On Searle's view, this intentional action may lack a prior intention. It must, however, involve many intentions in action causing many bodily movements: You take a step towards the person, and another step, and another until you get close enough, your arms go up, they embrace the person, they pull the person towards you etc. There is no prior intention, still however, there is a unity to seemingly many distinct intentions in action. Presumably, Searle would be willing to modify his claim that the intention that remains effective throughout the performance of an act, is an *overarching i*ntention in action, not a prior intention that causes it.

Another supplementation has to do with the common assumption that causes precede their effects. It might seem impossible for an overarching intention in action to be effective *throughout* the performance of an act if it is supposed to *precede* various bodily movements it causes via various intentions in action. But some philosophers have argued that temporal separateness need not be taken to be necessary for causal relationship.[43] Michael Huemer and Ben Kovitz argue for a stronger position.[44] They argue that all actual causes are simultaneous with their effects. If it is true that causes at

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[43] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, orig. 1781 trans. N. Kemp Smith (New York: Macmillan Press); Richard Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), Myles Brand, "Simultaneous Causation," in Peter van Inwagen, ed., *Time and Cause: Essays Presented to Richard Taylor* (Dordrecht, D. Reidel Publishing, 1980), 137-53.

[44] Michael Huemer and Ben Kovitz, "Causation as Simultaneous and Continuous" *The Philosophical Qua rterly* 53 (213) (2003), 556-565.

least do not need to precede their effects, we can modify Searle's account so as to make overarching intentions effective throughout the performance of an intentional action.

The Causing View can accommodate simultaneous causation as follows:

Overarching intention in action

Causes ⇓

intention in action1 causes bodily movement1
⟶
intention in action2 causes bodily movement2
⟶
intention in action3 causes bodily movement3
⟶

└ ⋯ _____ ┘
INTENTIONAL ACTION

This modification however, does not immunize the Causing View against the proliferation of intentions problem and the random fragmentation problem I have highlighted as I was criticizing the Product View. The Causing View is as susceptible to these problems as the Product View.

Consider once again organizing a bookshelf from t1 to t10. For Searle, first there is an overarching intention in action to organize a bookshelf from t1 to t10. But there are, in addition, intentions in action caused by this overarching intention.

For someone who has organized a bookshelf from t1 to t10, all of the following are true:

She has brought about certain limb movements between t1 and t10 intentionally.

She has brought about certain limb movements between t1 and t5 intentionally.

She has brought about limb movements between t1 and t2.5 intentionally…*ad infinitum*.

Then this person's overarching intention must have caused the following intentions in

action:

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t10

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t5

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t2.5 *ad*

infinitum.

The Causing View then, is susceptible to the proliferation of intentions problem

as much as the Product View.[45] Moreover, it too cannot dissolve the random

fragmentation problem, either. Assume once again that one has organized a bookshelf

between t1 and t10. Then all the following will be true:

She has brought about certain limb movements between t1 and t2 intentionally

She has brought about certain limb movements between t2 and t3 intentionally

…

She has brought about limb movements between t9 and t10 intentionally

But then this person's overarching intention must have caused the following 10 intentions

in action:

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t2

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t2 and t3

…

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[45] The case is no different when we consider mental acts such as, to borrow Searle's example, forming a mental image of Eiffel tower. Suppose I formed the mental image of Eiffel tower t1-t10. It is true of me that I intentionally formed that image t1-t2, t1-1.5, t1-t1.25…*ad infinitum*. For Searle, I must have formed an intention in action that caused me to keep that image in my mind t1-t2, t1-1.5, t1-t1.25…*ad infinitum.*

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t9 and t10

We can, however, fragment this person's action in other ways. Of this person's bookshelf organizing between t1 and t10, all of the following are true:

She has brought about certain limb movements between t1 and t10 intentionally

She has brought about certain limb movements between t1 and t9.9 intentionally

…

She has brought about limb movements between t1 and t1.1 intentionally

But then this person's overarching intention must have caused the following 100 intentions in action:

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t10

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t9.9

…

An intention in action that caused the limb movements between t1 and t1.1

As a result, The Causing View just like the Product View yields two absurd conclusions; first, it gives rise to the proliferation problem since it implies that there are always infinitely many intentions in action, and secondly, it gives rise to the random fragmentation problem since it implies that how many intentions in action a person has performed in organizing a book-shelf between t1-t10 depends on how *we* fragment her organizing. There is no telling whether she has formed one intention in action, ten, one hundred, or millions. The affinity between the way the Product View fails and the way

the Causing View fails is not very surprising once we contrast the schemes of the two

views:

The Product View:

prior intention1   causes   bodily movement1

prior intention2   causes   bodily movement2

… $\longrightarrow$

$\lfloor\underline{\hspace{4cm}}\rfloor$

INTENTIONAL ACTION

The Causing View:

Overarching intention in action

Causes $\Downarrow$

intention in action1   causes   bodily movement1

intention in action2   causes   bodily movement2

… $\longrightarrow$

$\lfloor\underline{\hspace{9cm}}\rfloor$

INTENTIONAL ACTION

Both views require that the bodily movements of an action be caused by intentions that

involve the representations of those bodily movements. In the Product View, these

intentions are labeled 'prior intentions', and in the Causing View, they are labeled

'intentions in action'.

Supplementing the Causing View with causation that does not presuppose

temporal separateness of cause and effect helps to assign the proper role to overarching

intention in action. Still however, the Causing View suffers from the proliferation of

intentions in action problem and the random fragmentation problem. The reason is obvious: it explains the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in an action by necessitating that they all have their own causing intentions in action —-intentions in action that are ultimately caused by an overarching intention in action. The disadvantages of keeping this requirement do not stop at giving rise to the proliferation of intentions in action problem and the random fragmentation problem. Explains the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in an action by necessitating that they all have their own causing intentions in action presents us with an implausible picture of both expressive behavior and of Aristotelian activities described in length by Talbot Brewer.[46]

We engage in expressive behavior when we perform non-accidental bodily movements that are unified so as to express our mental items or activities. I can express my belief that we were hit by a tornado yesterday by uttering "We were hit by a tornado yesterday", I can express my joy of seeing someone by a genuine smile, I can express my anger by punching a door, I can express my gratitude for someone by dedicating my book to her, I can express my remorse by apologizing, I can express my belief in someone by helping her achieve her ends, I can express my understanding of sculpture by making one, and so on. Some expressive behavior is, by its very nature, very spontaneous (e.g. a genuine smile).[47]

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[46] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, especially Ch.2.

[47] Rosalind Hursthouse's "arational actions" exemplify expressive behavior and so does Sabine Doring's actions that are performed out of emotion. Rosalind Hursthouse, "Arational Actions," *Journal of Philosophy* 88 (1991), 57-68; Sabine A. Doring, "Explaining Action by Emotion," *Philosophical* Qua*rterly* 53 (211) (2003), 214-230. Jing Zhu's "passive actions" overlap with expressive behavior, but not all passive actions count as expressive behavior I just described. Zhu follows Harry Frankfurt in his characterization of "passive actions", and argues that causalism cannot account for passive actions that

The expressive behavior that is spontaneous, such as punching a door out of anger, *necessitates* that one not mentally represent the bodily movements involved in that behavior. Surely, one might make others think that she is angry by forming a prior intention to punch the door as if she is angry. Suppose she in fact succeeds in giving that impression. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to describe what she has done intentionally as "punching the door out of anger" since what she has done intentionally is only pretending to have punched the door out of anger. And *that* is not an expressive action. Punching a door out of anger can be an expressive action only if there is no prior intention that involves the representation of it. Yet, it is not an unintentional bodily movement. One's movements are guided by the person as one punches some door out of anger unlike in the case of punching some door accidentally as one is cheering up for her favorite soccer team. Those who necessitate, for intentionality, prior mental representation of the involved bodily movements must either reject this plausible picture of expressive behavior or affirm the counter-unintuitive conclusion that such non-accidental bodily movements do not constitute human behavior.

Moreover, explaining the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in an action by necessitating that they all have their own causing intentions in action, as Brewer highlights, makes it impossible to account for the difference between experienced and inexperienced ways of carrying out the same activity. He describes the difference between an experienced singer and an inexperienced one as follows:

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include expressive behavior. Jing Zhu, "Passive Action and Causalism,"; Harry G. Frankfurt, "The Problem of Action," in Alfred R. Mele ed., *The Philosophy of Action* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

The singer needn't be imagined as representing certain motions of the tongue and throat in such a way as to cause these motions to occur. In most cases, it is only inexperienced singers in early stages of training [when they cannot even count as "singing"] who have to think explicitly about the bodily mechanics of sound production, though these awkward techniques are sometimes revisited to remedy bad habits.[48]

As Brewer convincingly argues, it is the mark of a good singer that most of her bodily movements as she performs are not represented by intentions in actions. The singer's movements of her tongue as she sings are intentional, yet unlike a very inexperienced person who is trying to sing, she does not form an intention to bring about those movements. The same is true of experienced dancers, pianists, painters, sculptors…If a dancer were to form an intention for every bodily movement required to dance, she could hardly count as a dancer, let alone an experienced one.

One wonders then, whether it is necessary for a causal account to employ these mediating intentions in actions. Can it not, for instance, just drop this demand and explain the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in action by making use of the overarching intention in action, or more generally, by making use of whatever cognition is doing the guiding all throughout the action. The suggestion I am thinking of is something like the following; those bits of bodily movements involved in an action are intentional since they are all guided by the same overarching intention in action. Put differently, a Causing View can explain the intentionality of the bodily movements involved by necessitating that they are brought about to serve the same end. For example,

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[48] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 84.

walking from point X1 to X2, walking from point X2 to X3,…walking from point X1 to X10 are all intentional, not because they are all caused by intentions in action that involve the representations of these bodily movements, but because they are all caused and guided by the overarching intention in action to walk from X1 to X10. This surely does not mean that no bodily movement that is involved in action gets represented in its own intention in action, before or as one brings it about. It may. The proposal is (i) not to necessitate the representation of every bit of bodily movement involved in an action, (ii) to explain the intentionality of pieces of bodily movements involved in an action by making use of an *overarching* intention in action and (iii) to distinguish intentional bodily movements that actually do have their own causing intention in action caused by the overarching intention in action from those that do not.

Fred Adams' Causing account is along these lines.[49] Below is a brief summary of his view:

S does A intentionally only if

    (1) S intends to do A

    (2) S does A, and

    (3) S's Aing causally depends on S's intention (in the right way) –the intention guides and sustains S's A-ing via goal-directed feedback control systems.

[Overarching] Intentions:[50]

       (i)   set the goal or plan of the action

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[49] Fred Adams, and Alfred Mele, "The Role of Intention in Intentional Action".

[50] Adams does not call these 'overarching intentions', but since they overlap with Searle's overarching intentions in action, I will refer to them as such not to disrupt the continuity.

(ii)   are involved by causally initiating and informationally updating

progress toward the action

(iii)   provide a standard for determining error and correction or damage

control when the plan goes awry

(iv)   provide the criterion for goal-success (help determine when the

intended action has been completed, disengage plan's implementation,

and so on)

(v)   play a crucial role in the counterfactual dependency of output behavior

(bodily movement) upon intention and information input (the

perception of present state as compared with one's intended goal-state)

Let us put everything together through an example. S's overarching intention involves the

specification of a state of affairs as S's goal, for instance, crossing the street. It initiates

her crossing the street. As she crosses the street, she sees a driver who fails to notice that

the traffic light is red and who seems like he will not stop at the light. This new

information is fed into the control system that helps S's overarching intention guide and

sustain the bodily movements she will perform to cross the street. Another input to the

control system is information about how far she has walked until that point. These pieces

of information are compared with the goal that was specified in her overarching intention

so as to, if needed, modify her output behavior. The output behavior is modified –were

she to be run over by a car, she would not have achieved crossing the street. Instead of continuing to walk forward, she takes a few steps back and waits for the car to pass by.[51]

Unlike Searle's Causing View, Adams' Causing View does not necessitate that there be a causing intention in action for any and every bit of intentional bodily movement performed throughout an action. It explains the intentionality of the bodily movements involved by an overarching intention in action that guides and sustains them. Whether a bodily movement has its own intention in action caused by the overarching intention in action depends on, loosely speaking, whether the performer takes herself to be encountering an obstacle in achieving the goal specified in her overarching intention in action and guides her bodily movements so as to avoid the obstacle she takes herself to have encountered. A Causing View of this sort can block the proliferation of intentions in action problem and the random fragmentation problem discussed above since it does not explain the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in an action by necessitating that they all have their causing intentions in action.

In light of these considerations, it is plausible to hold that a causal account of human behavior might well be satisfactory *on the condition that* there is a satisfactory account of causation (i) that does not require temporal separateness to account for the

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[51] Jing Zhu is another causalist who has defended a causal account of expressive behavior --an account, like Adam's, that does not require mental representations of the bodily movements involved in expressive behavior. The criteria he gives for expressive behavior are as follows:
 (1) the movement is not initiated by the agent intentionally [to follow our terminology, the overarching cognition does not involve a mental representation of the movement]
 (2) it is well under the agent's guidance and control, specifically, the agent is in a position to monitor the ongoing process, and is prepared to effectively intervene if necessary; and
 (3) the agent never actually intervenes in the course of bodily movement, because the process of the movement is fully voluntary.

guiding role cognition plays in human behavior-, and (ii) that can allow relata beyond events (to account for omissions), and (iii) that explains the intentionality of the bodily movements involved in behavior by an overarching intention in action that guides and sustains them. I do not know if (i) and (ii) can be met with a satisfactory account of causation. Even if they are met however, I believe that there is a deeper problem with causalism that has escaped non-causalists' attention. As I shall argue, if causalism is to survive, it should be divorced from the scientific world-view according to which evaluative properties do not belong to the furniture of the natural world, and thus, when we evaluate, we are engaging in something other than describing the world. In the second chapter, I will argue that our moral behavior is a kind of expressive behavior -different from the sort we just considered in that it involves ways of treating human beings, ways that are guided by a kind of cognition that is directed at particular human beings. By the end of the dissertation, I hope to have made a convincing case for the view that this cognition is moral understanding and that capturing the moral understanding that gets expressed in moral behavior demands that we abandon the scientific world-view required by the situation view of morality. If I am right, there is a more immediate debate to be had than whether an account of human behavior should be causal or not: Can we capture the guiding role of cognition in human behavior without abandoning the scientific world-view? My answer will be no. But taking up this scientific world-view is not *internal* to causalism. However, I know of no philosopher with a causal account of human behavior, who does not take up this scientific world-view. I think such an account is not incoherent. Correspondingly, what I will be arguing should be taken to be that taking up the scientific

world-view is crippling when it comes to giving a satisfactory account of, at the very least, moral behavior. I can be seen as arguing against causalism only if causalism is taken to presuppose the scientific world-view.

CH. II. MORAL TRUAMA AND ITS LESSONS FOR THE SUBJECT MATTER OF MORALITY: Situations vs. Human beings

In modern and contemporary philosophical ethics as done by academics in the Western tradition, it is commonplace to think that the very task of picking out an action is *extraneous* to ethical or moral assessment since actions can be captured in the language of the natural sciences. We are not engaged in doing ethics or morality as we pick out an action. We are so engaged *after* that, as it were, when it is time to evaluate whatever actions we have picked out. The same way of thinking is visible in the prevailing philosophical understanding of what is involved in picking out the circumstances under which an action is performed or proposed. The picking out or describing of the circumstances is taken to be extraneous to ethical or moral assessment. As Murdoch explains, "the centre of 'the moral' " is generally taken by ethical theorists to be "the situation of a man making a definite choice".[52] Let me call this view, to which most consequentialists, social contract theorists and Kantians subscribe, "the situation view". In what follows, I will argue that the center of 'the moral' is not the situation of a man making a definite choice but that it is rather, a human being expressing her view of another by treating her in certain ways, and that pieces of behavior that show up as different on the situation view are actually unified in this way. By the end of this dissertation, I hope to have shown that the best way to capture this 'view' of another is to think of it as one's purported *moral understanding*. But to make this suggestion plausible,

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[52] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 81.

we need a detailed discussion of the nature of understanding in general. I will engage in that discussion in the next two chapters. Consequently, I am not yet in a position to bring out the appeal of my suggestion that our 'view' of another consists in our understanding of her. Thus, I ask my reader to suspend, for the time being, her demand for a less vague and more informative phrase than 'view of another'. Having expressed my plea, let me now continue.

Human beings can be harmed in numerous ways. They can suffer from physical disease, they can lose their homes due to a natural disaster, they can lose their loved ones due to accidents etc. But they can also be harmed by one another. One can harm another accidentally such as when a medical doctor accidentally cuts an important nerve he was not supposed to cut during a surgery. And then there are cases in which one harms another non-accidentally to spare her from greater harm or from an untimely death such as when one has to cut the arm of someone to pull her out of the remains of a building that has collapsed onto her after an earthquake. The kind of harm one might bring onto another that is of immediate interest to ethicists is different. This is the kind of harm that one brings onto another non-accidentally without having the well being of the other in view. It is this latter sort of harm, harm that we might call 'moral harm' that most ethical theorists think we are morally required to minimize. What all ethicists might not immediately agree on is the boundary between permissible and impermissible moral harm. To bypass this difficulty, I will focus on the worst moral scenes in human life such as rape, sexual or emotional abuse, or torture of various kinds. These moral harms are at the extreme end of moral harms in that for no good reason, they leave the harmed one

traumatized, altering (often, just shattering) how she once saw herself and others around her. Her moral trauma alters her deepest convictions of what is possible in a human interaction.

The following is a passage Raimond Gaita draws from Chaim Kaplan's *Warsaw Diary*, a passage that depicts a human interaction that took place during the Holocaust:

> A rabbi in Lodz was forced to spit on a Torah scroll that was in the Holy Ark. In fear of his life, he complied and desecrated that which is holy to him and to his people. After a short while he had no more saliva, his mouth was dry. To the Nazi's question, why did he stop spitting, the rabbi replied that his mouth was dry. The son of the 'superior race' began to spit in the rabbi's mouth, and the rabbi continued to spit on the Torah.[53]

The sort of humiliation the Nazi above engages in is undeniably a very clear case of harming this rabbi in Lodz. Describing the rabbi as "being harmed" does not reveal how belittled, defiled, shunned, stigmatized, helpless he must have felt, how traumatic his experience must have been for him, how his prior beliefs and feelings about what it is to be in this world with others must have been shattered, how he might live as a prisoner of his new conviction that no one, absolutely no one is to be trusted, how he might now see any real human connection as a powerful threat, how much his new fixation on self-protection might smother the life out of him, how much he might need to struggle to reclaim his confidence. How deeply and in what ways he has been hurt is to be seen in the entirety of the rest of his life. Depending on how he copes (or tries not to cope) with

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[53] Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (Cornwall: Routledge, new edn 2002), 68.

this experience of his, and how he will interact (or avoid interacting) with others, his mode of presence in his relationships will be altered. The explanation of all the drastic changes in the ways he will interact (or refuse to interact) with others, and in the ways he will be present (or absent) in his relationships, will refer back to his interaction -if it can be called that- with this Nazi in Lodz. He is now a *morally traumatized* rabbi. The harm in question only begins with the Nazi's walking up to the rabbi, but it does not end with his walking away. In time, the rabbi might come to trust others again, he might come to have hope about what is possible in human interaction again. But his new trust and hope, will look different from the trust and hope he once had. They will, if thoroughly felt, penetrate his life with a heightened and a firmer sense of the value of human beings and human interaction, precisely because he will know what it is to live in the utter absence of such a sense. That is, even if he can become a rabbi that trusts others again and is hopeful about human interaction again, it will be through integrating the full reality of his experience into an understanding of how to be with others in this life and why, not by futilely denouncing its reality time after time. There is a sense therefore in which a moral trauma cannot be left behind. It becomes an indispensable part of the life narrative of those who have been forced to experience it. It shows up as either a continuous effort to bury it in one's mind, or a continuous effort to integrate it into one's understanding of how to be with others.

There are many other forms of humiliation still at this extreme end of the continuum of harming, including torture, rape and many cases of abuse. A rape survivor describes her experience in the following terms,

> I left my body at that point. I was over next to the bed, watching this happen…I dissociated from the helplessness. I was standing next to me and there was just this shell on the bed…There was just a feeling of flatness. I was just there. When I repicture the room, I don't picture it from the bed. I picture it from the side of the bed. That's where I was watching it from. [54]

Again, saying that the above girl was harmed does not reveal the full reality of the *moral trauma* she has begun to experience. It leaves completely opaque how deep her moral trauma runs and will run. The way in which she tells her story already shows how deep her dissociation is and probably will be for a long time. At the beginning, she will probably invest a lot of psychological energy to put her rape out of sight and out of mind. She might desperately hold on to the thought that there is something wrong with *her*, that there was something she could have done. It might come easier to her to believe that there is something wrong with herself that there must have been something she could have done in a world she recognizes than to believe that there was nothing she could have done in a world she can no longer recognize. She might therefore live with a misguided feeling of guilt besides feeling violated, damaged and defiled. Having been treated as an object, her whole self-understanding can suffer, she might feel she is worthless, or she might implicitly think that she needs to sexually please others to be valued. She might try to lose herself in fantasy, in addictive behavior, in self-chosen non-stop frenetic rhythms of responsibility, or with self-medication to avoid the nightmares, the flashbacks, to avoid

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[54] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 43.

facing what her pain has to show her, to reach "a state of detached calm in which terror, rage and pain dissolve".[55] This need of a detached state might leave her somewhere beyond inauthenticity in her relationships with others for she cannot be there to even pretend. She might speak *about* her shame, fear and shattered hopes in time, but it might be a life-long struggle for her to speak directly *from* her wound, to mourn for the optimistic young adult she could have been. Underneath all that dissociation, numbness and terror, she might feel a weak, needy, scared self. She might feel ashamed of these parts of her and do everything in her power to keep them disguised. Her interactions with others, her way of being in the world with others might be crippled. In the remainder of her life, she can only hope to find better ways to live with her rape. She, too might, in time, come to occupy an admirable perspective on herself, others, and the value of human interaction, but she can do so only by a continuous effort to integrate her experience into a non-distorted understanding of how to be with others in this world and why. Both trying to bury her rape in her mind and trying to integrate it into her life while acknowledging its full reality require continuous cognitive efforts about her rape. Her rape is not the sort of thing to which she can respond by doing neither.

When we consider the two examples above, it seems as if we can avoid bringing moral traumas onto others by simply avoiding certain acts. It might be thought that the rabbi and the above girl would not have entered a new life in which they are forced to

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[55] I borrow this description from Judith Lewis Herman; *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 42. These kinds of suffering are listed among the most common sufferings of traumatized people in the psychology literature. See for example, Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), Part I., and David Howe, *Child Abuse and Neglect* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1995), Part I-IV.

live with their moral traumas, had the Nazi and the rapist not performed the bodily movements they have performed. At this point, it is helpful to recall our reflections on human behavior in the previous chapter. Whether a particular human being's spitting into another's mouth is a *non-accidental* bodily movement, depends on whether it was guided by the cognition of the human being in question. We can easily imagine cases in which one spits into another's mouth accidentally. Once we necessarily employ the guiding cognition to capture the bodily movement as a piece of human behavior on the other hand, as we have seen in the previous chapter, we realize that the same bodily movement can partake in a very different human behavior depending on its guiding cognition. A particular spitting into the other's mouth might arise in the playing of two kids; it might be part of what one does as one saves an extremely dehydrated human being; in some culture it might partake in a certain ritual, say, it might signify a meaningful bond between two human beings; or as in our example, it might partake in the humiliation of another human being. We can tell that in our example it partakes in the humiliation of another human being since, with the help of our narrative, we are able to imagine (to some extent of course) the Nazi's view of the rabbi, the guiding cognition that was active *as* he spit into the rabbi's mouth: We know that they are in a death camp, we know one is a Nazi and the other is a rabbi which means that the Torah to which he is told to spit is sacred to him, having read about shuddering stories about death camps, we can imagine (to a little degree) what the rabbi's last days in Lodz might be like for him even before his interaction with this Nazi, and so on. In other words, we are imagining the Nazi as having a certain view of the rabbi, a view that gives his action the *humiliating* quality it has. The

same view might have given a variety of pieces of non-accidental bodily movements, or omissions, the same quality during their interaction: the way he looked at the rabbi during this interaction, how insulting his voice was as he asked the rabbi to spit, his belittling smirk when the rabbi ran out of saliva, the way he turned his back and walked away after the interaction, a way that expressed how satisfied he was with himself, his posture that signaled how powerful he imagined himself to be as he watched the rabbi spit on the Torah etc. Likewise, had their interaction continued, had the rabbi encountered the same Nazi the next day, the Nazi's view of the rabbi, assuming that it is not altered, could have expressed itself in many different non-accidental bodily movements, or omissions. If we knew more about the details of their interaction briefly described above, or if we knew that their interaction continued, the Nazi's humiliating way of treating the rabbi that expresses his view of the rabbi would have brought together a variety of pieces of non-accidental bodily movements or omissions that otherwise would have seemed unrelated. But then what a comprehending observer picks out is not a token of the action type "someone spitting in someone else's mouth": in the absence of some outlook that gives an appearance of value or disvalue to the spitting (e.g. Nazi's view of the rabbi), someone spitting in someone else's mouth does not show up as an action to begin with, and in the presence of such an outlook, it shows up with its moral significance (e.g. with its humiliatingness) already partly if not entirely determined. [56] Consequently, the Nazi's

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[56] This resembles Christine Korsgaard's distinction between acts and actions. She explains that actions differ from acts in that they the agent employs them with a certain end in view. She would therefore hold that someone spitting into the mouth of another at a particular time is merely an act unless it is performed with a certain end in view. Requiring performing bodily movements with a certain end in view for action, can be thought of as requiring performing bodily movements with a guiding cognition. I think, however, it is a mistake to think that in the absence such a cognition, a bodily movement can constitute a *human act*. In

action is necessarily picked out *with* its humiliating quality. When viewed this way, picking out the Nazi's action no longer seems *extraneous* to moral assessment. Instead, the ethical/moral assessment is already underway even as we pick out the Nazi's action. Further, the moral qualities of his action help us see what exactly is responsible for the initiation of the moral trauma in question. What is morally traumatizing for the rabbi is not the bare fact that the Nazi has spit into his mouth. It is rather the moral quality of his behavior, namely its humiliatingness that expresses Nazi's view of the rabbi that is responsible for the initiation of the rabbi's moral trauma. This humiliatingness, in turn, is a function of the rabbi's worth that is expressed.

