



**Digital Commons@**

Loyola Marymount University  
LMU Loyola Law School

---

Philosophy Faculty Works

Philosophy

---

2013

## The Cognitive Demands of Intellectual Virtue

Jason Baehr  
jbaehr@lmu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/phil\\_fac](https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/phil_fac)



Part of the [Epistemology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Baehr, Jason. "The Cognitive Demands of Intellectual Virtue." Knowledge, Virtue, and Action. Eds. David Schweikard and Tim Henning. New York: Routledge, 2013. 99-118. Print.

This Article - pre-print is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy at Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu).

*DRAFT ONLY; please cite with author permission only*

## The Cognitive Demands of Intellectual Virtue

Jason Baehr

Loyola Marymount University

My plan in this paper is to defend a “cognitive requirement” on intellectual virtue. I shall argue that part of what is involved with possessing an intellectual virtue is having a certain cognitive perspective on or belief about the disposition in question. This strikes me as an argument worth making in its own right, for it stands to illuminate the positive psychological substance of intellectual virtue and thus to deepen our understanding of its precise character. The discussion is also aimed, however, at providing a deeper account of the relation between the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue and various other widely acknowledged features of virtue proper. In this respect, the paper sheds light, not merely on the cognitive dimension of intellectual virtue, but also on the broader content and structure of intellectual virtue as a whole.

### 1. Preliminaries

I begin with two important preliminary tasks. First, I clarify how I am thinking about intellectual virtues. Second, I say something in support of the basic motivation of my project.

#### 1.1. A general conception of intellectual virtue

I shall be conceiving of intellectual virtues, first, as intellectual *character* traits like fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, attentiveness, carefulness and thoroughness in inquiry, and *intellectual* honesty, courage, integrity, and the like. Accordingly, I am not thinking of intellectual virtues as hardwired cognitive capacities or faculties on the model