In the case of the girl that is raped, it might be thought, it is a series of bodily movements that initiates the moral trauma of the girl. But to pick out a series of bodily movements as rape demands that one sees those movements as sharing a moral quality. Otherwise, we could not distinguish a rape pretense such as when an actor performs the same series of bodily movements in a movie, from real rape. The same series of movements performed by the actor would not constitute rape precisely because they would lack the moral quality they would have shared in real rape. It is the above rapist's view of the girl that gives his series of non-accidental bodily movements humiliatingness directed at the girl. The actor's view of the actress, by contrast, gives the series of bodily movements he performs only the pretense of such humiliatingness. When we turn attention to narratives that describe a longer interaction between two human beings, this

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the absence such cognition, I do not see how a bodily movement can show up as anything more than an accidental bodily movement. See Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 219.

point becomes even more visible. The more we know about the performer's view of the other with the help of the narrative, the better positioned we are to know how her many different non-accidental bodily movements and omissions belong to one and the same way of treating the other due to sharing in a certain view of the other. In narratives that describe an ongoing relationship, it is easier to see that if one is morally traumatizing the other, she does so, not by performing a series of different bodily movements that are describable in purely non-evaluative terms, but by a certain way of treating the other that expresses an objectionable view of another.

Below is an excerpt from Jonathan Franzen's novel titled, "Freedom".[57] It is an unusual choice of text in that it is quite long. I believe however that there are good reasons behind this choice: since it describes an ongoing relationship, it puts us in a better position to have access to the performer's view of the other and thereby to appreciate the fact that many different non-accidental bodily movements and omissions can belong to one and the same way of treating the other due to sharing in a certain view of the other. Correspondingly, it makes it easier to see that if one is morally traumatizing the other, she does so, not by performing a series of different bodily movements that are describable in purely non-evaluative terms, but by a certain way of treating the other that carries certain moral qualities due to expressing one's view of another. Hereby, I ask, therefore, for the patience of my reader.

The following excerpt attempts to partially depict a seventeen-year-old girl, Patricia, who is being exposed to a range of erratic parenting behavior involving both

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[57] Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom: A Novel* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). The excerpt is drawn from 36-47.

neglect and emotional takeover. Here is how Patricia's parents respond upon hearing

(from their daughter's coach) that she has been raped by a boy named Ethan:

…After he raped Patty, he said he was sorry "it" had been rougher than he'd meant "it" to be, he was sorry about that… The indignity was that Ethan had considered her such a nothing that he could just rape her and then take her home. And she was *not* such a nothing… To avoid waking her little sister, she went and cried in the shower. This was, without exaggeration, the most wretched hour of her life…How the story came out, in spite of her best efforts to keep it buried, was that Coach Nagel got suspicious and spied on her in the locker room after the next day's game. Sat Patty down in her office and confronted her regarding her bruises and unhappy demeanor. Patty humiliated herself by immediately and sobbingly confessing to all. To her total shock, Coach then proposed taking her to the hospital and notifying the police…Coach called Patty's house and got Patty's mother…Coach spoke these indelible words into the P.E. department's beige telephone:

"Your daughter just told me that she was raped last night by a boy named Ethan Post." Coach then listened to the phone for a minute before saying, "No, she just now told me. . . . That's right. . . . Just last night . . . Yes, she is." And handed Patty the telephone.

"Patty?" her mother said. "Are you—all right?"

"I'm fine."

"Mrs. Nagel says there was an incident last night?"

"The incident was I was raped."

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Last night?"

"Yes."

…

"And you think you might have been . . . It might have been . . ."

"Raped."

"I can't believe this," her mother said. "I'm going to come and get you."

"Coach Nagel wants me to go to the hospital."

"Are you not all right?"

"I already said. I'm fine."

"Then just stay put, and don't either of you do anything until I get there."

Patty hung up the phone and told Coach that her mother was coming.

"We're going to put that boy in jail for a long, long time," Coach said.

"Oh no no no no no," Patty said. "No, we're not."

"Patty."

"It's just not going to happen."

"It will if you want it to."

"No, actually, it won't. My parents and the Posts are political friends."

"Listen to me," Coach said. "That has nothing to do with anything. Do you understand?"

Patty was quite certain that Coach was wrong about this. Dr. Post was a cardiologist, and his wife was from big money. They had one of the houses that people such as Teddy Kennedy and Ed Muskie and Walter Mondale made visits to when they were short of funds. Over the years, Patty had heard much tell of the Posts' "back yard" from her parents. This back yard was apparently about the size of Central Park but nicer. Conceivably one of Patty's straight-A, grade-skipping, Arts-doing sisters could have brought trouble down on the Posts, but it was absurd to imagine the hulking B-student family jock making a dent in the Posts' armor…

It was shocking to see her mother in the gym and obviously shocking to her mother to find herself there. She was wearing her everyday pumps and resembled Goldilocks in daunting woods as she peered around uncertainly at the naked metal equipment and the fungal floors and the clustered balls in mesh bags. Patty went to her and submitted to embrace. Her mother being much smaller of frame, Patty felt somewhat like a grandfather clock that Joyce was endeavoring to lift and move. She broke away and led Joyce into Coach's little glass-walled office so that the necessary conference could be had.

"Hi, I'm Jane Nagel," Coach said.

"Yes, we've—met," Joyce said.

"Oh, you're right, we did meet once," Coach said.

In addition to her strenuous elocution, Joyce had strenuously proper posture and a mask like Pleasant Smile suitable for nearly all occasions public and private. Because she never raised her voice, not even in anger (her voice just got more strained when she was mad), her Pleasant Smile could be worn even at moments of excruciating conflict.

"No, it was more than once," she said now. "It was several times."

"Really?"

"I'll be outside," Patty said, closing the door behind her.

The parent-coach conference didn't last long. Joyce soon came out on clicking heels and said, "Let's go."…

…

Joyce's car was the last one left in its quadrant of the visitor lot. She put the key in the ignition but didn't turn it. Patty asked what was going to happen now.

"Your father's at his office," Joyce said. "We'll go straight there."

But she didn't turn the key.

"I'm sorry about this," Patty said.

"What I don't understand," her mother burst out, "is how such an outstanding athlete as you are—I mean, how could Ethan, or whoever it was—"

"Ethan. It was Ethan."

"How could anybody—or Ethan," she said. "You say it's pretty definitely Ethan. How could—if it's Ethan—how could he have . . . ?" Her mother hid her mouth with her fingers. "Oh, I wish it had been almost anybody else. Dr. and Mrs. Post are such good friends of—good friends of so many good things. And I don't know Ethan well, but—"

"I hardly know him at all!"

"Well then how could this happen!"

"Let's just go home."

"No. You have to tell me. I'm your mother."

Hearing herself say this, Joyce looked embarrassed. She seemed to realize how peculiar it was to have to remind Patty who her mother was. And Patty, for one, was glad to finally have this doubt out in the open. If Joyce was her mother, then how had it happened that she hadn't come to the first round of the state tournament, when Patty had broken the all-time Horace Greeley girls' tournament scoring record with thirty-two points? Somehow everybody else's mother had found time to come to that game.

She showed Joyce her wrists.

"*This* is what happened," she said. "I mean, part of what happened."

Joyce looked once at the bruises, shuddered, and then turned away as if respecting Patty's privacy. "This is terrible," she said. "You're right. This is terrible."

…

 "Here's a hypothetical question," Joyce said, driving. "Do you think it might be enough if Ethan formally apologized to you?"

"He already apologized."

"For—"

"For being rough."

"And what did you say?"

"I didn't say anything. I said I wanted to go home."

"But he did apologize for being rough."

"It wasn't a real apology."

"All right. I'll take your word for it."

"I just want him to know I still *exist*."

"Whatever *you* want—sweetie."

Joyce pronounced this "sweetie" like the first word of a foreign language she was learning.

As a test or a punishment, Patty said, "Maybe, I guess, if he apologized in a really sincere way, that might be enough." And she looked carefully at her mother, who was struggling (it seemed to Patty) to contain her excitement.

"That sounds to me like a nearly ideal solution," Joyce said. "But only if you really think it would be enough for you."

"It wouldn't," Patty said.

"I'm sorry?"

"I said it wouldn't be enough."

"I thought you just said it would be."

Patty began to cry again very desolately.

"I'm sorry," Joyce said. "Did I misunderstand?"

"*He raped me like it was nothing. I'm probably not even the first.*"

"You don't know that, Patty."

"I want to go to the hospital."

"Look, here, we're almost at Daddy's office. Unless you're actually hurt, we might as well—"

"But I already know what he'll say. I know what he'll want me to do."

"He'll want to do whatever's best for you. Sometimes it's hard for him to express it, but he loves you more than anything."

Joyce could hardly have made a statement that Patty more fervently longed to believe was true. Wished, with her whole being, were true. Didn't her dad tease her and ridicule her in ways that would have been simply cruel if he didn't secretly love her more than anything? But she was

seventeen now and not actually dumb. She knew that you could love somebody more than anything and still not love the person all that much, if you were busy with other things.

There was a smell of mothballs in her father's inner sanctum, which he'd taken over from his now deceased senior partner without redoing the carpeting or the curtains. Where exactly the mothball smell came from was one of those mysteries.

"What a rotten little shit!" was Ray's response to the tidings his daughter and wife brought of Ethan Post's crime.

"Not so little, unfortunately," Joyce said with a dry laugh.

"He's a rotten little shit punk," Ray said. "He's a bad seed!"

"So do we go to the hospital now?" Patty said. "Or to the police?"

Her father told her mother to call Dr. Sipperstein, her old pediatrician, who'd been involved in Democratic politics since Roosevelt, and see if he was available for an emergency. While Joyce made this call, Ray asked Patty if she knew what rape was.

She stared at him.

"Just checking," he said. "You do know the actual legal definition."

"He had sex with me against my will."

"Did you actually say no?"

" 'No,' 'don't,' 'stop.' Anyway, it was obvious. I was trying to scratch him and push him off me."

"Then he is a despicable piece of shit."

She'd never heard her father talk this way, and she appreciated it, but only abstractly, because it didn't sound like him.

"Dave Sipperstein says he can meet us at five at his office," Joyce reported. "He's so fond of Patty I think he would have cancelled his dinner plans if he'd had to."

"Right," Patty said. "I'm sure I'm number one among his twelve thousand patients." She then told her dad her story, and her dad explained to her why Coach Nagel was wrong and she couldn't go to the police.

"Chester Post is not an easy person," Ray said, "but he does a lot of good in the county. Given his, uh, given his position, an accusation like this is going to generate extraordinary publicity. Everyone will know who the accuser is. Everyone. Now, what's bad for the Posts is not your concern. But it's virtually certain you'll end up feeling more violated by the pretrial and the trial and the publicity than you do right now…The Posts can afford any lawyer in the country. And as soon as the accusation is made public the worst of the damage to the defendant is over. He

has no incentive to speed things along. In fact, it's to his advantage to see that your reputation suffers as much as possible before a plea or a trial."

Patty bowed her head and asked what her father thought she should do.

"I'm going to call Chester now," he said. "You go see Dr. Sipperstein and make sure you're O.K."

"And get him as a witness," Patty said.

"Yes, he could testify if need be. But there isn't going to be a trial, Patty."

"So he just gets away with it? And does it to somebody else next weekend?"

Ray raised both hands. "Let me, ah. Let me talk to Mr. Post. He might be amenable to a deferred prosecution. Kind of a quiet probation. Sword over Ethan's head."

"But that's *nothing*."

"Actually, Pattycakes, it's quite a lot. It'd be your guarantee that he won't do this to someone else. Requires an admission of guilt, too."

It did seem absurd to imagine Ethan wearing an orange jumpsuit and sitting in a jail cell for inflicting a harm that was mostly in her head anyway…

And yet: the feeling of injustice itself turned out to be strangely physical. Even realer, in a way, than her hurting, smelling, sweating body. Injustice had a shape, and a weight, and a temperature, and a texture, and a very bad taste.

…

Her dad drove them over to the high school and stopped under a bright light in the parking lot. They unrolled their windows, letting in the smell of spring lawns like the one she'd been raped on not many hours earlier.

"So," she said.

"So Ethan denies it," her dad said. "He says it was just roughhousing and consensual."

Patty's tears came on like a rain that starts unnoticeably but surprisingly soon soaks everything. She asked if her dad had spoken to Ethan directly.

"No, just his father, twice," he said "I'd be lying if I said the conversation went well."

"So obviously Mr. Post doesn't believe me."

"Well, Patty, Ethan's his son. He doesn't know you as well as we do."

"Do you believe me?"

"Yes, I do."

"Does Mommy?"

"Of course she does."

"Then what do I do?"

Her dad turned to her like an attorney. Like an adult addressing another adult. "You drop it," he said. "Forget about it. Move on."

"What?"

"You shake it off. Move on. Learn to be more careful."

"Like it never even happened?"

"Patty, the people at the party were all friends of his. They're going to say they saw you get drunk and be aggressive with him. They'll say you were behind a shed that wasn't more than thirty feet from the pool, and they didn't hear anything untoward."

"It was really noisy. There was music and shouting."

"They'll also say they saw the two of you leaving later in the evening and getting into his car. And the world will see an Exeter boy who's going to Princeton and was responsible enough to use contraceptives, and gentleman enough to leave the party and drive you home."

The deceptive little rain was wetting the collar of Patty's T-shirt.

"You're not really on my side, are you," she said.

"Of course I am."

"You keep saying 'Of course,' 'Of course.' "

…

"Listen to me. The P.A. is going to want to know why you didn't scream."

"I was embarrassed! Those weren't my friends!"

"But do you see that this is going to be hard for a judge or a jury to understand? All you had to do was scream, and you would have been safe."

Patty couldn't remember why she hadn't screamed. She had to admit that, in hindsight, it seemed bizarrely agreeable of her.

"I fought, though."

"Yes, but you're a top-tier student athlete. Shortstops get scratched and bruised all the time, don't they? On the arms? On the thighs?"

"Did you tell Mr. Post I'm a virgin? I mean, was?"

"I didn't consider that any of his business."

"Maybe you should call him back and tell him that."

"Look," her dad said. "Honey. I know it's horrendously unfair. I feel terrible for you. But

sometimes the best thing is just to learn your lesson and make sure you never get in the same position again. To say to yourself, 'I made a mistake, and I had some bad luck,' and then let it. Let it, ah. Let it drop."

He turned the ignition halfway, so that the panel lights came on. He kept his hand on the key.

"But he committed a crime," Patty said.

"Yes, but better to, uh. Life's not always fair, Pattycakes. Mr. Post said he thought Ethan might be willing to apologize for not being more gentlemanly, but. Well. Would you like that?"

"No."

"I didn't think so."

"Coach Nagel says I should go to the police."

"Coach Nagel should stick to her dribbling," her dad said.

"Softball," Patty said. "It's softball season now."

"Unless you want to spend your entire senior year being publicly humiliated."

"Basketball is in the winter. Softball is in the spring, when the weather's warmer"

"I'm asking you: is that really how you want to spend your senior year?"

"Coach Carver is basketball," Patty said. "Coach Nagel is softball. Are you getting this?"

Her dad started the engine…

The above excerpt depicts only a fragment of how Patricia's relationship with her parents is unfolding in the narrative of her life. Nonetheless, it conveys a partial understanding of how she has been (and is being) treated by her parents and how that makes her feel. Patricia is suffering from being, to a considerable degree, invisible to her parents. Even after such a traumatic event, her mother, Joyce, is acting more like she is (or has to be) the participant of a conspiracy of silence to deny an unacceptable reality than like a mother who is aware that she is being called to try to understand her daughter's fears, rage, shame, frailty, and their source. She is not meeting Patricia with words that recognize these aspects of what is happening to her. She is failing to help Patricia to turn her gaze inward, to help her articulate herself in a way that comes as

close as possible to capturing how she is feeling. Rather, she is contributing to that which has partially made Patricia's experience so traumatic. Part of why Patricia's experience with Ethan was so morally traumatic is the fact that she was not treated as a human being, a human being with a real story and feelings that matter. By almost trying not to attend to Patricia's feelings at such an important point in her life, Joyce is only enhancing her daughter's moral trauma regarding Ethan.

Joyce's not hearing her daughter fully does not seem to be due to a temporary paralysis that arose out of the shock of finding out that her daughter has been raped. Nor does it seem to be the result of trying to hear her but not finding the resilience to forego her inner barriers that have helped her flinch away from her own history in the name of protecting herself. Pronouncing "sweetie" like the first word of a foreign language she was learning does not signal her general difficulty in being in touch with her own feelings. After not being able to utter the word 'rape' several times, Joyce says, "Oh, I wish it had been almost anybody else. Dr. and Mrs. Post are such good friends of— good friends of so many good things. And I don't know Ethan well, but—". Patricia's outrage is not just against Ethan, it is against everyone who does not try to see her as a human being, a being with a real life, whose experiences are human experiences, whose body and voice express (or withhold) these experiences.

Being emotionally neglected does not only leave one's life crippled, one's own self-understanding distorted and one's hopes about human interaction shattered. It forces one to be involved in one's own humiliation by leaving one no option but to plead to be seen as a human being: Patricia shows her wrists and says, "*This* is what happened, I

mean, part of what happened." -as if she needs to plead to be seen as a human being. When she says, "I just want him [Ethan] to know I still *exist*", her plea extends to her mother (and later on we realize that it extends to her father, too).

Patricia is equally invisible in her father's eyes, hence her outburst at the end of their exchange: "Basketball is in the winter. Softball is in the spring, when the weather's warmer", "Coach Carver is basketball, Coach Nagel is softball. Are you getting this?" But in addition to participating with Joyce in the alliance of neglect, he tries to manipulate Patricia into thinking that he is supporting her. He tries hard to convince Patricia that it is the unfortunate circumstances rather than his concern about "the good things" that come with Ethan's parents that lead him to say that she should "drop it", "forget about it" and "move on". He pretends that he is concerned about her feeling even more violated and humiliated where in fact he is using her fears and using them to subtly threaten her by saying she should "drop it" unless she wants to spend her entire senior year being publicly humiliated. We hear his subtle threat even better when we look at how he repeats his point: "*I'm asking you*: is that really how you want to spend your senior year?" [my emphasis]. His real concern seems to be to avoid problems with Ethan's parents. Further, he tries to insinuate that it was partly she who brought this moral trauma upon herself. He says that she was behind a shed that wasn't more than thirty feet from the pool, and they didn't hear anything untoward because she did not scream. He advises her to "shake it off" and "learn to be more careful". He tells her to "learn her lesson" and "make sure she never gets in the same position again", to tell herself "I made a mistake, and I had some bad luck". Both Joyce and Ray pay attention

to Patricia, but the kind of attention they pay has little or nothing to do with *her*. This is why Patricia's rage is not just against Ethan, it is also against her parents who do not try to see her as a human being which involves seeing her as having a real life, whose experiences are human experiences, whose body and voice express (or withhold) these experiences.

Patricia's parents' behavior throughout the exchange has involved many different bodily movements and omissions. Consider the following: Joyce has uttered, "Of course, I am", she has picked up Patricia from the coach's office, she has driven Patricia to Ray's office and so on. As our discussion in the first chapter has showed, we cannot pick out these bodily movements as actions in the absence of some cognition that guides them as they are performed. Take for instance Joyce's pausing right before she is about to say 'rape' and not uttering it. Joyce could have exhibited, for example, the same pause, due to breathing problems or due to going through a temporary paralysis that arose out of the shock of finding out that the other is raped. Once we do appeal to such a guiding view, we can individuate her pause as *the particular pause it is,* namely, as this particular pause of Joyce's. We also saw in the first chapter that what is essential for this cognition to do its guiding cannot be representations of the bodily movements or omissions that emerge from it. What makes this particular pause this particular pause of *hers* is not simply the fact that she uses her body to bring it about at a particular time. If that were the case, the only difference between this particular pause of hers and, say, another pause of hers performed to be careful about her words due to not yet knowing how Patricia needed to be spoken to right after her rape, would be the time at which

they were performed. Her real pause is different from the just-imagined alternative primarily because they are performed with different views of Patricia.

Isolating this omission and thinking that it can be evaluated as wrong or right as such is overlooking the fact that it is guided by a certain view that Joyce has of her daughter: it belongs, with many other pieces of non-accidental bodily movements and omissions Joyce exhibits, to her neglectful treatment towards Patricia that expresses one and the same view of Patricia. To exemplify, consider her uttering, "Mrs. Nagel says there was an incident last night?" to which Patricia feels the need to respond by saying, "The incident was I was raped". Or again, Joyce gives Patricia a fake embrace –Patricia feels like she is somewhat like a grandfather clock that Joyce is trying to "lift and move". A mother that is attending to her daughter's emotional needs might for instance meet her daughter with a hug that expresses that she will be there for her throughout her emotional struggle, not with a fake embrace performed probably because she is being watched by a third person. We can imagine all these non-accidental bodily movements and omissions as being performed with very different guiding views. In the narrative of a different relationship, they might have no moral significance due to the guiding view with which they are performed. An actress might give a fake embrace to another actress on stage to abide by the script of the play they are performing, for example. Alternatively, they might be constitutive of a very different way of treating a human being due to expressing a very different view of the other. Going back to the above imagined-view, a mother might pause right before saying 'rape' and after a second of hesitance not uttering it due to trying not to push her daughter to face what has

happened before she feels ready to face it. In that case, this omission would be part of

treating her *protectively*, not neglectfully. We are not ready to evaluate these bodily

movements or their absence until we recognize them as constituting human behavior

and to recognize them as such demands that we grasp them together with their

motivating grounds. But once we have done this, we have already evaluated them.

Hence, to isolate certain bodily movements or their absence and to evaluate them one

by one, in a piecemeal way, is to overlook the fact that they can only be picked out in

evaluative terms –neglectful, humiliating, protectively etc.

Similarly, Ray calling Patricia 'Pattycakes' partakes in his *belittling* way of

treating his daughter. His belittling way of treating Patricia might bring together many

different non-accidental bodily movements and omissions. Given the hints in the above

text, we can easily imagine him regularly mocking Patricia's insecurities at the dinner

table, or saying things like "even Pattycakes can do that" to convey how easy it is do

something etc. In the narrative of a different relationship, calling Patricia 'Pattycakes'

might be a term of endearment and thus belong to a very different way of treating her

such as an adoring way of treating her that expresses a completely different view of her.

Or yet in the narrative of a different relationship, the very same piece of behavior might

not belong to a certain way of treating the other at all, one might call someone named

'Patricia', 'Pattycakes' simply because one might like the sound of it.

I do not mean to imply that how Joyce is treating her daughter or how Ray is

treating his daughter is as despicable as how the Nazi above has treated the rabbi or how

the rapist above has treated the girl he has raped. And some might think that the kind of

emotional neglect exhibited in Joyce's treatment is the kind that is involved in morally traumatizing another, but its degree does not yet make it morally traumatizing. Likewise, it might be thought, Ray's belittling treatment has not reached the point of deserving the name 'morally traumatizing'. But that worry can be overcome either by imagining Joyce as taking this kind of emotional neglect to its extreme and by imagining Ray as taking his belittling way of treatment to its extreme. Alternately, we can keep the current severity of neglectful treatment that Joyce exhibits and of belittling treatment that Ray exhibits, and place their treatment on a continuum between not morally traumatizing at all, and very morally traumatizing. Either way, it remains true that moral harm, regardless of how severe, is not something to be determined after picking out bodily movements and omissions that are describable in purely non-evaluative terms. Instead, moral harm is picked out *as* bodily movements and omissions are picked out as moral behavior.

Some think of moral philosophy as an effort to formulate a set of principles connecting circumstances to action types that are forbidden. From their perspective, my conclusion might seem hasty. They might point out that for the moral forbiddenness of various pieces of bodily movements and omissions to surface, they need to be considered in conjunction with the circumstances under which they are performed. Let us assume that the contenders of this objection can help themselves to a morally objectionable but not forbidden category besides the morally forbidden category. For deeming Joyce's pausing right before she is about to say 'rape' and not uttering it morally forbidden seems implausible to begin with. According to the objection at hand,

what is morally objectionable is not Joyce's pausing right before she is about to say 'rape' and not uttering it *per se*, but it is her pausing right before she is about to say 'rape' and not uttering it under ' 'certain' ' circumstances. We should be able to then find a set of circumstances in conjunction with which this intentional behavior of Joyce's turns out to be morally wrong. How about then the following circumstances: That Patricia was in need of, more than ever, being heard and seen as she is, especially by the ones she longs for the intimacy of, such as her mother. That Patricia was standing there, right in front of her mother's eyes, with all her frailty, shame and rage. These circumstances fall short of showing us the wrongness of Joyce's pause. We can imagine Joyce's pause as expressive of her concern for her daughter even when it is considered in conjunction with these two circumstances: she was trying to be careful about her words since she did not yet know how her daughter needed to be spoken to right after her rape, an encounter that has left her frail, fearful, enraged, and shameful. What we need is to explicate with what sort of view Joyce performed the pause in question. But before we move on to doing that, let us pay close attention to how we have been proceeding thus far.

There were many circumstances that we could have picked out as 'relevant'. After all, there are many facts extractable from the above narrative: That Joyce found out about Patricia's rape from her coach, that her husband was not with her, that Joyce asked, "Are you not all right?", that she said, "And you think you might have been…It might have been…", that she picked Patricia up from the coach's office and so on. Yet, we have left many of these facts aside and singled out only some of them as 'relevant'.

But why? Let us recall the ones that were relevant: That Patricia was in need of, more than ever, being heard and seen as she is, especially by those from whom she longs for intimacy, such as her mother. That Patricia was standing there, right in front of her mother's eyes, with all her frailty, shame and rage. It might be thought that the source of the relevance of these two circumstances is Patricia since they are both about Patricia. But there were many other facts about Patricia that we put aside. We put aside for instance that she was picked up by her mother from the coach's office, that she waited for her to get there, that she said, "I'm fine" as she was talking to her mom on the phone and so on. We picked instead, facts that help us see Patricia *qua* human being, a human being living a particular life including certain characteristically human needs and interests: she needed her feelings to be attended to, she needed to tell her story to someone who was able to hear it just the way it was for her, she needed to feel that someone would support her throughout the worst times of her struggle, etc. After just having been treated as if she were "nothing", she needed to feel, more than ever, its denial: that there is no limit to how much she matters. What she needed was not, thus and such to be done, or thus and such to be said. It turns out then that the circumstances we have taken seriously are the ones that call for a kind of treatment, not for bodily movements or omissions that are specifiable in isolation from that kind of treatment. Further, we are already beginning to bring into view how best to approach Patricia –or, on the view under discussion, ' 'what ought to be done' '– as we pick out the circumstances since the circumstances concern her needs. Hence, how best to approach Patricia is not something we deploy after we bring the circumstances into view. Our

view of circumstances is morally inflected.

But then, had we completed the suggested picture, that is, considering the objectionableness of Joyce's pause by adding the circumstances under which it is performed (the part we just completed crudely), and by adding the view with which it is performed (the part we have not yet added), what we would end up with would not simply be *that* Joyce's pause is morally objectionable. Rather, we would end up with an act of emotional neglect, an act of chosen inattentiveness, an act of turning one's back to the value of another. In other words, Joyce's pause would show up in such a way as to highlight *what* is wrong with it. Its moral objectionableness would have already been *specified* due to belonging to a certain way of treating another human being.

Trying to pin down the view with which Joyce's pause is performed takes us to this very conclusion, too. To be more precise, once we pin down the view with which Joyce's pause is performed, we realize that it is a kind of view that can guide a certain way of treating Patricia, a view that gets expressed in much of Joyce's past (and possibly future) non-accidental bodily movements and omissions such as giving Patricia a fake embrace, or asking, "Mrs. Nagel says there was an incident?". Assume that to distinguish Joyce's pause from a pause that is performed, say, out of concern for her daughter, we characterize the view with which she has performed her pause very roughly as follows: she wanted to avoid an emotional exchange and she believed that uttering 'rape' would be to offer an emotional exchange. But this view does not help us distinguish Joyce's pause from a pause that does not offer an emotional exchange to wait for Patricia to be the one to initiate an emotional exchange when she feels ready.

We need to add more, specifically, more about why Joyce wants to avoid an emotional exchange. Here we realize that we need even a longer narrative, one that goes beyond a description of an exchange between Joyce and Patricia, one that gives us a better idea about her ongoing relationship with Patricia against the backdrop of her life. According to one such narrative, it might be that she has always thought that her daughter is a burden, a mistake she has made in the past, and that she is often frustrated by her daughter's emotional needs because she thinks that they are getting in the way of emotional needs of her own that she is trying to meet with her husband and with their mutual acquaintances. But her *previous* view of her daughter and her daughter's place in her life might not be the view with which Joyce has performed the pause in question. Patricia's rape might have shaken Joyce, for the first time, out of her ongoing emotional neglect. She might have, for the first time, realized that Patricia is not a burden or some mistake she has made in the past but a human being who has been longing for her full presence. Her pause might be due to the speechlessness that strikes one in such realizations. So let us modify the above characterization as follows: she was preoccupied with thinking how Patricia's rape is going to affect her and her husband's relations with the parents of Patricia's rapist; she saw Patricia as a burden, getting in her way again; she thought that Patricia is a very needy teenager, she felt stuck with her 'mother role' since she saw Patricia as a mistake she has made in the past, a mistake she wants to leave behind but cannot due to the fear of being judged as a 'bad mother' by those around her. When the word 'rape' occurred to her, she paused, thinking that in that context to use the word 'rape' would be to alter their familiar unemotional

communication, and to alter their usual ways in this way would be to offer an emotional exchange, to open a door to her daughter, a door she is determined not to open to a 'burden'.

Once again, let us retrace our steps to see how we have been trying to pin down the view with which Joyce's pause was performed. We are focusing on what was going on in Joyce's mind, including certain thoughts, emotional feelings, construals and the like. My inclusion of emotional feelings to what is going on in Joyce's mind might strike my reader as perturbing. After all, on one common scientific view of emotional feelings, emotional feelings are characterized by various physiological phenomena such as facial expressions, musculoskeletal changes (such as flinching), expressive vocal changes and autonomic nervous system changes (such as adrenaline release and change of heart rate). This is yet another point where I ask the patience of my reader. I will argue that emotional feelings require cognitive states in the last chapter as I discuss their indispensable place in understanding human beings. For the time being, I will take them to be mental items without an argument not to disrupt the flow of this chapter. Let us now continue to elucidate the view with which Joyce performed her pause.

When we turn attention to the thoughts, feelings, construals we picked out as relevant to Joyce's view, we realize that there is a unity among them, that they are non-trivially related. I say 'non-trivially' since one thought can be trivially related to another merely in virtue of preceding it. The *non-trivial* relations among Joyce's thoughts, feelings, construals and the like can be brought to light only if we turn attention to *what they are about*: Patricia against the backdrop of her life, including her relationship with

Joyce. To be more specific, they are about how needy Patricia is, how she is a mistake that just cannot be gotten rid of (otherwise she would be shunned by those she is trying to meet her emotional needs with) and thus how she is a continuous burden to Joyce. Adding the view with which Joyce's pause was performed then supports, rather than undermines what I have been arguing for. Once we move towards a more satisfactory characterization of the view with which Joyce performed her pause, we realize that this is a sort of view that can guide what otherwise seem to be many disparate past and possibly future bodily movements and omissions of Joyce's. It is with this view that Joyce has given Patricia a fake embrace, and it is with this view that she has asked, "Are you not all right?" and so on.

We have seen that when we attend to the way in which we pick out the circumstances under which Joyce's pause was performed, we do not merely end up with a piece of behavior that can be captured in purely non-evaluative terms that still awaits assessment as morally forbidden or objectionable. We end up with a piece of behavior whose moral qualities are *already specified* due to partaking in certain ways of treating Patricia: her pause was an act of emotional neglect, an act of chosen inattentiveness, an act of turning one's back to the value of another. Furthermore, when we attend to the way in which we pick out the thoughts, feelings and construals that constitute the view with which Joyce has performed her pause, we realize that they have a certain unity. They constitute a view that is directed at Patricia and thereby at her life, including her relationship with Joyce. It is this view that gets expressed in Joyce's neglectful way of treating Patricia in which many different non-accidental bodily movements and

omissions partake and might continue to partake.

A detailed examination of moral trauma shows that the most serious of moral harms are harms that are initiated (and in certain cases sustained) through ways of treating a human being, not through bodily movements and omissions that are isolable from those ways of treating a human being. Any moment in a human interaction may be morally salient, its moral salience depends necessarily on to what way of treating another human being it belongs. Whether a variety of different bodily movements constitute moral behavior turns on the question whether these bodily movements compose a way of treating a human being that gets expressed in and is guided by a view that is directed at that human being against the backdrop of her life.

What lies at the core of the subject matter of ethics is therefore various views of human beings against the backdrop of their lives that get expressed in various ways of treating them. For various bodily movements and omissions to constitute human behavior, it is necessary that they are guided as they are performed. If the human behavior in question is *moral* behavior, it is so due to the guiding cognition involved in it. I have argued that this cognition is, still roughly speaking, "a view" that is directed at human beings against the backdrop of their lives.

Even when an interaction brings together for a brief time two human beings who have never met before, it is how they treat one another that captures the moral quality of their interaction rather than a series of bodily movements and omissions isolable from certain ways of treating a human being. We surely can list a series of bodily movements and omissions that exhibit a certain moral quality, but that *presupposes* that we have

already picked out the relevant manners of treatment by determining with which view of the other they are performed. Thus, the very picking out of moral behavior is not extraneous to moral assessment. Once bodily movements and omissions are picked out as constituting moral behavior, they are picked out *with* their moral qualities (e.g. they may be humiliating, inattentive, kind, supportive, acknowledging, dignifying, respectful etc.). Thus, the prevailing 'situation view' according to which we are not engaged in doing ethics or morality as we pick out moral behavior is mistaken. To *describe* moral behavior, we necessarily turn attention to the involved guiding view of a human being, and that view demands that we see different bodily movements and omissions as belonging to various ways of treating human beings, and thereby as sharing various moral qualities. What we know so far about this "view" that plays the guiding role and that gets expressed in moral behavior is (i) that it is directed at particular human beings against the backdrop of their lives (ii) that it involves a nest of inter-related judgments, emotional feelings, and construals about the particular human being and her life. I will eventually argue that our purported understandings of one another is precisely that "view". But first, let us see if "understanding" is well suited for this task.

CH. III. UNDERSTANDING[58]

Many have suggested that understanding is a worthier goal for theoretical reflection than is propositional knowledge.[59] Some have even claimed that unlike knowledge, understanding is always intrinsically valuable.[60] In this chapter, I aim only to show that there is a basic value in understanding and that when knowledge conduces to understanding, it gets this basic value extrinsically from understanding. After distinguishing two kinds of understanding, namely, teleological and non-teleological understanding, I will conclude that teleological understanding has more of this basic value than does non-teleological understanding.

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[58] The first 24 pages of this chapter (83-104) are drawn, with very few revisions, from my "How Understanding Makes Knowledge Valuable" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 40 (4) (2010), 591-609.

[59] About two decades ago some prominent historians began to suggest that the Greek discussion of 'episteme' was in fact not a discussion of what we call 'knowledge' but of what we call 'understanding,' hence that contemporary epistemology was not a faithful continuation of the theoretical inquiry into *episteme* found in Plato and Aristotle. These historians held that we uncover an independently interesting and unjustly ignored theoretical inquiry when we attain a proper understanding of the focus of these Ancient inquiries. See Julius M. E. Moravcsik, "Understanding and Knowledge in Plato's Philosophy," *Neue Hefte Für Philosophie* 15/16, (1979), 53-69.; Myles F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge," in E. Berti ed., *Aristotle on Science: The "Posterior Analytics"* (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1981); Hugh H. Benson, *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For discussions pertinent to the value of knowledge see A Haddock, A. Millar & D. H. Pritchard eds., *Epistemic Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Part One; Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics*, Chapter 8; Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and "Pointless Truth," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 32 (2008), 199-212.; Wayne Riggs, "Reliability and the Value of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4 (1) (2002), 79-96, and "Beyond Truth & Falsehood: The *Real* Value of Knowing that p," *Philosophical Studies* 107 (1) (2002), 87-108.; Robert C. Roberts, and Jay W. Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ch. 6; Linda Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," in Matthias Steup ed., *Knowledge, Truth and Obligation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

[60] See for instance Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*; Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics,* Ch.8.

III.(i) The Value of Knowledge

Let me first turn to the most convincing arguments against the intrinsic value of knowledge. There are two ways in which 'believing what is true is intrinsically valuable' can be conceived. First, one might put the emphasis on 'believing' and claim that *believing* what is true is intrinsically valuable. That is, it is always intrinsically valuable to assent to true propositions. Some have observed that there are instances of knowledge that lack epistemic value and that these instances can gain extrinsic epistemic value only if they serve some important epistemic or practical pursuit.[61] To borrow Robert Roberts and Jay Wood's example, it is hard to see for instance why knowing that the third letter in the 41,365[th] listing in the 1977 Wichita telephone directory is a "d" should have any epistemic value whatsoever.[62] Surely, this piece of knowledge might gain some epistemic value if it is related to some important epistemic or practical goal. But then its value is extrinsic, not intrinsic. If we are told that the person possessing this piece of knowledge is getting paid to find the typos in this telephone directory since it will be updated and the "d" is in fact a typo, then we can bring into view the extrinsic value of this instance of knowledge. But in the absence of some such story, the person in question cannot be credited with a piece of knowledge that has intrinsic value. Along the same lines, Talbot Brewer emphasizes that a person who keeps memorizing phone numbers out of a phone book cannot really be in the business of accumulating anything of intrinsic value.[63] There is no loss, let alone loss of intrinsic value if the number memorizer remembers only a few

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[61] Henceforth, 'knowledge' will be used to designate "propositional knowledge" unless indicated otherwise.
[62] Robert C. Roberts and Jay W. Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 157.
[63] Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics,* Ch.8.

of the numbers the next day. Robert Roberts' and Jay Wood's diagnosis of someone who loves to assent to true propositions without any discrimination is that this person is showing a kind of intellectual pathology, not an intellectual virtue.[64]

The second way to read 'believing what is true is intrinsically valuable' is to put the emphasis on 'true'. On this conception believing what is *true* is intrinsically valuable. So what has value is not assenting to as many true propositions as possible. Rather, the contention is that it is always good that a proposition be true *if* one believes it. The problem here resembles the one above. If the proposition one believes captures a fact that it is not valuable to believe in isolation, why should whether it is true or not matter? Imagine someone who is bored at a piano concert counting how many times the note E will be repeated throughout the performance. It is hard to see why she would be going through a valuable epistemic change by changing her false belief that there were 142 repetitions of E to the true one that there were 143 of them.

If knowledge is true belief with warrant, then these ruminations seem to leave warrant as the last resource for establishing the intrinsic value of knowledge. But so long as a belief is not valuable, adding warrant to it cannot make it valuable, either. Take for instance Ernest Sosa's account of externalist warrant. Sosa points out that the reliability of the ability through which an achievement is produced alters the value of the achievement.[65] For instance a song on a CD recording of a musician might sound very impressive after having been corrected many times in the recording studio. Yet, this is not

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[64] Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 156.
[65] Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge In Perspective: Selected Essays In Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Part 4 Sec.13.

nearly as impressive an achievement as the singer's skill giving the song the quality it has

on the CD live on stage. Analogously, it might be said that one's true belief seems to have

more epistemic value if it is a result of one's "ability to distinguish reliably the true from

the false"[66]. This would be hard to resist *only if we assume* that the true belief in question

has intrinsic value. But the fact that one's belief that there were 142 repetitions of E

during a concert is produced by such a reliable skill does not alter the valuelessness of

that belief.[67]

The same problem emerges when we turn attention to internalist justification. It

seems that the presence of an internal justification often does add value to the cognitive

relation between the epistemic agent and the proposition. Someone who merely believes

that one loses color perception as one goes deeper underwater bears an epistemically

poorer relation to this proposition compared to an experienced scuba diver who believes

the same proposition with internal justification. Without a doubt, taking a proposition to

be true suffices to hold a belief but this does not mean that there are no criteria that can

render certain ways of holding a belief better than others. For instance in *Meno* Socrates

says that when one has knowledge, one will not easily be talked out of one's true belief –

one's true belief will be 'tied down' (97e1- 98a2). Robert Roberts and Jay Wood make use

of John Locke's 'strength of confidence' ("subject's dispositional probability estimate

concerning the truth of a proposition") and Alvin Plantinga's 'depth of ingression' ("the

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[66] Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge In Perspective: Selected Essays In Epistemology*, 244.

[67] Following Zagzebski, Kvanvig points out that the fact that a true belief is produced by someone or some faculty or some process that is reliable does not add to the value that true belief already has. As Kvanvig claims, seeing such external reliability as adding any epistemic value would be similar to finding a piece of beautiful furniture aesthetically more valuable upon finding out that it has been produced by a factory that produces beautiful furniture most of the time. Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 49-50. This is a serious difficulty for most externalist accounts.

degree to which giving up the belief would cause reverberations in the subject's noetic structure") criteria in their discussion of "holding" a belief.[68] When internal justification creates this kind of alteration in the way a belief is held, it does seem to affect the epistemic value of the true belief. But once again, if believing the true proposition that there were 142 repetitions of E during a concert does not matter when taken in isolation, why should for instance having a stronger confidence in this belief matter?

Careful reflection leads one to join Roberts, Wood and Brewer in dropping the commonly held assumption that true belief has intrinsic value and that adding warrant to true beliefs that lack intrinsic value cannot turn them into beliefs with epistemic worth. But this does not mean that knowledge is not as important as we thought it was. It only means that we need to see more of its relation to other epistemic or practical pursuits to apprehend various kinds of value it can extrinsically possess. Let us then focus on understanding with this goal in view.

III. (ii) Structure among Objects of Understanding

The variety of things that are capable of being understood is head-spinning: One might come to understand any person one happens to meet, a past conversation that one keeps revisiting, a sonata one hears, a proof one sees in a book, a computer one is using, why group behavior is different from individual behavior, how currents move, that reading a certain story is exactly what one's friend needs right now, etc.

The sorts of things we ordinarily take ourselves to be understanding – at least to some extent – vary from facts, like *that* he was the only one to survive in this accident, or

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[68] Robert C. Roberts and Jay W. Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 208.

that a conditional is true when its consequence is true, to certain whys and hows, e.g. *why* certain things are the way they are, or *how* certain things are related.[69] We also talk about understanding particulars, such as artworks, persons, other life forms, activities, relationships, theories, machines, etc. I hope to unearth an underlying structure of objects of understanding by providing an explanation of this variety.

In depicting what sorts of objects admit of understanding, I have not restricted myself just to facts. This might seem disruptive for those whose initial reaction might be that a particular such as a system, an activity, a theory, a poem, or a person admits of understanding *only because* facts about the particular admit of understanding. On this approach, when I utter "I understand this old woman here," I mean "I understand all the facts about this old woman here." This approach rests on two assumptions that need to be scrutinized. The first is that understanding a fact *as such* is possible and the second is that understanding facts about particulars belonging to certain kinds can be explained *without employing the notion of understanding those particulars*. I will come back to the first of these assumptions, which has received serious challenge. Even if the first assumption is granted however, the thought that understanding a particular is nothing other than understanding all the facts about it is still a flawed one.

Take for instance Piotr Anderszewski`s performance of Chopin Ballade No.4 (op.47) at a concert hall on a specific date. It would be fair to assume on this view that every additional fact I understand about this performance contributes to my

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[69] Even though I shall refer to this category by 'hows and whys', in fact it also involves objects such as *when* to exit pauses in playing a certain sonata or *to whom* to talk to when one needs advice or to which diving style resembles life more or *to what* one owes her unique voice or *where* a certain event might have taken place or *whether* this machine works etc.

understanding of the performance. But obviously, understanding some of the facts, such as the fact that Anderszewski sat exactly sixteen inches away from the piano or the fact that he wore a tuxedo of a certain size, is irrelevant to understanding this performance. By contrast, a music critic might cite the fact that silences were not breaks between musical sentences, but were themselves musical expressions, in an effort to convey to a novice a deeper understanding of Anderszewski's performance. Similarly, if someone were to tell us that they understood Freud's theory better now that they understand the fact that the written sentences expressing his theory can be arranged into a large square, we would take it as a joke. On the other hand, a psychotherapist who understands Freud's theory might try to convey this understanding by citing, for example, the fact that depending on the circumstances, parapraxes and dreams provide the therapist with insight into the unconscious of the patient. Evidently, understanding a particular does not consist in understanding all facts about it but only the "right" ones.

When pressed to explicate what it is that makes certain facts about the particular the right ones for achieving understanding, one must turn to the particular itself. In more ample terms, it is Piotr Anderszewski`s performance of Chopin Ballade No.4 op.47 at a concert hall on a specific date itself that determines which of the hows and whys must be understood for the performance to be understood. While how he wiped his hands during the performance falls outside the bounds of his performance, how he entered the silences falls within these bounds. Each salient why or how determines facts salient to understanding the particular. Since how he entered silences is salient, whatever helps

explain how he entered silences will be salient.[70] For instance, if one understands the fact

that he did not enter into such silences because the notes instructed him to do so but

because their meaning reached out to him to be conveyed, this will contribute to one's

understanding of the performance. When viewed this way, objects of understanding cease

to look messy. Instead, we begin to glimpse an underlying structure among the objects of

understanding.

III. (iii) Understanding as categorically different from knowledge

At this point I might be reminded that even though orthodox contemporary

epistemology is primarily interested in propositional knowledge, it does not totally

neglect categories such as knowing how and object knowledge (i.e. knowledge by

acquaintance). The motivation behind bringing forward this reminder would be to draw

one's attention to an analogous variety of types of knowledge, so as to create a suspicion

as to whether understanding really is different in kind. It is. The proposal at hand is this:

(i) Understanding a fact is knowing the proposition that captures the fact in question;

(ii) understanding the whys and hows are simply knowing the whys and hows; and

(iii) understanding a particular is knowing that particular by acquaintance. Let us

consider these suggestions respectively.

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[70] Whether all the salient hows and whys can be captured by facts is worth investigating, however I will not undertake that task here.

If something is a fact then we can know it by knowing the proposition that captures it.[71] However whether that fact also admits of understanding is an open question. I can know the fact that I just scratched my hand, but what does it mean to understand the fact that I just scratched my hand? The *sentence* "I just scratched my hand" surely does admit of understanding; you understood that sentence as soon as you read it by understanding what it expresses.

You might have also come to believe the proposition that I just scratched my hand. Further, in coming to believe it, you must have made use of some understanding, say, understanding of human action. Indeed, certain things that this fact is about are indeed proper objects of understanding: One can understand how a human hand works, what it is to move intentionally, etc. Yet, *this fact as such* does not seem to be the sort of thing that can be understood. It can however become part of something that admits of understanding, namely, a coherent body of facts. If it is seen as part of, for instance, a story about a certain sickness of mine, then it can be understood as part of an important period in my life. The same is true for the proposition that captures this fact. It is an open question whether a single proposition can be a proper object of understanding when taken in isolation. This can be likened to musical phrases of a sonata. A minimal musical understanding is required to recognize a musical phrase as a musical phrase but a musical phrase of a certain sonata is not an apt object of understanding as such. It can only be understood within the context of something understandable such as the sonata it partly constitutes.

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[71] Some hold that a fact is a true proposition. I leave it up to my reader to pick a notion of fact since it has no bearing on the points of this essay.

While most propositions are to be understood within coherent bodies, the same is not true for knowing propositions.[72] Understanding a proposition within a coherent body of propositions differs significantly from what coherentists take warrant to be. In the case of understanding a proposition, the coherence is to be found within a body of propositions to which the proposition in question belongs. This is why a proposition (if it belongs to some such body or bodies) cannot be understood alone. The more one grasps the coherence, the more one understands the propositions and their place in this coherent body. Any departure from coherence is an impediment for understanding. By contrast, the coherence requirement of warrant and thereby of knowledge is not about grasping the coherence of a whole.[73] What is known is not a body of propositions either. What is known is just the proposition in question and all one needs to do to know it is to ensure that this new belief coheres with *one's held beliefs*.[74]

Even if one insists that a proposition can *always* be understood *as such* by, for instance, conceptualizing understanding as "grasping" or "cognizing", there would still be

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[72] Catherine Elgin generalizes this point and argues that a proposition is never an apt object of understanding; it is always to be understood within a comprehensive body of propositions. I am not sure if this point can be generalized. It seems to me that there are certain cases where it is harder to deny that the proposition in question does not admit of understanding as such; e.g. Ida is a sensitive person. I suspect that the difference in a case like this is that the proposition in question is itself more like a summary of a coherent body of propositions. Catherine Elgin, "Understanding and the Facts," *Philosophical Studies* 132 (2007), 33-42.

[73] See for example, Laurence, BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), and *Theory of Knowledge* (Boulder: Routledge, 1990; 2nd edn 2000); Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," in Ernest LePore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[74] In defining understanding a fact in terms of knowing a fact, there is another difficulty as well; we seem to be capable of understanding certain facts without having propositional knowledge of them. An adept rider might plausibly not have noticed that a bike is steered primarily by leaning rather than by turning the handlebars. In other words, the rider can understand this fact without knowing or even believing the proposition that captures it. The strength of this point turns on the question just how weak the criteria for having a concept or propositionalizing a fact can be. Since I cannot pursue that discussion here, I am relying on intuitive grounds here.

a gap that remains between knowing that thus and such is the case and understanding it. Indeed, one needs to understand the proposition that Ida is a sensitive person to some extent to know that she is a sensitive person. But while two people can know that Ida is a sensitive person, one can understand that Ida is a sensitive person more than the other. This is a thread that runs between other kinds of knowledge and understanding as well.[75]

Consider now the difference between "understanding why" and "knowing why". One can easily come to know why one's friend is very upset by knowing the proposition that she was insulted. Imagine being told "I was insulted". Again, a minimal understanding is required if one is to come to know this. One needs to see the relationship between being insulted and getting upset for instance. So as one relates the utterance of her friend to her feeling upset, one is in the midst of understanding why she is upset. This is precisely the point. Though one has achieved knowledge, one is in the midst on understanding since her understanding can be, as Roberts and Wood emphasize, deeper, more insightful and more penetrating. Had one had a similar experience of insult herself, for instance, one would understand more deeply why her friend is so upset as a result of an insult.

The analogue of this discrepancy can be traced all the way to the discrepancy between knowing something and understanding it. While we who teach philosophy might well have known hundreds of students in classrooms, such knowledge marks only the beginning of understanding them. This discloses the place of understanding in knowledge by acquaintance. One needs to have a minimal understanding of the person, to count as

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[75] I thank an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to the fact that knowledge always requires a minimal understanding.

having been acquainted with her to begin with. One needs to recognize the person as a person for example. This is a minimal understanding of her *qua* person. Nonetheless it is still only a tincture of understanding. But again, this minimal understanding can grow in many ways. Among the hundreds of students we have known, we might have had the chance to have a deep understanding of only a few of them.

III. (iv) Irreducibility of Understanding

We have seen earlier that there is a structure among objects of understanding. We noted that ultimate objects of understanding are certain kinds of particulars and that certain hows and whys are to be understood in reference to these particulars and finally, that certain propositions are to be understood in reference to these hows and whys. I now turn to the irreducibility of understanding and to the nature of its ultimate objects.

One reductive route one might wish to take is to construe understanding as some constant way of cognitively approaching an object. Most of the candidates for this task turn out to be bad candidates since they turn out to be unnecessary for understanding. Consider "imagining": it might be proposed that understanding something always involves imagining it. However, the proposal at hand will not work for every case. One need not imagine anything to understand what makes a number irrational. Which mode(s) of cognition is required to understand an object depends on what the object in question is. Understanding what makes a number irrational does not require imagination, but understanding what kind of a life one would be living had one become more attentive to others does. Understanding a mathematical theory –assuming, for the time being, that it

involves cognition– does not require feeling, whereas understanding a human being does. This is not to say that understanding requires only one mode of cognition depending on its object. It may, and often does, involve many different modes of cognition, again, depending on the object that is to be understood. Understanding a story, for example, consists partly in having some propositional knowledge, various construals and various emotional feelings. Thus, it is futile to look for one mode of cognition or a combination of modes of cognition that is common to all cases of all understanding.

There are of course more plausible candidates to capture the commonality across all cases of understanding. One proposal might be that understanding involves appreciating that which is understood. Also, following Brewer's insightful suggestion, one might think that understanding involves manifesting certain intellectual and practical virtues (depending on the object of understanding) in one's activities involving what one understands.[76]

It is plausible to see understanding as the appreciation or as involving the appreciation of what is understood. One would not believe someone who claims that she understands a sonata but does not appreciate it *qua* sonata at all. However, appreciating a sonata *qua* sonata cannot be explained without making any reference to understanding. Obviously, the main reason why one would lack such appreciation is precisely due to being far from *understanding* it. One needs to, for instance, be gripped by the story the sonata is telling. Not being able to hear the story in the sonata signals lack of understanding and explains why one cannot appreciate it. The appreciation that we expect

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[76] Talbot Brewer , *The Retrieval of Ethics,* Ch.8.

from a person who claims to have some understanding of the sonata depends upon the very presence of that understanding.

Nor may understanding a particular be reduced to manifesting intellectual or practical virtues in activities involving that particular. Although this proposal of Brewer's was not intended as a reductive account of understanding, it is helpful to investigate whether understanding can be reduced to it. It is helpful in particular to see why it cannot be used in a reductive account of understanding. It is not that some cases of understanding would escape this reduction. Rather, it is because " manifesting intellectual or practical virtues in activities involving what is understood" requires understanding in its own account. On this route, one would get desperately stuck. For when one tries to give an account of why the virtues manifested by a person with understanding are intellectual virtues (e.g. not being inappropriately dismissive in understanding a theory), one is pressed to say something like, "It is an intellectual virtue so long as and because it advances one's *understanding* of the theory".

Another reductive route to an account of understanding might be sought by shifting one's gaze from what kind of a relation understanding might be, to what kinds of objects admit of understanding. The focus now is some commonality among all *objects* of understanding. The hope, on this approach, is that one might succeed in picking out what makes for understanding by seeing what makes an object a possible object of understanding. And again, this will open a reductive route to the understanding of understanding only if a commonality that can itself be characterized without reference to understanding is revealed.

This method can easily mislead, unless one casts one's net broadly enough and does not overlook the variety of proper objects of understanding. Though Moravscik does not explicitly endorse a reductive agenda, his brief list of the possible objects of understanding does suggest the contours of such an approach. He writes, "…only a very select group of entities can function as proper objects. We understand systems, languages, mathematics, proofs; …What we understand are *systems of various sorts…*"[77] He continues by explaining that only systems have defining rules and this is the essential feature of systems that makes them apt objects of understanding. From this observation, he concludes that understanding is internalizing defining rules.

The problem that immediately strikes one about a reductive proposal along these lines is that the category of 'system' falls short of being a broad enough net to capture all objects of understanding. We are perfectly capable of understanding objects other than systems: paintings, sonatas, persons, stories, concepts, questions, emotions, etc. Yet, if it is true that systems are also apt objects of understanding, one might wonder whether it is possible to find a feature that all these objects have *in common with* systems. Certainly they do not all seem to have defining rules.

Burnyeat states that understanding is related to *intelligible* systems of elements.[78] The appeal to system here can be seen as too restrictive given that paintings are not systems, but we can revise the suggestion and consider only 'being intelligible'. That is, the new reductive proposal might be that understanding is a relation that takes all and only intelligibles as objects. To complete the reductive proposal, one needs to add also

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[77] Julius M. E. Moravcsik, "Understanding and Knowledge in Plato's Philosophy," 55-56.
[78] Myles Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge," 134.

that being intelligible is conceptually independent of understanding. But the claim that

intelligibility is conceptually independent of understanding is obviously not true; what

else can the intelligibility of an object be other than its being an apt object of

understanding?

Another attempt might be to invoke 'coherence' rather than 'intelligibility'.[79] To

draw attention to this coherence aspect of the objects of understanding Kvanvig writes,

> What is distinctive about understanding…is internal to cognition. It is internal seeing or appreciating of explanatory and other coherence-inducing relationships in a body of information that is crucial for understanding.[80]

Kvanvig takes 'coherence' to be a relation that holds among propositions. I do not wish to

restrict myself to a conception of coherence that holds only among propositions for it is

questionable whether all objects of understanding can be captured by facts. If for

instance, a sonata cannot be captured by a set of salient facts, it is safer to hold that its

coherence is among its notes or its musical phrases rather than among salient facts about

it. What the coherence will be among depends on what is going to be understood. A

theory's coherence will be among propositions, a person's coherence will be among her

character traits, a machine's coherence will be among its parts, a dance performance's

coherence will be among its phrases, etc. If it can be shown that what we might call

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[79] The use of 'coherence' might not be the best choice here, 'unity' or the Aristotelian notion '*eidos*' might be better proposals. I am employing 'coherence' mainly because its use is commonplace in the literature on understanding.
[80] Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 198.

'coherence bearers' such as character traits and dance phrases can be captured by facts, I am equally content with using Kvanvig's narrower conception of 'coherence'.

Now, it seems true that all the apt objects of understanding possess coherence or they can all be said to be coherent unities of some sort: Theories are coherent (or they can be understood to the extent they are coherent), stories exemplify some kind of coherence and so do paintings, certain machines, persons etc. Nonetheless, coherence cannot be employed for the reduction project for a different reason -a reason we have seen before. It requires understanding in its own account.

The difficulty begins to emerge once we see the dependence of the coherence of an object on the kind it belongs to. The coherence of a theory depends on what a theory is supposed to look like whereas the coherence of a sonata depends on what a sonata is supposed to be like. This is why just taking the standards that help establish the coherence of a theory to be the same as standards that help establish the coherence of a dance performance is not a viable option. The more one specifies what each sort of coherence consists in, the more one gets thrown off by the dissimilarities among various kinds of coherences. For instance the coherence of a theory might partly consist in avoiding logical contradictions – though indeed it goes way beyond that since it is not enough to avoid logical contradictions to explain a certain phenomenon. The coherence of a dance performance on the other hand crucially depends on the unity of the story or the theme on which the performance unfolds.

Yet, when one takes a step back to get a hold of that which weaves all these different kinds of coherences together, one finds herself needing the help of the notion of

understanding. Coherence seems to gesture towards something more than simple relatedness. Consider the following facts that might be seen as related:

She slammed the door as she left the room. The room was in a house that overlooks the sea. The sea had a tracing of moonlight.

These facts hardly carve out the reality in a way that manifests coherence. To spell out when and how they carve out a piece of reality that can be seen as coherent, one is pressed to refer back to understanding. Our primary reason to see certain facts as incoherent *even if they are related with relations that are not trivial*, is not to be able to understand them as an intelligible whole despite the existence of various relations among them. Coherence goes beyond being non-trivially related. Facts (or other 'coherence bearers' –if there are such bearers that cannot be captured by facts) compose a coherent whole only when what they compose admits of *understanding*. This means that the last step of the reductive route cannot be taken. Coherence cannot be explained without referring back to understanding itself.

III. (v) Towards a non-reductive account of understanding: Teleological and Non-Teleological Understanding

If one leaves the reductive ambition aside, the coherence proposal can lend itself to an illuminating account of understanding. We have just seen that what is involved in understanding is not merely grasping the relations among a bunch of facts (a life), propositions (a story), phrases (a dance performance), colors (a painting), notes (a sonata), or the like. These units can be related in many different ways without bringing

about a coherent body that waits to be understood. What is special about the way in which these units come together when they do compose an object of understanding is that they permit the object to satisfy the criteria that make it a certain kind of thing. When phrases do compose a dance performance, they are related in such a way that they satisfy the criteria for being a dance performance. When a group of words do form a sentence, the words are related so as to satisfy the criteria for being a sentence. Accordingly, understanding is the criteria-grasping epistemic pursuit.

When we reflect on how one understands things such as poems, musical pieces, performances, artifacts and persons on the one hand, and how one understands things such as the solar system, currents or physical pain on the other, we observe an important difference. To understand whether a bunch of sounds is a musical performance, and if it is, to understand it as a musical performance, one needs to have some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good musical performance. As I will explain more in detail in the next chapter, this is not a mere epistemic requirement we face to understand a particular musical performance. We need to have some dim conception of a perfectly good musical performance since a pianist's striking the keys *itself* needs to have some goodness *qua* musical performance *to be* a musical performance. Going back to Anderszewski's performance, if what Anderszewski did in striking the keys of the piano departs completely from such ideals and hence does not manifest any goodness *qua* musical performance, it cannot count as a musical performance to begin with.[81] So the

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[81] It is not only musical performances that are supposed to approximate being perfectly good *qua* their kind to be what they are. The coming together of two persons is supposed to approximate being perfectly good *qua* friendship to be a friendship at all, a string of sentences expressing philosophical thoughts must approximate being perfectly good *qua* philosophical theory to be a philosophical theory at all, and so on.

very attempt to make sense of this noise is simultaneously the attempt to bring into view the ideals that constitute the *telos* of musical performance, namely, the ideals that constitute a perfectly good musical performance. To put it differently, understanding such teleological particulars involves grasping *evaluative criteria*.

Understanding the *telos* of a musical performance, for example, involves seeing the aptness of, say, *perfecting one's expressive power* as one of the ideals of musical performance. To see this, one need not have a perfect understanding of what perfecting one's expressive power might consist in. But one does need a dim conception of it. Then, one might be led to investigate further what perfecting one's expressive power consists in. The more one grasps the contours of such ideals that constitute the *telos* of a musical performance, the more one understands and appreciates how and to what extent the particular musical performance before her manifests its *telos*.[82] This is why a music critic who is in the midst of understanding Anderszewski's performance would inevitably use a value-laden language in describing the performance to a novice. She would perhaps say,

> You hear a man who knew the piano deeply and almost wallowed in its sensual
> possibilities. Anderszewski played with all the qualities he needed: boldness,

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Examples can be multiplied. Stories, knives, cars, mosques, dance performances, paintings, conversations and persons all seem to be particulars that are supposed to have some goodness *qua* their kind to be the kind of particulars they are. I follow Judith Jarvis Thomson in drawing the boundaries of these 'teleological' entities. See Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Goodness and Advice* (Princeton University Press, 2001). For a more restrictive conception of this category see Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[82] This is not to imply that one somehow first gets a grip on the ideals constituting the *telos* of a musical performance and then understands a particular performance. After all, one cannot understand the ideals of a musical performance without having begun understanding any particular performances. A better description seems to be that one can understand a particular musical performance only if one has some understanding of the ideals that constitute its *telos*, and, one advances this understanding of the *telos* by understanding particular musical performances. The two are interdependent in experience.

tenderness, grace. His dynamics were apt, and his phrasing was wise. The startling clarity of the sound was imbued with orchestral color - he called on strings, winds and percussion, and they were ubiquitously present as exquisitely characterized voices in the icy perfection of his keyboard technique. Anderszewski sat quietly and listened intensely, but his body rocked almost imperceptibly with rhythm, and his rhythmic patterns were so sharply defined and rigorously applied that an occasional alteration - a minute rubato - was tellingly dramatic. His expressive flexibility, exceptional left-hand mobility and eloquence were combined with a grasp of every musical detail. His absorption into the introspective world of the composer was judged to perfection. He often challenged my own notions of how this music should go, but every provocation arose from emotional currents welling up from fissured, subterranean depths. This was a feat of pianism and a feat of musicianship.[83]

By contrast, the criteria whose satisfaction brings about the coherence of a non-teleological particular are non-evaluative. In figuring out how to go about understanding currents, it does not make sense to try to bring into view what a perfectly good current is. This is because a current, unlike a musical performance, is not the sort of thing that has to manifest some goodness *qua* its kind to be what it is. Those things that need to come together to compose the coherence of a current come together in accordance with *non-evaluative criteria*. Thus, this sort of understanding involves grasping things like what it is to move like a current or what causes a current, not, for instance, what it is to be perfectly expressive *qua* current. Let me call this sort of understanding 'non-teleological understanding'.

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[83] This is a collage composed of some of Anderszewski's reviews of his recital at the Carnegie Hall on the 24th Feb. 2007: Bernard Holland, "Exploring Beethoven's Talent for Turning Straw Into Gold," *The New York Times*, Tuesday 27 Feb. 2007; Jay Nordlinger "Poetry From the Polish Pianist," *The New York Sun*, Monday 26 Feb. 2007.

III. (vi) How understanding makes knowledge valuable

The distinction between teleological understanding and non-teleological understanding is quite helpful in thinking about the different sorts of value understanding can have. Thus it is helpful in thinking about different ways in which understanding can make knowledge valuable. When we turn our attention to teleological understanding, we immediately find value due to the special particulars that teleological understanding can be directed at. Any theory we set out to understand must manifest some goodness *qua* its kind to be a theory, any poem we set out to understand must manifest some goodness *qua* its kind and so on. Hence, understanding such teleological particulars involves both understanding what it is for them to be perfectly good *qua* their kind, and also understanding their manner and degree of approximating being perfectly good *qua* their kind. In other words, teleological understanding involves appreciating the essential intrinsic value of its object. Consequently, it is tempting to say that this kind of understanding is always intrinsically valuable in this sense.

This suggests a way in which understanding can make knowledge valuable. If one's knowledge conduces to her teleological understanding, it possesses an extrinsic value that it would otherwise lack. If one's knowledge of a mathematical truth, for example, helps one get a better grip on the value of a mathematical theory *qua* mathematical theory, then one's knowledge gains a kind of extrinsic epistemic value it lacked before. It becomes valuable since it helps one appreciate the intrinsic value of a mathematical theory in light of appreciating (to some extent) the ideals that constitute a perfectly good mathematical theory.

Excelling in placing the mathematical truth in its proper place by deepening one's understanding of the theory provides one with growing internal justification for her assent to the mathematical truth. In fact, it is highly questionable whether a true belief can ever be part of teleological understanding unless it is internally justified to some extent. Once teleological understanding begins, internal justification of all the related true beliefs that form part of one's understanding begins. If a true belief is not yet internally justified, it does not yet enter into one's understanding of the salient web of facts.

Some argue that understanding can involve false beliefs. At least with regard to teleological understanding, this does not seem right. It is obviously true that a person who understands, say, another person to some extent can have false beliefs about her. But this is not the proposed claim. Rather, it is that a false belief can be, to borrow Riggs' words, "included in" or "implicated by" one's proper understanding of another person. Riggs for example tells us that he believes that his wife had a traumatic boating accident when she was three that left her with great fear of traveling on water and that the accident had a significant impact on her character. He claims that if this belief of his turns out to be false, because, say, as a matter of fact, she fell off a pier into the ocean, his understanding of his wife would remain the same since her character would still carry the same traces.[84] Riggs uses this example to show that one's understanding can involve false beliefs. I do not think this is the right conclusion to draw however.

The reason is that it is not the ocean event with all its details that enters into his understanding of his wife. What enters into his understanding instead seems to be that

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[84] Wayne Riggs, "Understanding, Knowledge, and the *Meno* Requirement," in A Haddock, A. Millar & D. H. Pritchard, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 335-336.

there was some traumatic ocean accident. The traumatic aspect of it, one might say, has to do with its unexpectedness and a period of feeling helpless in water. *These* are the aspects of the accident that are required by understanding his wife since these are the ones that have a bearing on how and to what extent she approximates her *telos qua* person. I think it is clear that one's experience of an unexpected ocean accident with the feeling of helplessness attached to it will have a significant bearing on how she is doing in aspiring to her *telos*. It might have a bearing on, for instance, how or to what extent she approximates being courageous -an ideal that partly constitutes being perfectly good *qua* person. Consequently, so long as she really did suffer an accident and really did experience a period of feeling helpless, it is hard to see why other details should enter Riggs' understanding. The salient fact here is not that his wife had a boating accident. Instead it is something like "she found herself in the ocean unexpectedly and felt helpless for some time, and this made the event a traumatic one for her". If his belief that the event was traumatic for her or if his belief that captured the kind of trauma it was turned out to be false, he should conclude that he has been *mis*understanding his wife to some extent. Upon reflection, false beliefs cannot be constituents of understanding.

It might be pointed out that the conception of intrinsic value I have been portraying is mute on the value that non-teleological understanding can have. Clearly, understanding an episode of physical pain, for instance, is not valuable because it involves seeing its kind-relative value in light of appreciating to some extent what it is for pain to be perfectly good *qua* pain. One way to address this worry is to draw attention to the fact that non-teleological understanding shows up as valuable when we see its relation

to teleological understanding. One sense in which an episode of physical pain can be understood is to understand what it is to suffer from it and thereby miss out on *a life* that would otherwise have been better. This sort of understanding of pain would seem to derive its value from its role in understanding the life of the person suffering pain, and how it falls short of being a perfectly good human life *qua* human life. Likewise, understanding currents in an ocean can get extrinsic value from understanding the impact of currents on the lives of underwater creatures, or perhaps from understanding it as part of the setting in which a human life unfolds.

Perhaps there is some ground to doubt the idea that teleological understanding has intrinsic value due to involving the appreciation of the intrinsic value of its object. What does not call for a similar doubt however is that an episode or a stretch of understanding, regardless of whether it is directed at a teleological particular, *itself* has a *telos*. Unifying a series of beliefs would not count as a stretch of understanding unless it manifested a minimal goodness *qua* understanding. If it does not answer to the ideals that constitute being perfectly good understanding at all, for example, if it manifests no depth, no penetration, no insight and the like, it cannot be a stretch of understanding. This sort of intrinsic value then is embedded in every understanding whether it is directed at a teleological particular or a non-teleological one. Propositional knowledge, by contrast, does not essentially have a *telos*. There is nothing that would be aptly called "being perfect knowledge" that a piece of knowledge must approximate in order to be a piece of knowledge. Knowledge of a certain proposition is not construed as something that

necessarily shows up somewhere on the continuum between bad knowledge and perfectly good knowledge.

Considerations about teleological understanding reveal that its intrinsic value is twofold. Teleological understanding has some intrinsic value since it necessarily manifests some goodness *qua* understanding, and in addition, it has some intrinsic value since it necessarily involves appreciating the intrinsic value of its object. Non-teleological understanding, unlike teleological understanding, lacks the value that comes from appreciating the intrinsic value of its object since it is not directed at objects that necessarily possess some intrinsic value to be the kind of object they are.

If teleological understanding has the additional intrinsic value in virtue of involving the appreciation of the intrinsic value of its object, it is tempting to conclude that the best kind of understanding is teleological understanding. However, I think that might be a premature conclusion for us to draw. Sometimes the extrinsic value (regardless of whether it is instrumental) of something can be drastically greater than its intrinsic value.[85] For instance, the intrinsic value embedded in understanding the Pacific yew tree (*taxus brevifolia*) is not as significant as the extrinsic value it has in relation to treating certain cancers and advanced forms of Kaposi's sarcoma.[86] Nothing I have said so far illuminates why the value of the latter surpasses the former.

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[85] Often ethicists mean to refer to non-instrumental value when they make use of "intrinsic value". Yet, as some have rightly argued, there are many ways in which something can have extrinsic value and having instrumental value is only one of them. For instance, Ben Bradley points out that something can have contributory value in virtue of being part of a valuable whole, or it can have signatory value because of what it signifies. See Ben Bradley, "Extrinsic Value," *Philosophical Studies* 91 (1998), 109-126.

[86] 'Paclitaxel' is a Pacific yew tree (*taxus brevifolia*) based drug. It is used to treat patients with especially lung, ovarian, breast, or head and neck cancers and to treat advanced forms of Kaposi's sarcoma. Kaposi's sarcoma is a cancerous tumor of the connective tissue.

The same void can be felt when one considers the value difference between understanding two different teleological particulars or the difference between the same understandings but carried out by two different people living two different lives. This signals the need to import further conceptions of value in bringing to the surface the various kinds of value that understanding can have and thus can confer on knowledge.[87] One such conception that virtue ethicists would find themselves at home with is that a good human life is intrinsically valuable, and that something is valuable if it is a constituent of a good human life. Consequently, we cannot favor the conclusion that teleological understanding always has the most important value to confer on knowledge.

In light of this discussion of understanding, let us see whether we can say more about the cognition that plays the guiding role and that gets expressed in moral behavior. The conclusion we had drawn based on the ruminations on moral traumas in the second chapter was that it was by treating one another in certain ways that human beings morally traumatize one another, not through performing bodily movements and omissions that can be picked out as human behavior in isolation from those ways. As we asked what determines to which way of treating another various bodily movements and omissions belong (if they do at all), a natural candidate presented itself. I referred to this candidate as the performer's "view*"*, a view that is directed at the recipient of the treatment in question. It is this view that gets expressed as she performed the bodily movements and omissions in question. Going back to our narrative of the interaction between Patricia and

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[87] We see use of some of these conceptions in Brewer's defense of the claim that understanding is an intrinsically valuable activity in the Aristotelian sense and that it is the *telos* of theoretical reflection. Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics,* Ch.8.

Joyce, Joyce's pause not to say 'rape' belongs to Joyce's neglectful way of treating Patricia due to expressing a certain view that is directed at Patricia against the backdrop of her life, including her relationship with Joyce. It is this view that gets expressed in other bodily movements and omissions of hers, too, during their exchange. Recall Joyce's asking, "Mrs. Nagel says there was an incident last night?", giving Patricia a fake embrace, saying, "What I don't understand, is how such an outstanding athlete as you are –I mean how could Ethan, or whoever it was—", pronouncing "sweetie" like the first word of a language she was learning, pausing before saying 'rape', not giving a genuine hug that expresses that she will be there for her throughout her struggle, not saying, "It was not your fault".

We saw how Joyce's omission that constituted her pause could not have showed up as human behavior to begin with, had we not appealed to a certain view that is directed at Patricia against the backdrop of her life, including her relationship with Joyce. Joyce could have exhibited, for example, the same pause, due to breathing problems or due to going through a temporary paralysis that arose out of the shock of finding out that the other is raped. Once we do appeal to such a guiding view, we can individuate her pause as *the particular pause it is,* namely, as this particular pause of Joyce's. What makes this particular pause this particular pause of *hers* is not simply the fact that she uses her body to bring it about at a particular time. If that were the case, the only difference between this particular pause of hers and, say, another pause of hers performed to be careful about her words due to not yet knowing how Patricia needed to be spoken to right after her rape, would be the time at which they were performed. Her

real pause is different from the just-imagined alternative primarily because they are performed with different views.

Towards the end of the second chapter, we pondered what Joyce's view might be like as she performed her pause. Since the narrative was only partially helpful in this regard, we helped ourselves to various mental states. The crude picture was something like this: she was preoccupied with thinking how Patricia's rape is going to affect her and her husband's relations with the parents of Patricia's rapist; she thought that Patricia is a needy teenager; she saw Patricia as a burden, getting in her way again; she felt stuck with her 'mother role' since she saw Patricia as a mistake she has made in the past, a mistake she wants to leave behind but cannot due to the fear of being judged as a 'bad mother' by those around her. When the word 'rape' occurred to her, she paused, thinking that in that context using the word 'rape' would be to alter their familiar unemotional communication, and to alter their usual ways in this way would be to offer an emotional exchange, to open a door to her daughter, a door she is determined not to open to a 'burden'. Joyce has formed an intelligible unity by relating an array of different mental states with different contents.

Despite its crudeness, our partially speculative view of Patricia that we attributed to Joyce was instructive in certain ways. We saw that this "view" involved a nest of inter-related thoughts, judgments, feelings, and construals about Patricia and thereby about her life, including her relationship with Joyce. These mental states share neither their content nor their mode. Yet they form an intelligible unity since, as a whole, they compose a view that is directed at Patricia against the backdrop of her life, including her

relationship with Joyce: by Joyce's lights, Patricia is a mistake Joyce made, she is a burden on her mother, she has emotional needs that Joyce does not want to attend to, she is recently raped, her rape threatens to affect Joyce's relations with her rapist's parents in a bad way etc. Given these features of Joyce's 'view' of Patricia, "understanding" stands out as a very good candidate to capture Joyce's 'view'. According to our inquiry into understanding, understanding (i) is a different kind of cognition, one that is not reducible other cognitions (ii) has, among its ultimate objects, human beings, their lives and their relationships (iii) can involve an array of different modes of cognitions such as judgments, construals and emotional feelings and so on depending on its object. But as we have seen, understanding is itself teleologically structured so it can exhibit various ways and degrees of departures from *its telos*, namely from being perfectly good understanding. Since Joyce clearly shows serious departures from understanding Patricia and her life well, it is more apt to call the cognition that guides her way of treating Patricia, her 'purported understanding' of Patricia against the backdrop of her life.

We have seen in this chapter that there is an important distinction between teleological understanding such as understanding a human being, a human life or a human relationship, and non-teleological understanding such as understanding wave motion. Teleological understanding, unlike non-teleological understanding demands that we have inter-related *evaluative* representations that purport to capture how and to what extent the teleological particular in question approximates its *telos*. If a philosophical theory is shallow for instance, understanding its shallowness is crucial to understanding

it. Or going back to Joyce, she sees Patricia as a burden. According to her, this is one way in which their relationship departs from its *telos*, namely, being a perfectly good relationship. This construal of Joyce's is crucial to her purported understanding of their relationship –-which partly constitutes her purported understanding of Patricia against the backdrop of her life. The observation that our purported understandings of one another requires inter-related representations that involve evaluations raises the question whether one's purported understanding of another against the backdrop of her life –the guiding cognition in moral behavior, as we have seen— can be captured by the advocates of the scientific world-view. It is not clear whether representations such as "She is *selfish*", "That is an *abusive* relationship", or "His life can be *richer*" –evaluative representations that are constitutive of our purported understanding a human being against the backdrop of her life- can be analyzed without abandoning the scientific world-view. At this point, it looks like the advocates of the scientific world-view *can* concede that one's purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life requires a nest of inter-related representations that involve evaluations. Take for instance, the Nazi's belief that the rabbi is a *pollutant* of this world that is a constituent of his purported understanding of him. The advocates of the scientific world-view will suggest, as we will see in the next chapter, that this belief can be analyzed as having two components; one purely non-evaluative such as "this rabbi is an inhabitant of this world", and some "pure evaluation" concerning the non-evaluative component such as "his being an inhabitant of this world *is bad*".

In the next chapter, I will argue that inter-related representations that involve

evaluations that are constitutive of our purported understanding of teleological

particulars such as human beings, human lives and human relationships cannot be

analyzed in this way. I hope to show, thereby, that capturing moral understanding that

gets expressed and that plays the guiding role in moral behavior demands that we

abandon the scientific world-view.

CH. IV. THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD-VIEW AND THE CONSTITUENTS OF MORAL UNDERSTANDING

There is a growing interest in what Bernard Williams has dubbed 'thick evaluative concepts' such as kindness, selfishness and greediness. What lies behind this interest isn't just the fact that these concepts are more specific and hence more informative than generic evaluative concepts such as good and right, nor just that the revival of virtue ethics seems to require their invocation. There is also a well-placed concern about the compatibility of judgments involving thick concepts with the fact-value divide built into the scientific world-view – a divide that many contemporary ethical theories have taken for granted, following their modern predecessors.

Judgments involving thick concept attribution such as the judgment, "Ida is *selfish*" or the judgment "This theory is *shallow*", present a prima facie challenge: It is not clear whether such judgments (henceforth, 'thick judgments') can be analyzed without abandoning the fact-value divide. There are two positions that are organized around this challenge. Those that I shall call 'compatibilists' typically argue that the meaning of a thick judgment such as "Ida is selfish" can be captured by appealing to two components: one purely descriptive (e.g. "*Ida gives no weight in her deliberations to what other people want*") and some pure evaluation concerning the purely descriptive component (e.g. "Ida's giving no weight in her deliberations to what other people want *is bad*"). On their view, if we once found Ida selfish but now find her cruel, this implies no change in our evaluation. In both cases, we find her bad. It is just that when we found her selfish,

we found her bad due to one descriptive property, and when we began to find her cruel we did so due to a different descriptive property. By contrast, those that I shall call 'incompatibilists' hold that a successful analysis of thick judgments is incompatible with a strict division of fact and value. Incompatibilists argue that when we make attributions of two different thick concepts, we are engaging in two distinct *kinds* of evaluation. To find Ida cruel rather than selfish is to make a different kind of evaluation altogether –one that aims at picking out her cruelty rather than her selfishness. The judgment that Ida is selfish and the judgment that she is cruel do not share some "pure evaluation" such as the judgment that Ida is bad.

This basic disagreement can give a predictable and seemingly quite futile shape to the disputes. Compatibilists can take thick evaluative judgments and try to pin down their descriptive component, while incompatibilists can busy themselves producing counter-examples in which the descriptive components are present but the attribution of the thick property itself seems to be absent. Impressive counter-examples can lead to more convoluted specifications of the descriptive component, and this can lead in turn to a fresh search for counter-examples.[88]

In what follows I will follow a different route to argue for incompatibilism. Here is an overview of my main argument:

Step 1: Argue that intrinsic goodness/badness attributions (e.g. Ida is bad) consist in attributions of thick concepts (e.g. Ida is selfish).

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[88] Part of the literature on thick concepts does in fact testify to this sort of exchange. See for instance, S.L. Burton, "Thick Concepts Revised," *Analysis* 52 (1) (1992), 28-32; Eve Garrard and David McNaughton, "Thick Concepts Revisited: A Reply to Burton," *Analysis* 53 (1) (1993), 57-58.

Step 2: Show how compatibilists, too can capture this relation by dropping their two-component analysis and by adopting a one-component analysis. Though they would be reluctant to do this, they can hold that thick concept attribution is pure evaluation. (e.g. To attribute selfishness to Ida is only to evaluate her)

Step 3: Argue that intrinsic goodness attribution cannot be pure evaluation and hence thick concept attributions that constitute intrinsic goodness attributions cannot be pure evaluations, either.

Williams has drawn attention to a nest of what he calls 'thick' evaluative concepts like the concept of kindness. Among his examples are: destructiveness, meanness, generosity, contemptibleness, outrageousness, ingratitude, maliciousness, selfishness, inconsiderateness, laziness, and greediness.[89] What is interesting about these concepts is that they seem to embody both descriptive and evaluative content. On the face of it, when we judge that a certain event that has befallen someone is tragic, our judgment seems both to describe the event in question and to evaluate it. We cannot credit someone with possession of the concept of the tragic if she says that a certain event is tragic while thinking that there is nothing bad about that event.

Little attention has been paid to the fact that thick evaluative concepts can apply to many things other than character traits and their expressions in ethically relevant behavior, and thus to the fact that there are all sorts of extra-ethical judgments involving thick concept attribution. There has been some discussion in environmental ethics

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[89] Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 208, and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 129, 141, 192.

concerning, for example, whether health and disease are to be seen as thick concepts in ecosystemic contexts.[90] Indeed, environmental ethics is not alone in embodying seemingly thick concepts. Theories of aesthetics appeal to many concepts that are seemingly thick such as "elegant", "grounded", "expressively rich", "deep" and "obscure". Similarly, certain epistemic notions such as the concept of "having warrant" and politically loaded concepts such as having a "right" or being a "legitimate authority" seem to be thick concepts.

To a great extent, contemporary ethicists have been the ones to take center stage in this debate. What underlies their close attention is the threat posed by incompatibilism for most contemporary ethical theories. The very subject matter of ethical theory, be it the nature of a good person, a good human life, or moral obligatoriness of certain kinds of acts, seems to demand the employment of further ethically relevant evaluative concepts. In one ethical theory, a good person might be explained further by appealing to virtue concepts; in another, a good human life might be explained further by appealing to the concepts of the harmful and the beneficial; and moral obligatoriness might be explained by appealing to the concept of reasonableness in yet another theory. If incompatibilists are right in holding that judgments involving the attribution of these further explanatory evaluative concepts cannot be captured without transgressing the fact-value divide, then most contemporary ethical theories involve a serious misstep due to taking a fact-value divide for granted. By incompatibilists' lights, these theories are neither licensed to

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[90] J.L. Nelson, "Health and Disease as 'Thick' Concepts in Ecosystemic Contexts," *Environmental Values* 4 (1995), 311-322; B. Norton, "Objectivity, Intrinsicality and Sustainability: Comment on Nelson's "Health and Disease as 'Thick' Concepts in Ecosystemic Contexts"," *Environmental Values* 4 (1995), 323-332.

employ these evaluative concepts, nor can they be expected to provide insight into the morally admirable or defective qualities of persons or actions picked out by these concepts. Indeed, they might be revised by stripping away these concepts, but then they would either lose much of their explanatory power, or lack enough content to qualify as an ethical theory. The threat from incompatibilism remains the same in other realms of evaluative discourse such as political philosophy, aesthetics and arguably epistemology.

Let me now briefly explain what one believes when she believes that there is a fact-value divide, that is, why she thinks that the metaphysical status of facts differs from the metaphysical status of our values. Both of the vital concepts of this divide have received different treatments from different philosophical approaches. For Hume, a fact was just something of which there can be a sensible "impression".[91] Logical positivists initially thought that a fact was something that could be verified by direct experience. But because things like bacteria, curved space-time, gravitational fields, electrons etc. cannot be directly experienced, most of the logical positivists eventually claimed that scientific statements about such non-observable things correspond to facts as well, since they help explain the observational facts.[92] Following Williams, we can then agree that the conception of fact we have inherited is that it "is something that can be described in the vocabulary that science is destined to "converge" upon in its indefinitely continued inquiry."[93]

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[91] Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2002), 21.

[92] For a brief summary of how the construal of "facts" got transformed throughout the logical positivism period, see ibid.,19-24. As Putnam records, the idealist version of a fact was simply a complex of sense qualities, ibid. 40.

[93] Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 237.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, contemporary philosophical views of what constitutes a value diverge more drastically compared to views on what constitutes a fact. First and foremost, there is no consensus as to whether evaluation is a cognitive matter. Furthermore, cognitivists cannot agree among themselves as to whether we are tracking anything in the world when we evaluate or whether there is nothing for us to track. To provide just a brief sampling of this diversity, Moore thinks that when we evaluate we are trying to track some non-natural property, namely, the property of goodness/badness.[94] Mackie agrees but thinks that there is no such non-natural property for us to track.[95] Scanlon thinks that we are trying to track the reasons to pursue/avoid or to take a favorable/unfavorable attitude towards whatever it is that we are evaluating.[96] For Blackburn, evaluation is non-cognitive, that is, when we evaluate we are not trying to track anything; rather, we are simply expressing a non-cognitive sentiment.[97] To accommodate all these different pictures of "pure evaluation", we might say that pure evaluation is some cognitive or non-cognitive state the linguistic expression of which involves no truth-apt description that aims at picking out a fact in the natural world. Rather, it is a cognitive or non-cognitive state the linguistic expression of which involves only some ascription of purely evaluative terms such as "good", "bad", "right" or "wrong".

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[94] G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 161-163.

[95] J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 38-40.

[96] T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 95-100.

[97] Simon, Blackburn, "How To Be an Ethical Antirealist," in Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard and Peter Railton, eds., *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 167-178.

Despite their differences in capturing pure evaluation, many contemporary ethicists have attempted to provide a two-component analysis of thick judgments. That is, the content of, to take up the previous example, the judgment "Ida is selfish" is analyzed as bringing together a description that aims at picking out a natural fact, and some pure evaluation, however that pure evaluation may be construed. This "naïve conjunction analysis" was held by Stevenson, Hare and Blackburn in his *Spreading the Word*.[98] On the naïve conjunction analysis, to count as judging that Ida is selfish, it is sufficient to believe something about Ida that can be expressed in purely descriptive terms such as that she gives no weight in her deliberations to what other people want, and to find her bad. Other compatibilists realized that naïve conjunction analysis does not live up to the task at hand. What the naïve conjunction analysis misses is *the link* between the two conjuncts. It matters that the evaluation is made *on the basis of* the descriptive component. Due to the absence of this link, on the naïve conjunction analysis, I turn out to be making the judgment that Ida is selfish even when I find it good that she gives no weight in her deliberations to what other people want so long as I find her bad for some other reason. For this reason, incompatibilists have adopted a more sophisticated analysis: x has the property F (or a set of properties) and is good/bad for having F (that set of properties). Let me call this the "standard conjunction analysis".

It is no surprise that refined variants of the standard conjunction analysis are so prevalent among contemporary ethicists since most of them – cognitivists and non-

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[98] R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); C. L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1944). Blackburn revised his view after his *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) See Blackburn "How to be an Antirealist," especially 289.

cognitivists alike – are committed to the fact-value divide. A standard conjunction analysis of thick judgments coheres nicely with the fact-value divide.

Let me now turn to the view that thick judgments cannot be captured without abandoning the fact-value divide, namely, incompatibilism. Quite a number of prominent figures, including Iris Murdoch, John McDowell, Hilary Putnam, Bernard Williams and Jonathan Dancy, have rejected the two-component analysis of thick judgments.[99] As I mentioned earlier, some of the arguments put forward by incompatibilists are designed to show the implausible consequences of compatibilism rather than simply to provide counter-examples to reductive analyses. For example, McDowell argues that compatibilism mistakenly implies that one can predict the applications and withholdings of thick terms in new cases "without even embarking on an attempt to make sense" of the evaluation these applications and withholdings involve.[100] He invites compatibilists to imagine a moral community that has a certain conception of some moral virtue. He states that if compatibilism were true then one could master the extension of the term picking out this moral virtue "not merely without oneself sharing the community's admiration (there need be no difficulty about that), but without even embarking on an attempt to make sense of their admiration".[101] After all, one could simply be told that the term is used for people with a certain aspect that can be picked out in purely descriptive terms.

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[99] Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality," especially 94-5; Hilary Putnam *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*, especially 35; Williams *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* especially 129; John McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian S*ociety, Supplementary Volume 52 (1978), 13-29,
"Virtue and Reason," *The Monist* 62 (1979), 331-50, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," in Holtzman and Leich, eds., *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1991), 141-62; Jonathan Dancy, "In Defence of Thick Concepts' in eds. French, Uehling, and Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 263-79.
[100] John McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," 144.
[101] John McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," 144.

Say that this aspect is patience. An outsider can easily detect people with patience, and this is all she needs to reliably predict the applications and withholdings of the moral virtue term in question. In order to attain such mastery, she need not understand why people in this community admire people who have patience. However, people entering in new moral communities seem to have a hard time grasping how that community extends moral virtue terms to new cases. Why would they have such a hard time mastering the extension of these thick concepts if these concepts had a separable descriptive component?

From the perspective incompatibilists occupy, the difficulty here cannot be accounted for by highlighting various complexities surrounding the supposed descriptive component of thick concepts. *That* surely can be done. Compatibilists can claim for example, that the descriptive component of the judgment, "Ida is selfish" and the descriptive component of the judgment, "Miles is selfish" exhibit only a family resemblance. But the difficulty faced by someone who is not familiar with a thick evaluative concept, be it someone new to a certain moral community, or a child at the beginning of her life, is not pertinent to the complexity displayed by the supposedly detachable descriptive components of the relevant thick judgments. If that were the difficulty, the unfamiliar person's situation would be similar to that of someone who is trying to get a grip on how to extend a *non-evaluative* term that applies to things that show a family resemblance.

What we admire when we admire an elderly person's understanding of the concept of kindness does not rely on the fact that she has had more time to realize that the

term 'kindness' can be extended to different people with different non-evaluative properties. It is not as if we understand the kind of appreciation, approval or attitude she has regarding kindness but we cannot yet bring various non-evaluative properties together in the way the elderly person does to show an appreciation, approval or attitude we are already familiar with. A grieving mother who has just lost her child would not feel understood if one were to tell her that the badness she sees in the *loss* of her child is the same kind of badness we see in, say, *shallow* commentaries. Adding that her child and what has happened, described in purely non-evaluative terms, is of course a lot worse compared to the badness of the non-evaluative aspects of some commentary would just be beside the point. For the mother's grief shows the whole world differently, it shows everything through a different lens: *loss of her child*. Her grief has introduced her to a new mode of evaluative awareness, one that will enable her to think and live with the concept of *loss*, one that she cannot pass on to anyone who is familiar with some uniform disapproval or con-attitude and capable of fully grasping some non-evaluative description of this mother's child and her absence in this life –this life, described, once again, in purely non-evaluative terms. Perhaps one of the most valuable things life can teach us is to learn to broaden *the ways in which we appreciate it*, not to learn to extend to new cases a kind of appreciation, attitude or approval that remains uniform throughout.[102] Let me now turn to the first step of my incompatibilist argument and argue that intrinsic goodness attribution (e.g. Ida is bad) consists in attributions of thick concepts (Ida is selfish).

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[102] For more on this point, see Talbot Brewer *The Retrieval of Ethics*, Ch.5

About the attribution of goodness Philippa Foot writes:

> Moore speaks of the judgment that a certain thing –pleasure, for instance, or friendship–
> is 'good' as if 'good' could be taken as the standard form of predication for it, as for 'X
> is red'. It seems to me, however, extremely important that this should be challenged
> before we start on the usual discussions of the way in which Moore himself thought that
> goodness was a special kind of property (a 'non-naturalistic' property) and the theories
> developed out of this thought…[103]

Foot's criticism of this Moorean thought is based on Peter Geach's distinction between what he calls 'predicative adjectives' on one hand and 'attributive adjectives' on the other:

> I shall say that in a phrase "an A B" ("A" being and adjective and "B" being a noun)
> "A" is a (logically) predicative adjective if the predication "is an A B" splits up
> logically into a pair of predications "is a B" and "is A"; otherwise I shall say that "A" is
> a (logically) attributive adjective.[104]

Take one of Geach's examples, "x is a big flea": "x is a big flea" does not split up into "x is big" and "x is a flea". "X is a small elephant", "x is a forged banknote", "x is the putative father of y" are all examples of attributive predication that Geach lists. By contrast, "x is a red book", he continues, does split up into "x is a book" and "x is red".[105] He then goes on to argue that "good" and "bad" are also attributive, that when they are predicated of a noun, the predication does not split up into "x is F" and "x is good/bad". For example, "x is a good serial killer" is not equivalent to "x is a serial killer" and "x is good".

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[103] Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 2.
[104] Peter T. Geach, "Good and Evil," *Analysis* 17 (1956), 32.
[105] Ibid., 32.

Geach's contention is that it is a mistake to speak about the meaning of an attributive adjective without also mentioning to what kind of thing it is attributed. It matters whether it is a diamond that is fake or a marriage that is fake, it matters whether it is a monkey that is big or a pet that is big, and finally it matters whether it is a poem is good or a human life that is good. As others have observed however, there are other uses of 'good' that are harder to conceptualize if we think that they too operate as attributive adjectives. Judith Jarvis Thomson draws attention to four different uses of 'good'. She writes,

> When people say about a thing "That's good," what they mean is always that the thing is *good in some way*. Perhaps they mean that the thing is a good fountain pen. Or a good book. Or a good apple. If so, what they mean is that the thing is **good of a kind**. There is more too. A person might say "That's good," not meaning that the thing is good of a kind, but that it is **good for use in doing this** or that. Perhaps the thing is good for use in making cheesecake. Or they mean that the thing is **good for such and such or so and so.** Perhaps the thing is or would be good for Alfred, or for England, or for the tree in my backyard. Or they mean that the thing **tastes good or looks good**.[106]

I would like to put aside whether Geach is right in thinking that all the appropriate uses of 'good', in the end, calls for the "good qua" explanation. I only want to record that there might be different senses of 'good' and focus exclusively on the use Geach focuses on. I took a brief detour only to explain that the Geachean attribution of goodness is worthy of exclusive attention since it seems to be the only attribution that captures attribution of *intrinsic* goodness. Let us now see what the relationship between our attributions of intrinsic goodness and our attributions of thick evaluative concepts

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[106] Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Goodness and Advice*,18.

is.

Christine Tappolet argued recently that the relationship between the general evaluative concept good *pro tanto* and more specific evaluative concepts is one of determinable/determinate rather than one of genus/species.[107] That is, the relationship between them is akin to the relationship between color and red rather than the relationship between animal and rational animal. Of the determinable/determinate relationship she writes,

> Contrary to species, determinates are not to be construed as a conjunction of two logically independent terms. Thus, a concept like *red* cannot be defined by conjoining the term color and some other term, which would play the role of the *differentia*. As John Searle puts it: 'Red things do not possess some trait other than their redness which, when conjoined with their coloredness, makes them by definition red.' (1967, p. 358) Still the relation between a determinable and its determinate is comparable to that of the *genus/species* in that it is between the less specific and the more specific. The difference is simply that in the case of determinates, the specification is not provided by a *differentia*.[108]

In the case of animal and rational animal, the concept that corresponds to the genus, "animal", is conceptually prior to and independent of the concept that corresponds to the species, "rational animal". The concept of animalness is conceptually independent of the concept of rational animalness since its explanation does not require explanation of "rational animal". But conceptual independence obviously does not entail conceptual

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[107] Christine Tappolet, "Through Thick and Thin: Good and its Determinates," *Dialectica* 58 (2) (2004), 207-221.
[108] Ibid., 218.

priority. For two concepts need to be linked explanatorily for one to be conceptually prior to the other. Conceptual independence makes no claim concerning the presence or absence of such a link between the two concepts in question. Consider for instance the concepts yellowness and roundness. Roundness is conceptually independent of yellowness but neither is conceptually prior to the other since they are not explanatorily linked. This is not the case with "animal" and "rational animal". The former is a necessary part of the explanation of the latter. We add the differentia "rational" to express a specific kind of animal species. Tappolet claims that the conceptual relation between "color" and "yellow" is different from that of "rational" and "rational animal." "Color" is conceptually dependent on its determinates such as redness, blueness and yellowness. We cannot get a grip on the concept of color without getting a grip on red, blue, yellow etc. And the more we get a grip on these determinate colors, the more we understand what color is. Likewise, she continues, thick concepts are to be thought as determinates of general evaluative concept good *pro tanto*. We cannot get a grip on the concept of good *pro tanto* without getting a grip on more determinate evaluative concepts, and the more clearly we grasp these thick evaluative concepts, the more we understand what goodness is. I will not rehearse her defense of this relationship between thick concepts and good *pro tanto* here since I will be focusing exclusively on the relationship between thick concepts and the concept of *intrinsic goodness*. Tappolet curiously leaves this relationship aside in her essay. I shall argue that the relationship between certain thick concepts and the concept of intrinsic goodness is the very relationship Tappolet detects

between certain thick concepts and the concept of good *pro tanto,* namely, the determinate/determinable relationship.

In our attempts to provide a clearer picture of the goodness or badness of a person or her life, we draw upon an array of thick concepts. If you tell me that a friend of yours is a very good person or that your life is not going well these days, I do not know quite what to think. Is your friend a *loving person*? Is she *kind*? Is she *open-minded*? Similarly, why is your life not going well these days? Did something *tragic* happen? Is it becoming *intolerably monotonous*? Do you think that it is going in a *fearsome* direction? Just as you could easily make use of evaluative concepts such as lovingness, kindness and open-mindedness to help me understand why you think that your friend is a very good person, you could easily appeal to concepts such as tragicness, intolerable monotonousness and fearsomeness to illuminate why you think that your life is not going well these days. Or again, two philosophical theories that seem good to a great extent might seem so due to different strengths and weaknesses they possess. One theory might seem very *crude* but it might also seem to be capturing some of the most *fundamental* intuitions we have, whereas another one might seem to be quite *refined* but be in tension with our most fundamental intuitions.

Even when we use non-evaluative *terms* to specify further the goodness of persons, lives or theories, we employ them to convey thick evaluative concepts. We might say, "What is concluded is assumed" to complain about a philosophical theory. We might have, in other words, a tone of *complaint* as we utter a sentence that involves only non-evaluative terms. Blackburn emphasizes this very feature of our language practice as

he claims, "in an intonation language, the pitch, the length and loudness of parts of an utterance subserve difference of stress, accent and rhythm, and these in turn are available to act as indicators of meaning… just as a tone can be unmistakably bored or excited, conciliatory or aggressive, so it can be condescending, menacing, hostile, jocular, ironic, and so on…"[109] This observation leads him to prematurely conclude that there is ' 'plain separation' ' between the words that tell us what is said, words that are purely descriptive, and the "pattern of intonation" that tells us the manner used.

What Blackburn overlooks is that when we say, "what is concluded is assumed" with a tone of complaint, we do not just mean that the problem is that the conclusion is assumed. We mean that assuming the conclusion in this case is *viciously* circular, i.e., that it does *significant damage* to the *explanatory power* of the theory. If what we were trying to convey were not something along these lines, the *tone of complaint* we have as we say "what is concluded is assumed" would be puzzling. For nothing would explain the absence of that tone, or the presence of an entirely different tone when we utter the very same words about another theory. The absence of the tone of complaint in the latter case can be explained only if we assume that what we are trying to get at by uttering "what is concluded is assumed" without any tone of complaint is that there is circularity but the circular explanation involved is *illuminating*. Consider for example a theory that begins by a rigorous defense of the irreducibility of the *explanandum* followed by a non-reductive but nonetheless *illuminating* account of it. Further, the variety of these intonations suggests that what we seem to see in things are not just goodness and

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[109] Allan Gibbard and Simon Blackburn, "Morality and Thick Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 66 (1992), 267-283+285-299.

badness. If that were the case, there would be no way to distinguish what makes a tone a *condescending* one rather than a tone of, say, *severe shock.* The former captures our attribution of *inferiority* to something while the latter captures our attribution of *tragicness* to something.

It is not simply various tones that help express different evaluative features we seem to see in persons, lives or theories. If two close colleagues know each other's evaluative criteria in assessing philosophical theories, they can convey to each other what evaluative features they see in a theory by using non-evaluative words. One can simply say, "Did you see the very first sentence?" and would rightly assume that the other would take her question to mean that the theory begins with an extremely *implausible* assumption. She surely could not express what she is getting at to a philosopher whose evaluative outlook she is not familiar with in this way. Then she is forced to search for the thick evaluative words that help pick out the evaluative aspects of a philosophical theory. When we attempt to understand how we specify our attributions of intrinsic goodness, we can be easily misled if all we zoom in on is our daily verbal exchanges with people we live or work with. Our focus should rather be on what kind of concepts we are trying to get at or convey when we specify further the goodness or badness we seem to see in things.

Careful scrutiny shows that in further specifying our attributions of the intrinsic goodness or badness of certain particulars such as artifacts, artworks, persons, lives, theories, performances etc., we make use of attributions of thick evaluative concepts even though we might convey such attributions in different ways. We make use of attributions

of thick evaluative concepts, to be more precise, to explain what makes something

good/bad *qua* the sort of thing it is. Our attribution of the concept of intrinsic goodness to

a philosophical theory, for instance, is explained by the various merits we take the theory

to have *qua* philosophical theory, not vice versa. We do not explain those merits in terms

of the intrinsic goodness of an entity that we have independently apprehended as a

theory. It turns out then that the relation between various thick evaluative concepts and

the concept of intrinsic goodness or badness is one of, to borrow Tappolet's terminology,

determinate/determinable.[110]

At this juncture, compatibilists might point out that they, too can capture the

determinate/determinable relation between certain thick evaluative concepts and the

concept of intrinsic goodness or badness. Compatibilists can treat judgments involving

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[110] To adopt this relation between the concept of intrinsic goodness and various thick concepts in a philosophical account is to put forward what Susan Hurley has dubbed a 'non-centralist' account.

Hurley explains a "centralist account" as follows:

"A feature common to many philosophical accounts of ethical concepts is that general concepts, such as *right* and *ought*, are taken to be conceptually prior to and independent of the specific concepts such as *just* and *unkind*. According to such accounts [**centralist accounts**], the general concepts carry a core meaning, which may be associated with either assertoric or imperatival force, that also provides the specific concepts with reason-giving status, relating, for example, to their tendency to pick out the right thing to do or to provide evidence about the right thing to do…An example of a cognitivist version of centralism is found in the work of Ross; an example of a non-cognitivist version of centralism is found in the work of Hare." Susan L. Hurley, *Natural Reasons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 11. For Ross' centralism see W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), and for Hare's see R. M. Hare *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

Non-centralism, by contrast, rejects the view that the general concepts are prior to and independent of the specific ones. Non-centralists often "take the identification of discrete specific values such as justice and kindness as a starting point" and argue that the general evaluative concepts depend on these more specific ones, --or that the two are interdependent. (Hurley, p.11) Hurley distinguishes centralism from non-centralism in ethical discourse but the idea can be extended to all sorts of evaluative discourses: Centralist accounts, we might say, explain the more specific evaluative concepts by employing general evaluative concepts that are taken to be independent of and prior to the specific ones. So for instance, a political theory that explains the concept of being a "legitimate authority" (assuming that this is a thick evaluative concept) by appealing to the concept of goodness would also be a centralist account, provided that the theory takes the latter to be independent of and prior to the former.

the attributions of thick evaluative concepts exactly the way they treat judgments

involving general evaluative concepts such as goodness or badness: she can treat *both of*

them as "pure evaluations".

A cognitivist might follow Mackie in claiming that when we make thick

judgments, we are trying to track purely evaluative properties, but as a matter of fact

there is nothing there for us to track. Thereby, one can simply broaden the scope of our

"error". Or a neo-Moorean might say that it is not just the property of being good that is

simple and ' 'non-natural' ' but that thick evaluative properties fall into this category as

well. A non-cognitivist like Blackburn can also give a one-component analysis by saying

that the non-cognitive sentiment expressed by "He is good", "He is courageous" and "He

is kind" all differ *in kind.* The trick, as it were, is to provide an analysis of thick

judgments that mimics the analysis of pure evaluation of the endorsed ethical theory.[111]

So actually, the default contemporary commitment to the fact-value divide does not

logically demand a two-component analysis. But surely, a Mackiean is more convincing

if she can keep our "error" restricted and a Moorean sounds less "queer" if she avoids

claiming that there are very many non-natural properties. Likewise, a Blackburnean can

be more persuasive when she holds that there are only two primitive sentiments – namely

approval and disapproval – that we express upon experiencing an evaluatively barren

world, instead of committing herself to the presence of dozens of primitive sentiments.

So, fact-value advocates would be reluctant to adopt a "pure evaluation" analysis of thick

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[111] Another way to give a one-component analysis, as Putnam has noted, is to do what Mackie does with judgments that involve the attribution of the concept "cruel". For Mackie, when we attribute cruelty, all we are attributing is a set of natural features. Hence, cruelty attribution is purely descriptive. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, 41.

judgments. Nonetheless, it is still seems like such an analysis is a viable option for them. They can treat both our attributions of intrinsic goodness *and* thick judgments as pure evaluations. This would not violate the fact-value divide since both fall on the value side of the fact-value divide.

I shall now move on to the second step of my argument: If we attend to the nature of the sort of entities to which we attribute intrinsic goodness, however, we realize that the compatibilist cannot treat thick judgments as "pure evaluations" *since what they purport to explain, namely, our attributions of intrinsic goodness, cannot be treated as ' 'pure evaluations' '*.

Consider a musical performance. When we hear a bunch of notes seemingly produced by someone, to understand whether it falls under the concept of being a musical performance, and if it does, to understand it as a musical performance, we need to have some dim conception of what a perfectly good musical performance is supposed to be like. This is not a mere epistemic requirement for understanding a *particular* musical performance. We need to have some dim conception of a perfectly good musical performance since a pianist's striking the keys *itself* needs to have some goodness *qua* musical performance *to be* a musical performance. If what, say, a pianist does in striking the keys of a piano departs completely from the ideals of a musical performance, it would simply be cacophony. This does not mean that no musical performance can be very bad *qua* musical performance. But it does reinforce our intuition that if we still want to call a very bad musical performance 'a musical performance' and not 'cacophony', it is because it still has a touch of some kind of goodness *qua* musical

performance. Geach's thought that the statement, say, "x is a good musical performance" cannot be split up into "x is a musical performance" and "x is good" due to "good" being an attributive adjective can be supplemented further then. The reason why this statement resists such a split is not solely due to "good" being an attributive adjective. It is also because there is no such thing as a musical performance that has no goodness *qua* musical performance. Hence, *both* of the conjuncts, that is, both "x is good" *and* "x is a musical performance" are problematic.

It is not only musical performances that must approximate being perfectly good *qua* their kind to be what they are. The coming together of two persons must approximate being perfectly good *qua* friendship to be a friendship at all, a string of sentences expressing philosophical thoughts must approximate being perfectly good *qua* philosophical theory in order to count as a philosophical theory, and so on. Examples can be multiplied. Stories, knives, cars, mosques, dance performances, paintings, conversations and persons all seem to be particulars that must have some goodness *qua* their kind to be the kind of particulars they are. Let me call these particulars 'teleological particulars'. [112]

Non-teleological phenomena such as lumps of mud, currents and reflexes, by contrast, do not need to have some goodness *qua* their kind to be what they are. True, something does need to satisfy certain criteria to be a lump of clay, or a current or a reflex. Yet there is nothing evaluative about the content of these criteria. This is why it

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[112] As I mentioned before on p.102 fn. 77, I follow Judith Jarvis Thomson in drawing the boundaries of these 'teleological' entities. So I include animals and plants into this category, too. But drawing the boundaries more narrowly by excluding animals and plants has no bearing on the arguments of this chapter.

does not make sense to say things like, "This is good *qua* lump of clay." Surely, we can attribute all sorts of extrinsic value to it, such as when we attribute goodness to it on the basis of its cosmetic benefits. But it is not an existential requirement that a lump of clay possess any intrinsic goodness *qua* clay.

It might be thought that if teleological particulars really must embody some goodness *qua* their kind to be the kind of particulars they are, we would feel no need to attribute goodness to them. Why emphasize that a musical performance is good if it has to be good *qua* musical performance to be a musical performance? This objection would have some force if the goodness of a musical performance were an all or nothing matter. Every musical performance, even a very bad one, has some goodness *qua* its kind. But when the badness of a musical performance stands out, we emphasize its badness, not the tincture of goodness it has that can hardly be discerned. On the other hand, if it approximates the ideals of a musical performance to a great extent, we call it a "good musical performance". This surely does not rule out the possibility that another performance might even be better *qua* musical performance.

Capturing the concept of intrinsic goodness is therefore in tension with the idea that general evaluative concepts do not describe but only evaluate. When we aptly call a series of statements 'a theory', we are referring to a series of statements that could not have composed a theory had those sentences not come together in such a way as to contain some goodness *qua* theory. We call a series of statements 'a good theory' when the goodness it necessarily contains is manifested to such an extent that we want to draw attention to it. The point of the attribution is only to indicate that the intrinsic goodness in

question is close to "perfectly good" since careful reflection shows that any theory has to show up somewhere on the continuum between so bad *qua* theory as barely to count as a theory, and perfectly good *qua* theory. Attributing goodness to a theory therefore is not attributing a property that it might have utterly lacked. It is to attempt to capture the intrinsic goodness it must have *qua* philosophical theory in order to count as a philosophical theory. Thus, once it is successfully picked out, it is picked it out with its intrinsic goodness. When one judges therefore that a philosophical theory is good, she is claiming that the intrinsic goodness the philosophical theory has is closer to being perfectly good rather than bad *qua* philosophical theory. She is not claiming that some philosophical theories have the property of goodness, others do not, and that the philosophical theory before her happens to be among the former. It is an existential requirement of any philosophical theory that it possesses some intrinsic goodness.

As we have seen, it is an existential requirement of any teleological particular, be it a musical performance, a philosophical theory, a human being or a human life, that it possess some intrinsic goodness *qua* its kind. But if it is an existential requirement of such teleological particulars that they possess some intrinsic goodness *qua* their kind, then the intrinsic goodness they necessarily possess can be nothing other than a *natural* property. And if intrinsic goodness is a natural property, then our attributions of intrinsic goodness cannot be assumed to be "pure evaluations". Rather, our intrinsic goodness attributions have to be taken to be "descriptively evaluative", i.e. irreducibly thick. We have already established the fact that we specify our attributions of intrinsic goodness by appealing to thick judgments. When I judge that a certain musical performance was good

but not very good, I might go ahead and explain my attribution by appealing to its

expressive poorness as well as noting the impressiveness of the authenticity involved. I

might be totally off or I might be on the right track, since there necessarily *is* some

intrinsic goodness to be explained by making reference to various thick concepts. This

means that those thick judgments that purport to specify further our attributions of

intrinsic goodness cannot be treated as pure evaluations since our attributions of intrinsic

goodness cannot be taken to be ' 'pure evaluations' '. Consequently, those thick judgments

that purport to specify further our attributions of intrinsic goodness also have to be taken

to be "descriptively evaluative".

I have proposed a new incompatibilist route to arguing against compatibilist

analyses of thick concepts. My defense is nowhere near conclusive, especially since I

have focused exclusively on intrinsic goodness and the thick judgments that help explain

it. Whether my proposal can be extended to all thick judgments has yet to be worked out.

However, the "Argument from Intrinsic Goodness" that I outline above poses a serious

threat to the compatibilist's hope to analyze all thick judgments in accordance with the

fact-value divide. The Argument from Intrinsic Goodness also lends insight into how

deep the compatibilist's problem runs. In ethical discourse, for instance, what

compatibilists lose by lacking the resources to capture at least a portion of thick

judgments is not just articulacy about their focus, be it a good person or a good life or a

good moral relationship. Compatibilists cannot pick out *any person or any human life or*

any relationship so as to set the stage for thick evaluative assessment of their goodness

qua persons, human lives or relationships. There is good reason to suspect that

proponents of the fact-value divide will face analogous difficulties in their treatments of

other realms of evaluative discourse, including those that form the subject matter of

political philosophy, aesthetics and arguably epistemology. So long as we do not turn

down the compatibilist agenda, we are bound to lose sight of the proper foci of evaluative

discourse, and fail to illuminate these foci *as they are.* [113]

Recall that at the end of the last chapter, we had considered a way in which the

advocates of the scientific world-view might leave enough conceptual space for

understanding human beings against the backdrop of their lives as moral understanding.

We imagined the advocates of the scientific world-view agreeing to take one's purported

understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life as involving a nest of

different modes of inter-related representations involving evaluations, such as judging

that a certain person has been acting selfishly recently. But their contention was that

these constituents of one's purported understanding of a human being against the

backdrop of her life could be analyzed in line with the scientific world-view.

Accordingly, we imagined the advocates of the scientific world-view to be attempting to

capture one's purported moral understanding that gets expressed and plays the guiding

role in moral behavior by sorting them into inter-related *non-evaluative* representations

and a nest of *pure evaluations, regardless of how they may be fleshed out,* concerning

these non-evaluative representations. But we have just seen that inter-related

representations involving evaluations that are constitutive of one's purported

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understanding of another such as judging that a certain person has been acting selfishly cannot be analyzed as involving some "pure evaluation". Human beings, their lives including their relationships are teleologically structured. Consequently, understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life demands that we understand (i) the evaluative properties of hers that manifest how and to what extent she approximates her *telos*, (e.g. her kindness) (ii) the evaluative properties of her life that manifest how and to what extent her life approximates its *telos* (e.g. the richness of her life), including (iii) the evaluative properties of her relationships with others that manifest how and to what extent these relationships approximate their *telos*. (e.g. the abusiveness of a relationship of hers). Accordingly, our purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life necessarily involves a nest of inter-related representations that purport to capture *these evaluative properties*.

It might be pointed out that the above discussion focused solely on judgments that involved attributions of thick evaluative concepts, not on other modes of thick evaluative representations such as seeing a human being as a burden. An advocate of the scientific world-view might wish to treat other modes of thick evaluative representations exactly the way she treated thick judgments. She might take them to be analyzable as having one non-evaluative component and some pure evaluation concerning the non-evaluative component. So for example, she might analyze Joyce's seeing Patricia as a burden –a construal that is constitutive of her purported understanding of Patricia against the backdrop of her life, including Patricia's relationship with Joyce – as follows: This construal involves an allegedly non-evaluative component, such as Joyce seeing Patricia

as making it difficult for her to spend time with Ethan's parents, and, some pure evaluation concerning the non-evaluative component, such as seeing Patricia's creating this difficulty as *bad*. But the *mode* of the representation that is constitutive of one's purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life has no bearing on our conclusion. If there are good grounds to think that "pure evaluation" cannot be part of the scientific world-view advocate's analysis of thick evaluative *judgments* that are constitutive of one's purported moral understanding, this will apply equally to her analysis of any mode of thick evaluative representation that might be constitutive of one's purported moral understanding, *be it a judgment or a construal*. To conclude, since moral understanding requires having a nest of inter-related thick evaluative representations, it cannot be captured unless we abandon the scientific world-view. This explains why morally relevant bodily movements and omissions that express one's purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life cannot be picked out in accordance with the scientific view, why they can be only picked out with their moral qualities such as "humiliating", or "neglectful".

CH.V. MORAL UNDERSTANDING

In moral matters (though not only in moral matters) the achievement of deeper understanding requires that we have depth to receive it, and that depth in ourselves is not a depository of propositions in our heads which God could have put there 'in a flash', but a historically achieved individuality. Our lives must have a certain kind of unity that involves a truthful responsibility for and to our past –we cannot flee it, for example…And in addition to truthfulness, it requires fidelity to what is past.

(Raimond Gaita) [114]

In her *Sovereignty of the Good*, what Murdoch partly does is to criticize what we have been calling 'the situation view' of morality that is based on a scientific world-view.[115] From the perspective of the situation view, as I mentioned at the beginning borrowing Murdoch's descriptions, "the centre of 'the moral' " is "the situation of a man making a definite choice", and "the moral life of the individual is a series of overt choices which take place in a series of specifiable situations". Murdoch argues that the situation view is a poor outlook on morality since "people are not like that" and "people ought not picture themselves in this way".[116] I have been arguing that our dissatisfaction with the situation view should run deeper, that the situation view is not just a poor outlook on morality, but that it cannot count as an outlook on morality due to failing to capture the guiding moral cognition in moral behavior, namely moral understanding, as well as failing to capture the object of this cognition, namely human beings.

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[114] Raimond Gaita, *Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 267.

[115] Iris Murdoch calls it the 'behaviorist-existentialist-utilitarian' view of morality. She unpacks this view by saying that it is behaviorist in its connection of the meaning and being of action with the publicly observable, it is existentialist in its elimination of the substantial self and its emphasis on the solitary omnipotent will, and it is utilitarian in its assumption that morality is and can only be concerned with public acts. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 9.

[116] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 9.

One of the pinnacles of Murdoch's criticism is when she invites her reader to consider the following example:

A mother, who I shall call M, feels hostility to her daughter-in-law, who I shall call D. M finds D quite a good-hearted girl, but while not exactly common yet certainly unpolished and lacking in dignity and refinement. D is inclined to be pert and familiar, insufficiently ceremonious, brusque, sometimes positively rude, always tiresomely juvenile. M does not like D's accent or the way D dresses. M feels that her son has married beneath him. Let us assume for purposes of the example that the mother, who is a very 'correct' person, behaves beautifully to the girl throughout, not allowing her real opinion to appear in any way. We might underline this aspect of the example by supposing that the young couple have emigrated or that D is now dead: the point being to ensure that whatever is in question as *happening* happens entirely in M's mind.

Thus much for M's first thoughts about D. Time passes, and it could be that M settles down with a hardened sense of grievance and a fixed picture of D, imprisoned (if I may use a question-begging word) by the cliché: my poor son has married a silly vulgar girl. However, the M of the example is an intelligent and well-intentioned person, capable of self-criticism, capable of giving careful and just *attention* to an object which confronts her. M tells herself: 'I am old-fashioned and conventional. I may be prejudiced and narrow-minded. I may be snobbish. I am certainly jealous. Let me look again.' Here I assume that M observes D or at least reflects deliberately about D, until gradually her vision of D alters. If we take D to be now absent or dead this can make it clear that the change is not in D's behavior but in M's mind. D is discovered to be not vulgar, but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on. And as I say, *ex hypothesi*, M's outward behavior, beautiful from the start, in no way alters.[117]

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[117] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good*,16-17.

Murdoch goes on to explain why we are impelled to say and to be philosophically permitted to say that M has been *morally active* in the interim.[118] She elucidates her reasons as follows: First, "M looks at D, she attends to D, she focuses her attention", second, she says that one very natural way to describe M's activity is "by the use of specialized normative words… M stops seeing D as 'bumptious' and sees her as 'gay' ", and finally, "M's activity is peculiarly *her own*".[119]

Murdoch portrays how M's thinking, construing and feeling about D unfolds over a stretch of time. At a first glance, one might be resistant to agreeing with Murdoch that M has been morally active in the interim. There is, after all, no overt action or omission M has performed. Nor is M thinking of performing such an action or an omission. One might remain unmoved by Murdoch's reasons to hold that M is morally active in interim. But the previous chapters have prepared us to *explain why* Murdoch's reasons are good reasons to hold that M is morally active in the interim.

When we turned attention to moral behavior, we realized that what can guide the morally relevant bodily movements and omissions involved in moral behavior is a complex cognition whose focus is a human being. When we unpacked what sort of cognition might be playing this role in Joyce's moral behavior, for instance, we saw that it was a cognition that can be complex, one that admits of different modes of representations such as emotional feelings, beliefs, judgments and construals that are inter-related. Our discussion of understanding suggested that understanding is an excellent candidate to capture such a complex, ultimately particular directed cognition.

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[118] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good*,19.
[119] Ibid., 22.

This sheds light on why it is plausible to think that M is morally active in the interim. Close attention to M's mental activity helps us lay bare its close affinity to Joyce's cognition that was involved in her moral behavior. M's cognition, too, is directed at a particular human being, namely, D. M's cognition, too, has a complex nature, by involving different modes of inter-related representations such as believing that she herself is jealous, suspecting that she might have been narrow-minded about D, construing D not as vulgar but as refreshingly simple, not as tiresomely juvenile but as delightfully youthful, and perhaps feeling regret about her past purported understanding of D. The best way to describe what M is doing then is that M is engaging in understanding D, that is, she is correcting and perfecting the kind of understanding that could have expressed itself in various bodily movements and omissions in her interactions with D, had D not passed away.

It might be thought that M might still have occasions to express her altered understanding of D even though D has passed away. If her son asks what she thinks of D, for example, her answer will express this new understanding of hers. But imaging having no occasion to express one's understanding of another is not hard. Someone who cannot command any part of her body due to a disease can still direct her understanding towards a particular human being. The loss of the capacity to use one's body does not strip her of her capacity for moral understanding, hence to be morally active in Murdoch's sense. For this cognition is the very cognition that would have guided a series of bodily movements and omissions that would have constituted a morally significant way of treating another, had she not lost her capacity to use her body.

Both Joyce's cognition expressed in her behavior towards Patricia and M's cognition that lacks an occasion to get expressed in any behavior towards D are their moral understanding of Patricia and D respectively. The difference is, M's moral understanding of D gets altered as she reflects on it. Thus, the change that M goes through is a moral change despite the fact that this moral change might never get actualized in bodily movements and omissions. Had M had the opportunity to express her new understanding of D, on the other hand, her non-accidental bodily movements and omissions towards D would have constituted a different way of treating D. M's moral change then is primarily rooted in and originates from the change in her understanding of D. Her moral behavior would have changed, if the world had cooperated with her, since the moral understanding involved in it changed. Given our deliberations in the last chapter about the existence of evaluative properties, we can say not only that M's moral understanding has changed but that there is a fact concerning whether this change constitutes real moral progress. This brings me to Murdoch's second reason behind her plea to see M as morally active in the interim, namely, that M's cognition that is directed at D involves evaluative representations. For example, M stops seeing D as tiresomely juvenile and begins to see her as delightfully youthful; stops seeing D as vulgar and begins to see her as refreshingly simple etc.

Our reflection on understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life revealed that such understanding demands that we understanding (i) the evaluative properties of hers that manifest how and to what extent she approximates her *telos*, (e.g. her kindness) (ii) the evaluative properties of her life that manifest how and to what

extent her life approximates its *telos* (e.g. the richness of her life), including (iii) the evaluative properties of her relationships with others that manifest how and to what extent these relationships approximate their *telos*. (e.g. the abusiveness of a relationship of hers). Accordingly, we thought, our purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life necessarily involves a nest of inter-related representations that purport to capture these evaluative properties.

Going back to Murdoch's example of M, to say that M is engaged in understanding D is to say that M appeals to evaluative representations concerning D, since the former necessitates the latter. Hence, Murdoch is misleading to some extent when she lists these two facts as reasons to take M to be morally active in the interim. For these are not two *different* reasons. Rather, the fact that M is making use of inter-related evaluative representations explains further the fact that M is engaged in understanding D.

The difference between our example of Joyce that we have been continuously returning to and Murdoch's example of M is not just that Joyce's understanding of Patricia gets expressed in her non-accidental bodily movements and omissions in her interaction with Patricia whereas M's understanding of D cannot get expressed in such interactions. There is also the fact that Joyce's understanding of Patricia does not get altered whereas M's understanding of D does. The possibility of such a change raises two important questions: "How does one's understanding of another change?" and "Is there a fact about whether a change in moral understanding constitutes real moral progress?". The first of these questions demands that we turn attention to moral reflection.

Moral reflection takes on a different look and a different importance when we

shift our gaze from the rightness or wrongness of acts to the way in which our morally relevant bodily movements and omissions are guided by our understanding of human beings. I have been arguing that morally relevant bodily movements and omissions cannot be picked out in the absence of the understanding they express. But if picking out morally relevant bodily movements and omissions demands picking them out with the understanding they express, moral reflection cannot be a matter of seeing whether one got certain acts right or wrong. From the perspective I have been proposing to occupy, moral reflection is a matter of reflecting on one's purported understanding of a human being against the backdrop of her life. This perspective does not require us to renounce the possibility of moral reflection whose focus is one's past bodily movements and omissions concerning a human being. Rather, it illuminates what makes such reflection possible and how it can be carried forward. Since one cannot pick out her own bodily movements and omissions as her moral behavior in the absence of some sense of the understanding they express, her moral reflection cannot even begin unless she engages in thinking about the understanding expressed in the bodily movements and omissions in question. She cannot pick out her morally relevant behavior to reflect on unless she turns attention to the purported understanding of the human being(s) affected by her behavior. She cannot carry forward her moral reflection on her past bodily movements concerning human beings without calling into question her understanding of those human beings against the backdrop of their lives, including their potential and actual relationships with others. Once she picks out her past bodily movements and omissions concerning a human being as her behavior, she picks them out with their moral qualities due to

settling on at least a provisional view of the understanding they express. She is now in a position to carry forward her reflection by questioning whether the moral qualities that seem to her to be present in her behavior are really in her behavior, or by asking herself how her behavior can exhibit better moral qualities. Joyce, for instance, might ask herself whether how she spoke with her daughter really was supportive and caring – assuming that she deceived herself into thinking that it was. Or, the Nazi might ask himself how he can rid himself of his humiliating way of treating Jews –assuming that he has come to the painful acknowledgment of it. This means that even when one begins to engage in moral reflection by focusing on a past piece of behavior, she is bound to turn her attention to the human being some understanding of whom is expressed in that behavior to carry forward her moral reflection. This is why I think Murdoch errs when she says, "I think it is more than a verbal point to say that what should be aimed at is goodness, not freedom or right action, although right action, and freedom in the sense of humility, are natural products of attention to the Good. Of course right action is important in itself, with an importance which is not difficult to understand. But it should provide the starting point of reflection not its conclusion."[120] The rightness of an action cannot be the starting point of reflection as much as it cannot be its conclusion.

On the view I am proposing, the ultimate aim of moral reflection is to deepen one's understanding of another by trying to see to what extent one's purported understanding of her against the backdrop of her life portrays her and her life the way they really are. When viewed this way, all those times when we try to understand others

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[120] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good*, 69.

better by thinking of them show up as our *moral* reflections. To pick one representative, consider the following passage from Marcel Proust's "The Fugitive". Proust's main character, Marcel, is engaging in thinking about a particular human being, Albertine, he has recently lost, and he is struggling to find a way to reconcile her betrayal and her concealment of it with the earlier unfoldings of his moral understanding of her:

But it was above all that fragmentation of Albertine into many parts, into many Albertines, that was her sole mode of existence in me. Moments recurred in which she had simply been kind, or intelligent, or serious, or even loving sport above all else. And was it not right, after all, that this fragmentation should soothe me? For if it was not in itself something real, if it arose from the continuously changing shape of the hours in which she had appeared to me, a shape which remained that of my memory as the curve of the coloured slides, did it not in its own way represent a truly objective truth, this one, namely that none of us is single, that each of us contains many persons who do not all have the same moral value, and that if a vicious Albertine had existed, it did not mean that there had not been others, the Albertine who enjoyed talking to me about Saint-Simon in her room, the Albertine who on the night when I told her that we must part had said so sadly: "This pianola, this room, to think that I shall never see these things again" and, when she saw the distress which I had finally communicated to myself by my lie, had exclaimed with sincere pity: "Oh, no, anything, rather than make you unhappy, I promise that I shall never try to see you again." Then I was no longer alone; I felt the barrier that separated us vanish. As soon as this good Albertine had returned, I had found once more the only person who could provide me with the antidote to the sufferings which Albertine was causing me…No doubt Albertine had never ceased to lie to me. And yet, in the ebb and flow of her contradictions, I felt that there had been a certain progression due to myself. That she had not, indeed, confided some of her secrets to me at the beginning (perhaps, it is true, involuntarily, in a remark that escaped her lips) I would not have sworn. I no longer remembered. And besides, she had such odd ways of naming certain things that they could be interpreted one way or the other. But the

impression she had received of my jealousy had led her afterwards to retract with horror what at first she had complacently admitted. In any case, Albertine had no need to tell me this. To be convinced of her innocence it was enough for me to embrace her, and I could do so now that the barrier that separated us was down, that impalpable but hermetic barrier which rises between two lovers after a quarrel and against which kisses would be shattered. No, she had no need to tell me anything. Whatever she might have done, whatever she might have wished to do, the poor child, there were sentiments in which, over the barrier that divided us, we could be united…I had the comfort of hearing this Albertine say so. Besides, had I known any other? The chief causes of error in one's relations with another person are, having oneself a kind of heart, or else being in love with that other person. We fall in love for a smile, a look, a shoulder. That is enough; then in the long hours of hope or sorrow, we fabricate a person, we compose a character. And when later on we see much of the beloved being, we can no more, whatever cruel reality that confronts us, divest the woman with that look, that shoulder, of the sweet nature and loving character with which we have endowed her than we can, when she has grown old, eliminate her youthful face from a person whom we have known since her girlhood. I recalled the kind and compassionate look in the eyes of that Albertine, her plump cheeks, the grainy texture of her neck. It was the image of a dead woman, but, as this dead woman was alive, it was easy for me to do immediately what I should have done if she had been by my side in her living body (what I should do were I ever to meet her again in another life), I forgave her.[121]

Marcel's reflection described above does not begin by way of focusing on some past bodily movement or omission of his. Like M's reflection it immediately focuses on a particular human being and proceeds by calling into question the previous understanding of that human being against the backdrop of her life. In other words, its immediate focus is its ultimate focus. We might think that his reflection calls for critique –perhaps any

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[121] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time:* V *The Captive, The Fugitive* trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff & Terence Kilmartin (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), 605-607.

such reflection does– but the point I am trying to make is that this is *moral* reflection since he is reflecting on his earlier understanding of Albertine against the backdrop of her life –that includes their relationship– by questioning it as honestly as he can. His reflection alters his understanding of Albertine; had he been wrong about Albertine's death, had Albertine walked towards him after this reflection, we can imagine him embracing Albertine and telling her that he has forgiven her, something he would not have done with his earlier understanding of her. His altered understanding of Albertine that he has come to have through his reflection would be the understanding that would have gotten expressed had the occasion arose. The change that gradually occurs through reflection, both in M and Marcel, is a moral change.

Murdoch refers to that which gets altered internally in M and in Marcel as moral 'vision', not moral 'understanding'.[122] She holds that moral vision consists of moral imagination and moral effort.[123] But as we have seen, moral understanding is better suited to capture what gets altered internally in M and in Marcel, or put differently, it is better suited to capture that which guides and gets expressed in moral behavior. For moral understanding can involve different modes of representations, including but not confined to imaginings. It also captures better the inter-relatedness of these

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[122] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 17. Sometimes she prefers 'apprehension' but primarily, and surprisingly, for the cognition directed at the form of the Good. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 49, 51.

[123] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 36. As I mentioned in fn 10, By 'moral effort', Murdoch means the effort to counteract "false pictures of the world" by continuously focusing one's "attention" on it. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 36.

representations, and thereby helps to make better sense of why moral changes like that of M's or Marcel's typically happen, as Murdoch herself highlights, *gradually*.[124]

Based on the arguments of the last chapter, moreover, we can say that there is a fact about whether M's or Proust's main character's moral change constitutes real moral progress. We saw that the inter-related evaluative representations constitutive of one's purported moral understanding purport to capture real evaluative properties of the human being and of her life in question. Correspondingly, there is an open question as to how well one's moral understanding captures the reality, namely, the human being that is to be understood against the backdrop of her life. One's purported moral understanding can be as deeply deficient as Joyce's purported understanding of Patricia, or it can be closer to depicting the human being as she is as exemplified in M's new understanding of D after her moral reflection. We can now see how the arguments of the last chapter illuminate what is involved in excelling at understanding a human being against the backdrop of her life.

One of the important arguments of the last chapter was that to understand a teleological particular, it is necessary to have some understanding of what it is for that particular to be perfectly good *qua* its kind since the teleological particular in question could not be the kind of particular it is unless it manifested some goodness *qua* its kind. To understand whether a bunch of sounds is a musical performance, and if it is, to understand it as a musical performance, we need to have some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good musical performance. We need to have some dim

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[124] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 17.

conception of a perfectly good musical performance since a pianist's striking the keys *itself* needs to have some goodness *qua* musical performance *to be* a musical performance.

The same goes for excelling at understanding a human being against the backdrop of her life. One can misunderstand a human being, or worse yet, fail to understand her entirely. Joyce's purported understanding of Patricia is a case in point. Joyce's purported understanding of Patricia, for example, can be seen as closer to a complete failure to understand her than it is to a perfect understanding of her. At the time of their exchange, there were many things about Patricia that Joyce should have understood: That she was standing there, right in front of her mother's eyes, with all her frailty, shame and rage; that she was in need of, more than ever, being heard and seen as she is, especially by those from whom she longs for intimacy, such as her mother; that she needed her feelings to be attended to, she needed to tell her story to someone who was able to hear it just the way it was for her, she needed to feel that someone would support her throughout the worst times of her struggle; that after just having been treated as if she were "nothing", she needed to feel, more than ever, its denial: that there is no limit to how much she matters. Joyce did not have any of these representations, in any mode, in her understanding.

To understand a human being against the backdrop of her life, we need to have some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good human being as well as some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good life. Had Joyce been clueless about the importance of growing up with emotional support, she could not have

even discerned Patricia's need as a need for a certain kind of emotional support, a need the proper satisfaction of which poses a threat to the satisfaction of her own needs according to her purported moral understanding. Nor could she have seen Patricia as, say, too demanding in this way. As we have seen, having at least some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good human being as well as some dim conception of the ideals that constitute a perfectly good human life is not just an epistemic requirement to understand human beings against the backdrop of their lives. There is such an epistemic requirement since a human being *itself* needs to have some goodness *qua* human being *to be* a human being, and a human life itself needs to have some goodness *qua* human life to be a human life. This marks an important place where the view I have been outlining departs from Murdoch's. As I mentioned in the introduction, Murdoch repeatedly claims that she is against the idea of a *telos*, that goodness is an independent form.[125] And that what is to be "apprehended*"* to apprehend the individual is this independent form of the good.[126]

The third and last reason behind Murdoch's claim that M is morally active in the interim is pertinent to the fact that "M's activity is peculiarly *her own*". Thinking of M as engaging in moral understanding is conducive to strengthening and explaining this aspect of M's mental activity. Moral understanding offers us two significant reasons why it is apt to describe M's activity as peculiarly her own, and (put more familiarly) why it is very difficult to pass the cognition that gets expressed in one's moral behavior on to someone else.

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[125] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, see especially, 4, 40-1, 59, 67, 76, 95, 99-100.
[126] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 41.

The first reason has to do with the inter-relatedness of different representations involved in one's purported moral understanding. One can reliably assent to the truth of a proposition or reliably judge that thus and such is the case on the basis of the reliable testimony of someone else. By contrast, understanding demands that one "see" the relations between various aspects of a human being herself. If one simply takes two aspects of a human being to be related due to taking a reliable person's word for it, she does not thereby make progress in understanding the human being in question. Just as a student would not make progress in understanding Aristotle's thought by taking two significant propositions about his thought to be related only because we have told her that they are, so too Joyce would not make progress in understanding Patricia by taking Patricia's rage against Ethan and her rape to be related only because Patricia told her that they are. As one's understanding of an object, be it a human being or Aristotelian thought, unfolds, it unfolds in such a way that the coherence bearers of the object in question (e.g. propositions of a theory or aspects of a human being) are represented as already related. When we read student papers, we can tell when the paper is not written with understanding by suspecting that it has been produced by first listing propositions that have been repeated in class and then adding various connectors between them. Such a paper stands out as a paper that does not show understanding precisely because it shows that the student has not seen the relations between the propositions she has expressed. When we are on our way to understanding, or in the midst of understanding, the coherence bearers of our object of understanding are present to our mind as already related, regardless of how misguided our purported understanding might be. The

phenomenology of understanding is more like having a cognitive picture of a certain object rather than having a list of representations that then need to be *turned into* a cognitive picture. Surely understanding does not unfold that smoothly all the time. There are times when we have a hard time trying to see how exactly two propositions of a theory or two aspects of a human being are related. But even then, we have some idea about how to piece things together in light of our focus, about what is left out as if it is irrelevant even though it seems relevant, and about what has remained frustratingly opaque during this mental struggle. That is why such cognitive struggles are described as times when we "*try* to understand" the object in question, not as times when we were in the midst of "understand*ing*".

Another reason why it is very difficult to pass the view that gets expressed in one's moral behavior on to someone else concerns the place of emotional feelings that are constitutive of this view. As I have been emphasizing, the fact that moral understanding admits of different modes of representations that are inter-related and evaluative is partly why it is superior to other kinds of cognition in capturing the guiding role in moral behavior. In giving examples of different modes of representations, I have repeatedly included emotional feelings among my examples alongside beliefs, judgments and construals. As promised before, let me try to justify this inclusion.

On one common scientific view of emotional feelings, emotional feelings are characterized by various physiological phenomena such as facial expressions, musculoskeletal changes (such as flinching), expressive vocal changes and autonomic

nervous system changes (such as adrenaline release and change of heart rate).[127] Paul E. Griffiths who is a leading proponent of this view, groups some of these responses under the name 'affect program responses'. He lays out the empirical evidence that some of these responses are similar cross-culturally: Paul Ekman's studies, for instance, show that many cultures display anger, fear, sadness, enjoyment, disgust and surprise by similar facial expressions.[128] Yet, they are distinct from each other since the facial expression of, say, sadness differs from the facial expression of enjoyment. There is also empirical evidence showing that certain patterns of autonomic arousal are also characteristic of these responses. Furthermore, Ledoux's work strongly suggests that in such responses, the sensory thalamus and thereby the amygdala plays the main role. Responses occur rapidly and without the intervention or contribution of any higher-cognitive states such as beliefs or judgments.[129]

What we might be able to conclude on the basis of these findings, however, is only that physiological responses *typically* accompany emotional feelings, not that emotional feelings are nothing more than such responses. One can experience an emotional feeling even when the physiological responses that go typically with it are masked. Think of, for instance, someone whose facial nerves are severely damaged and who therefore lacks facial expressions. She can still feel surprise. Or, imagine someone whose heart rate is constantly kept under control by beta-blocker pills or by a pacemaker. Such a person is not barred from feeling anger just because anger typically involves an

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[127] Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 29.
[128] Paul Ekman, "Universal and Cultural Differences in Facial Expressions of Emotion" in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* 4, ed. J.K. Cole (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).
[129] Joseph Ledoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

increase in one's heart rate. Consequently, physiological responses cannot be essential to experiencing emotional feelings. In fact, the studies that purport to show that they are would not be possible in the absence of some independent characterization of emotional feelings. A scientist can compare facial expressions of, say, fear cross-culturally only because she has a prior conception of fear and knows whose face to look at and when in accordance with that conception. She picks out the faces of those who might be construing something as dangerous according to her. She *expects* a commonality in those faces due to the presumed presence of a certain cognitive state.

There are accounts of emotional feelings including those put forward by Martha Nussbaum and Robert Solomon that characterize emotional feelings by appealing to evaluative judgments. On their view, to experience fear, for example, is to judge that something that one values is in danger.[130] The trouble is that characterizing emotional feelings by appealing to cognitive states such as beliefs or judgments underdetermines emotional feelings. As Griffiths points out, one can hotly deny the supposed judgment that underlies an emotional feeling while still experiencing that emotional feeling. His example is a person who has the conviction that earthworms are harmless yet who nonetheless gets afraid of them.[131] Still along similar lines, these cognitive accounts fail to accommodate the fact that people have emotional responses to imagination.[132] Many experiences of emotional feelings occur, as Griffiths notes, when people only *imagine* certain situations, objects, events etc. One may for instance experience disgust when she

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[130] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert C. Solomon, *Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[131] Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, 28.
[132] Ibid., 29.

imagines swallowing a bug as she drinks a glass of wine. Clearly, she does not, as a matter of fact, believe that there is a bug in her glass of wine.

What is then the best account of emotional feelings? If judgment or belief based cognitive theories like Nussbaum's and Solomon's is all we can recognize by way of cognitive theory of emotional feelings, we reach an impasse. On one hand, the very possibility of scientific inquiry into the physiological responses that are typically involved in emotional feelings pressures us to acknowledge an independent characterization of emotional feelings that employs some sort of a cognitive state; on the other hand, if we acknowledge only beliefs and judgments as cognitive states, we cannot have a satisfactory account of emotional feelings. This antinomy is overcome if we acknowledge a mode of representation that differs from beliefs and judgments. Robert Roberts offers us just this. According to his account, emotional feelings are concern-based construals, not beliefs or judgments. He draws attention to the close affinity between perceptions and construals. He contends "usually we believe our eyes and ears, but not always. Our perception tells us that the stick in the water is bent (this is how we perceive it), but we judge otherwise, disagreeing with our eyes".[133] Just as we cannot help perceiving certain straight lines as curved when presented in a certain way, there are times when we cannot help construing what we construe in a certain way.

Roberts takes a construal to be typically an imagining that consists in seeing a 'focus' *in terms of* a perception, an image, a concept, or a proposition.[134] Going back to

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[133] Roberts, Robert C., *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89.
[134] Robert C. Roberts, "What an Emotion is: A Sketch", *The Philosophical Review* 97 (2) (1988), 190. Also see Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, 77 and 87.

Joyce, for instance, Joyce fears having an emotional exchange with Patricia as she speaks

with her after her rape. This token fear of Joyce must be then Joyce's construing a focus

in terms of a perception, an image, a concept, or a proposition. Based on the narrative and

our speculations about Joyce, we can surmise that the focus of Joyce's emotion is herself

and that she construes herself as threatened by Patricia's immediate emotional need. She

can't let go of images of her and her husband enjoying or losing the "good things" that

come with the parents of her daughter's rapist.[135]

A cognitive theory of emotional feelings of this sort –that is, a theory that

employs a different mode of representation than that of beliefs or judgments– is immune

to the problems of cognitive theories that employ judgments: one can be in the grip of a

construal while holding a belief that is in tension with it, and one can have an emotional

experience by merely imagining a situation, event or object.[136] If emotional feelings are,

(or at the very least necessitate) a kind of mental representation that is different from

beliefs or judgments, this opens up the possibility that they too can be constitutive of our

understandings of a human being against the backdrop of her life just as beliefs or

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[135] According to Roberts, "emotions are states of the self and that to feel an emotion is to perceive oneself in such a state". We might plausibly be doubtful Roberts' distinction between a token-emotion and the feeling of a token-emotion. We might think that a token-emotion is always felt and that his contention that to feel a token-emotion one needs to construe herself as having a certain token-emotion makes emotional feelings implausibly self-focused. When one is feeling pity, for instance, the phenomenology of this feeling suggests that one's focus in not on oneself at all. Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, 323.

[136] In his earlier article Roberts distinguishes serious construals from non-serious ones. Non-serious construals were those when one only imagines X in terms of Y or entertains how it would be if X were Y etc. Robert C. Roberts, "What an Emotion is: A Sketch". Yet, in his book, he drops the distinction and seems to take a construal to be serious by definition. He claims, "…in my special use of 'construal', to construe a situation in certain terms is for the situation to strike one, or impress one, or appear to one, as having that character." It seems that Roberts' most recent position is that the only construals that are not emotions are those that are not based on subject's basic concerns: "…emotions are a subclass of construals, the ones in which active concern of the subject is impinged upon by the other dimensions of the construal and thus the active concern is one of the terms of the construal". Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*, 101.

judgments can. On reflection, there is reason to suppose that at least some of the evaluative properties of human beings –and of human lives that include human relationships– that await to be understood *demand* that they be represented in the mode of an emotional feeling if our understanding of them is to deepen and to broaden. Take someone's (e.g. Patricia's) suffering from an erosion of belief in meaningful human relationships. Someone's understanding of Patricia's suffering who feels her suffering to some extent is deeper and broader compared to someone who is reliably told that Patricia is suffering in this way. It is deeper in that the one who feels her suffering has a better grasp of the weight of this particular suffering. And it is broader in that the one who feels this suffering can grasp its weight and is in a better position to see and imagine how Patricia and her life are affected by her suffering. Gaita draws attention to the same point by comparing the prose of SS reports with the prose of Deane and Gaudron's description of the dispossession of Australian Aborigines. Of the latter, he says,

> We know when we read them that they are written by men whose souls were lacerated by what they knew. It shows in their prose which we read, as Nora Levi put it, with bleeding eyes. There is no other way to read them with understanding and no other way they can convey the reality of the evil they describe…We see that immediately if we compare the reports of the murders with SS reports of the killing without any sense of its evil. Those SS reports are dispassionate, in the sense of being uninformed by feeling. The effect is not to disclose reality objectively, but to obscure it.[137]

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[137] Gaita, Raimond, *A Common Humanity: Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice*, 89-90.

The same point can be made more generally but with less precision by turning attention to that which is to ultimately be understood: human beings. A human being is the sort of being that has emotional feelings. It is only natural then to claim that to understand a human being partly consists in understanding her emotional feelings that purport to represent various evaluative properties. In the case of Patricia, this property is meaningful relationships. She suffers due to seeing meaningful relationships as non-present or as not possible for her. But one cannot understand these emotional feelings of hers simply by being told that this is how things appear to her. One must be able to temporarily be able to catch a glimpse of how things appear to her, say, by recalling a similar period in one's own life. This does not mean that one must feel some suffering due to seeing meaningful relationships as non-present and/or as not possible for Patricia. That would exhibit some deficiency in understanding Patricia since part of what is to be understood is the blindness that this feeling of Patricia's manifests. A better understanding would involve a different emotional feeling, perhaps sorrow due to seeing Patricia as emotionally crippled due to feeling the way she does, as missing out on the human possibility of meaningful human connection in her life. This is why the emotional aspect of understanding another human being goes beyond mere empathy.

The above elaboration of emotional feelings and their place in understanding another human being brings out yet another reason why it is very difficult to pass moral understanding on to someone else, why moral understanding, in Murdoch's terms, is "peculiarly one's own". Unlike beliefs and judgments, emotional feelings cannot be had on the basis of the word of a reliable source. Joyce cannot feel delighted in her daughter

merely by being told by someone who has an exemplary understanding of Patricia that Patricia is to be delighted in, not to be experienced as an emotional burden.

The view I have been urging, which might be called, 'morality as understanding human beings', is a substantial realist view. But it is different from other substantial realist views on offer. There is controversy surrounding how to construe realism in philosophical ethics, so I will draw the boundaries of realism generously. According to realism, there are moral or ethical propositions that are true and their truth is independent of us. Substantial realists hold that these moral propositions purport to capture various moral qualities of moral behavior and moral cognition. For example, a Kantian who claims that we have a duty to avoid doing X to serve a certain end E under certain circumstances C is a realist but not a substantial realist. She holds that this claim is true independently of us, but *the reason why* it is true independently of us is not because there is this property of being a duty that exists independently of us. Rather, it is because doing X to serve a certain end E under certain circumstances C would be in conflict with our rationality. In more Kantian terms, the truth of the claim "we have a duty to avoid doing X to serve a certain end E under certain circumstances C" is derived from the fact that "do X to serve a certain end E under certain circumstances C" cannot be a universal law. By contrast, an Aristotelian will typically hold that the claim, "S is kind" is made true in virtue of S having the property of being kind. Substantial realism therefore, requires the existence of evaluative properties such as "being kind". Since the view I have defended above requires the existence of evaluative properties, it can be categorized as a substantial realist view. But on this view, being committed to the existence of evaluative

properties is necessitated by being committed to the existence of human beings living

human lives. Consequently, we understand the humanity of human beings by

understanding the evaluative properties of them and their lives. This link between

understanding human beings against the backdrop of their lives and understanding the

evaluative aspects of human beings and their lives provides the proper context within

which the importance of thick evaluative concepts such as the concept of humiliatingness

is to be placed. Those who highlight the fact that ethical or moral thinking is essentially

thinking with thick evaluative concepts –a group that includes such figures as Elizabeth

Anscombe, McDowell and Murdoch– are right to do so.[138] Yet, given the nature of moral

understanding, there is more to be said about *why* thinking (imagining, construing,

emotional feeling and so on) with evaluative concepts is crucial to moral understanding:

the ultimate objects of moral understanding are human beings living human lives. The

teleological structure of human beings and human lives –that include human

relationships– explains why (i) we are to understand the evaluative aspects of human

beings that manifest how and to what extent they approximate their *telos*, (e.g. the

kindness of a human being) (ii) we are to understand the evaluative aspects of human

lives that manifest how and to what extent they approximate their *telos* (e.g. the richness

of a life) (iii) we are to understand the evaluative aspects of human relationships that

manifest how and to what extent these lives approximate their *telos*. (e.g. the abusiveness

of a relationship). And it is because we are to understand these evaluative aspects of

human being, human lives and human relationships that we are to think, imagine, feel,

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[138] Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (1958), 1–19; Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*; John McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following".

construe and so on with thick evaluative concepts. Put briefly, it is the ultimate objects of moral understanding that explains the indispensability of thick evaluative concepts for moral theory.

The special emphasis this view places on human beings might make it seem closer to Kantianism and farther from Aristotelian virtue ethics. If we think of virtue ethics as primarily focusing on a good human life and as explaining the ethical value of something in terms of its contribution to a good human life, then this view does not show up as Aristotelian, since it takes how best to understand and thereby treat human beings as its primary focus. A good way to see this tension is to reflect on the value of our interactions with others from these two perspectives. On virtue ethics, our interactions show up as valuable due to their constitutive role in a good human life. But this hardly exhausts their importance. Consider the following ways of displaying failure during an interaction, say, a conversation. First, imagine someone who has a hard time understanding the person she is conversing with due to conversing in her second language. This sort of failure restricts what can pass between two people during a conversation. Indeed, this failure prevents the conversation from opening up to more possibilities since, due to this obstacle, one participant is failing, to some extent, to understand what the other is trying to convey. There is, however, a different kind of failure one might display as one converses with another. This latter failure does not arise due to failing the conversation. It arises due to failing *the human being* one is conversing with, by, say, conversing in a condescending way with her.

The virtue ethicists can of course go beyond simply deriving the value of something by just considering its contribution to a good human life. After all, Aristotle himself says, "the virtuous actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble".[139] So the virtue ethicist might say that the virtuous person is one who tracks nobility, including the nobility of human beings.[140] Hence, the virtuous person can be characterized as having perfect grasp of the nobility of human beings, in our terms, as having perfectly deep and broad understanding of human beings. She can track, in other words, not just the value of various human activities that are constitutive of a good human life, but also the value of human beings without whom most of these activities become impossible. If we adopt this latter sort of virtue ethical approach, the difference between it and the view I have been outlining becomes a difference in emphasis rather than scope. On both views, we cannot make progress in treating human beings well without making progress understanding a good human life. But on the virtue ethical view, the immediate focus is on deepening our understanding of a good human life. As we make progress in understanding a good human life, we necessarily make progress in understanding human beings and thereby in treating them well. On morality as understanding human beings, on the other hand, the immediate focus is on understanding human beings and it is because making progress in understanding human beings demands that we make progress in understanding what it is for a human life to go well that we turn attention to a good human life. Since understanding a good human life necessitates understanding human beings and vice

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[139] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 11120a23.

[140] It is questionable whether we can attribute this view to Aristotle himself since every time he speaks of nobility, he speaks of the nobility of being virtuous and of the actions that are performed with virtue. See *The Nicomachean Ethics,* 1115b12, 1116a12, 1116b3, 1117b9, 1117b17, 1119b15 and 11120a23.

verse, I believe there is no good theoretical reason to prefer one to the other. I have moved from understanding human beings to understanding a good human life since I thought this might help to convince those who view virtue ethicists as "changing the subject". If there is a distinction to be drawn between moral theory and ethical theory, that distinction is not one that concerns a difference in scope, but in emphasis: we might say that moral theory starts with focusing on understanding human beings and treating them well, and then inevitably proceeds to an understanding of a good human life, whereas ethical theory starts with focusing on understanding a good human life and then inevitably emphasizes the importance of understanding human beings and treating them well in a good human life. I have chosen to call understanding human beings "moral understanding" for this reason, not because I believe that we are pressed to do either "moral theory" or "ethical theory" as if they differ in scope.

My immediate emphasis on understanding human beings against the backdrop of their lives, especially my defense of how it necessarily guides various ways of treating human beings, might seem Kantian for the following reason: Kantians assess the moral status of "action types" that can be put in the form, "doing X to serve end E under circumstances C". These action types make reference not only to some universal bodily movement or omission (doing X) but also to the grasp with which it is, or will be, performed (to serve end E). Further, one of the formulations of the Categorical Imperative that determines the moral status of action types can be seen as overlapping with "treating human beings well": *"So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as*

a means" (G: 429).[141] It is natural to think then what the Categorical Imperative, if understood with this formulation, really determines is "action types that constitute ways of treating human beings". When viewed this way, it might be thought that the best theoretical residence for moral understanding that gets expressed in ways of treating human beings is Kantianism. It might be thought that Kantianism can be modified so as to provide us with a way to assess someone's purported moral understanding that gets expressed in her way of treating another (or, of course, herself). For example, it might be proposed that the Kantian "action types" might take the following modified form: "Doing X that expresses the moral understanding U under circumstances C". Once someone's way of treating a human being is captured in this way, the thought continues, it can *then* be morally assessed. If the way of treating a human being in question counts as treating her as a mere means, then it is a way of treating her that one ought to avoid. If it is not, then it is permissible. Since our purported moral understandings can be better or worse and thereby can guide better or worse ways of treating human beings, a better modification of the Kantian moral assessment might be as follows: The closer one's way of treating another is to treating her as a mere means, the worse the treatment in question is. Of course, treating someone as a mere means would have to be understood as something that can come in degrees –treating more as a mere means, less as a mere means. Let us sidestep doubts about whether a modified Kantianism can do this and assume that it can. Still, however, there remain two reasons why a modified Kantianism along these lines is fated to fail to capture morality as understanding human beings.

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[141] Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the Metaphysical of Morals* orig. 1785 trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The first reason concerns the portrayal of human beings in Kantianism. What explains why we are to treat human beings as ends and never as a mere means is that they have rational nature, that is, they are the sort of creatures that can set ends for themselves and pursue them. To treat them only to achieve certain ends we have set for ourselves is to fail to respect the rational nature of human beings; it is to fail to acknowledge them *qua* beings that can set ends for themselves. Going back to Joyce and Patricia, Joyce's emotionally neglectful way of treating Patricia, on this view, is a way of treating a human beings that one ought to avoid since it fails to respect Patricia's rational nature, it fails to acknowledge her *qua* an end setter. But this does not do justice to the moral harm that is being done to Patricia. Joyce's continuous emotional neglect is not bad simply because it disrespects or adversely affects Patricia's end-setting capacity. Or, it is not bad because the emotional needs that Joyce is neglecting happen to belong to a creature with an end-setting capacity and *thereby matter*. It is bad because the neglect is directed at an important aspect of a *human being* who matters as a whole, a human being with various capacities and needs, including emotional capacities and needs, a human being who is living a human life. I am not sure if Kantianism can be modified so as to broaden the scope of the "end"ness of human beings. My suspicion emerges from one of the motivations shared by orthodox contemporary Kantians: grounding "morality", that is, providing a justificatory reason as to why one should be moral, a reason that is itself not a moral reason, a reason that is external to morality. If being moral is a matter of striving to excel in moral understanding, it does not make any sense to look for such an external ground, since its "ground" albeit internal, is in the very object of moral understanding –

human beings. Asking, "why be moral?" is therefore asking, "why strive for a better moral understanding" and the answer is "because moral understanding is understanding human beings". If we do happen to meet someone who asks, "so what?" and means it, we can either try to show them they already are engaging in the activity of understanding human beings, or if we are convinced that they are trying hard not to be so engaged, we can perhaps offer our friendship. All in all, I am not sure if Kantianism can remain as Kantianism if it is divorced from its aim of grounding morality in rational nature and instead married to grounding it in its own object in the way I just described.

There is yet another facet of morality as understanding human beings that cannot be embraced by a modified Kantianism at all. It is its demand that we abandon the scientific world-view on which the Kantian situationist view is built. Kantianism, if modified so as to leave conceptual space for moral understanding as understanding human beings, would have to view moral understanding through the lens of the scientific-world view on which it is built. Due to this scientific view, on any modified Kantian view, moral theory's work would have to begin after one's way of treating a human being together with the purported moral understanding that gets expressed in it are picked out. As we have seen however, the employment of purported moral understanding and thereby the way of treatment that gets expressed in it cannot be captured without abandoning the scientific world-view. For one's purported moral understanding necessarily involves appealing to inter-related evaluative representations that purport to capture various evaluative *properties* of human beings and their lives. Correspondingly, ways of treating human beings necessarily carry moral qualities. They owe these

qualities, as we have seen in the last two chapters, to being guided by and expressing purported moral understandings.

The necessary shift from construing the center or 'the moral' as the situation of a human being making a definite choice, i.e., choosing the right or the wrong action, to construing the center of the moral as a human being expressing her purported moral understanding by treating a human being in a certain way that necessarily carries a moral quality that comes in degrees, renders the recent virtue ethical attempts to provide an account of right or wrong action misguided. To give a sampling of these attempts, Rosalind Hursthouse proposes that "an action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances".[142] Michael Slote suggest that "an act is right iff it exhibits or expresses a virtuous (admirable) motive, or at least does not exhibit or express a vicious (deplorable) motive".[143] And according to Christine Swanton, a virtue ethicist can make use of one of the following accounts of right action: "an act is right iff it is overall virtuous, and that entails that it is the (or a) best action possible in the circumstances", "an act is right iff it is overall virtuous, and that it entails that it is good enough even if not the (or a) best action", or, "an act is right iff it is not overall vicious".[144] We have seen in the first chapter that human action can be picked out only with the cognition that plays the guiding role in it. In the following chapters, we noted again and again that many different bodily movements and omissions can belong to the same way of treating a human being due to sharing the same purported

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[142] Rosalind Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics," in Russell Shafer-Landau, ed., *Ethical Theory: An Anthology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 703.

[143] Michael Slote, "Agent-Based Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 20 (1) (1995), 83-101.

[144] Christine Swanton, "A Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action," in Russell Shafer-Landau, ed., *Ethical Theory: An Anthology* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 730.

moral understanding. Hence, they cannot be picked out as particular actions unless they are picked out as partaking in certain ways of treating a human being that are essentially evaluative. The Kantian motivation behind making use of rightness and wrongness concerns the mistaken assumption that the moral assessment of actions begins after they are picked out without any moral assessment. But virtue ethicists need not (and typically do not) share this mistaken assumption. If the action is picked out by placing it in its proper place within a way of treating a human being (e.g. a humiliating act that belongs to a humiliating way treating a human being), then it is conceded that it carries the moral qualities of the way of treating a human being to which it belongs. In that case, attribution of rightness to a morally relevant action does not only seem less informative than all the specific moral qualities that have already been attributed to it, but it also prevents us from distinguishing actions that partake in a good way of treating a human being from actions that partake in yet a better way of treating a human being.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that a detailed examination of moral trauma shows that the most serious of moral harms are harms that are initiated through ways of treating a human being, not through actions that can be picked out in isolation from those ways. Further, what makes a variety of seemingly different actions belong to one and the same way of treating a human being is the fact that they all share and express one and the same purported moral understanding directed at the human being in question. Accordingly, the cognition that should be under immediate focus in philosophical ethics is not judgments that concern various actions, but moral understanding directed at human beings living human lives, moral understanding whose content requires inter-related evaluative representations that purport to capture how and to what extent a human being exemplifies her *telos* as well as inter-related representations that purport to capture how and to what extent her life exemplifies its *telos*. Our purported understanding of one another can broaden, and deepen over time: It can broaden as we experience new evaluative aspects of the other and of her life; and as we see the relationships between these and the ones we had already experienced. Our understanding of one another can deepen, too. It deepens when our (apt) inter-related evaluative representations that compose our understanding change their mode from modes that are easier to pass on to someone else such as beliefs or judgments to modes that are harder to pass on to someone else to modes such as emotional feelings. This is why "coming, through living with a people, to see dignity in faces that had all looked alike to us, to see the full range of human expressiveness in them, to hear suffering that lacerates the soul in someone's cry or in their music, or to see

it in their art, to hear all the depth of language in sounds that had seemed comical to us"[145] bestows on us a deeper and broader moral understanding.

This "personalness" of moral understanding has significant implications for moral theory. Of course we form a general understanding of human beings living human lives through engaging in understanding particular human beings against the backdrop of their lives. In fact, as I have emphasized earlier, the two are inter-dependent both conceptually and experientially. Some understanding of human beings living human lives is necessary to understand particular human beings against the backdrop of their lives and vice verse. When we meet someone new, our purported understanding of her is inevitably conditioned by some purported general understanding of human beings living human lives that we bring to our experience with her. Yet, our interaction with her has the potential to alter our purported general understanding. Gaita depicts, in detail, his father and his relationship with him in his memoir titled, "Romulus, My Father". In a passage of his memoir he writes,

> If he called you an incorrigible liar he might do it angrily, scathingly, sorrowfully, or, strange as it might sound, matter-of-factly, but never in a tone that suggested he would turn his back on you. You were always welcome at his table, to eat and more importantly to talk; always to talk.[146]

Living with someone whose tone always suggests that he would never turn his back on you (or on anyone else) might alter one's purported general understanding of human

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[145] Raimond, Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, 67.
[146] Raimond, Gaita, *A Common Humanity*, 97.

beings living human lives. Imagine for instance that according to one's previous general understanding, not everyone deserves one's faith in them and one's life would go better if one just reserved such faith for only a selection of human beings. One's altered general understanding of human beings and human life would then resemble more that of Gaita's father. It matters then that we capture this inter-dependency between our understanding of a particular human being against the backdrop of her life and our general understanding in our proposed moral theories. This means many things at once: it means that what we should be doing under the name "moral theory" –if that is the best name for what we are supposed to be doing- has to involve narratives that are detailed enough to expose better the proposed or opposed moral understanding that is under focus, such as the lengthy narrative of Gaita's relationship with his father as he depicts it in his memoir; it means that our moral theories must be set out in our authentic prose and tone, both of which are crucial to conveying our moral understanding of a human being that is inseparable from our general understanding of human beings; it means that our moral theories have to reflect our awareness that our purported moral understanding cannot be perfectly deep and broad, that we are putting our purported moral understanding out there in the hopes that we help each other's moral understanding to deepen and broaden; and it means that our moral understanding conveyed through our moral theories cannot be divorced from our moral behavior that involves it, so how we present our essays on morality and how we interact with one another (including with our students) matter since they are guided by the very moral understanding we are trying to convey in our moral theories. I came to the realization of the importance of these aspects of moral theorizing

in the writing of this dissertation. In retrospect, this dissertation seems to me to have failed to sufficiently exhibit them.   Morality as understanding human beings demands that two important long-standing moral discussions in moral theory take different forms. These are the motivational internalism and externalism debate, and the debate about the implications of moral disagreements for the moral realism and anti-realism debate. The debate between internalism and externalism about motivations reveals a genuine antinomy. Motivational internalists hold that moral cognition implies a motivation to act in accordance with the content of the cognition, while motivational externalists hold that it does not.[147] If moral judgment is understood on the model of propositional belief assertion, and if this is all we recognize as the only possible kind of moral cognition, then externalism is right: moral cognition is not essentially motivational. Externalists' examples, which are drawn from daily life, indeed do testify to the possibility of motivationally inert moral judgments. On the other hand, internalists seem to be on to something when they insist that there is a kind of moral cognition that is essentially motivational. This becomes very clear in the case of the moral cognition of a good person. Yet if we make the mistake of articulating this insight in the form of the internalist thesis that moral *judgments* always motivate, we quickly reach an impasse: there seems to be no way to resist putative externalist counter-examples without simply insisting upon the internalist thesis itself. This genuine antinomy is overcome if we

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[147] For a defense of internalism see for instance, Michael Smith *The Moral Problem* sect. 3.1.; Richard W. Miller, *Moral Differences: Truth, Justice and Conscience in a World of Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 1992); James Dreier, "Internalism and Speaker Relativism," *Ethics* 101 (1990), 6–26. For a defense of externalism see: Alfred Mele, *Moral Motivation and Agency*; David Brink, "Moral Motivation," *Ethics* 108 (1997), 4-32; Sigrun Svavarsdottir "Moral Cognitivism and Motivation," *The Philosophical Review* 108 (2) (1999), 161-219.

acknowledge the fact that two different human beings can be making the same moral judgment without sharing the same moral understanding. Both Patricia and I can make the judgment that Ray, Patricia's father, has been treating her in a condescending way and that someone who has the opportunity ought to make him realize this. Yet, Patricia's moral understanding might be deeper and broader than mine due to her ongoing relationship with Ray. Accordingly, her purported moral understanding might guide her treatment towards Ray, and mine might guide my treatment in a different way. Guided by my limited understanding, I might, upon running into Ray, tell him that I think that he has been treating his daughter in a condescending way, whereas Patricia, being the one who is exposed to that treatment day after day and being the one with a better understanding of Ray, might reach out to different words and say them with a very different tone.

The same insight can be used to shed light on what moral disagreements are ultimately about and thereby to re-consider what moral disagreements show about the realism and anti-realism debate. On the view I have sketched, moral disagreements are not ultimately about moral judgments, but are discrepancies between our purported moral understandings.[148] Just as two people can have drastically different moral understandings while agreeing on the same moral judgment, so too their moral understandings can be quite close to one another while disagreeing on the same moral judgment. Both Patricia and I can agree that someone who has the opportunity ought to make Ray realize that he has been treating Patricia in a condescending way. But I, having had only access to the

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[148] For those who characterize ethical disagreement as a disagreement about judgments see for example, Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Disagreement, Ethical Objectivism and Moral Indeterminacy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54 (2) (1994), 331-344; Robert Audi, "Intuition, Inference and Rational Disagreement in Ethics," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 11 (2008), 475-492; David Enoch, "How is Moral Disagreement a Problem for Realism?" *Journal of Ethics* 13 (2009), 15-50.

narrative of a part of their relationship, might not know that Ray has never had anyone treat him any differently whereas Patricia, living with him, might know this, might have seen how this has been affecting him and so on. Consequently, my purported understanding of him might involve seeing him as someone who thinks he is superior to others, whereas Patricia's purported understanding of him might involve seeing him as someone who has been so unfortunate that he does not know how to be delighted in someone or to be the recipient of that delight. In other words, my purported understanding of him might take the form of an ongoing anger and hers might take the form of ongoing sympathy. Similarly, Patricia and I might disagree about whether someone who has the opportunity ought to make Ray realize that he has been treating Patricia in a condescending way. Assume that I am Patricia's sister, that we have a very similar shared history with Ray and that we have come to have very similar understandings of Ray. We might still disagree about whether we ought to make Ray realize that he has been treating Patricia in a condescending way, since, say, Patricia might believe that we can but I might believe that we cannot. This means that moral *agreements* about moral judgments require explanation just as moral disagreements about moral judgments do. The explanation lies in the purported moral understandings that they are held with. Consequently, the question we should be asking is not "what do moral disagreements show about the realism/anti-realism debate?", but, "what do the presence of different moral understandings show about the realism/anti-realism debate?". On this view, the differences are explained by differences in the quality and inevitably the quantity of time we spend with one another and with ourselves. To move from the

presence of different moral understandings to the conclusion that there is nothing to be understood, would be to be committed to the claim that there are no human beings living human lives.

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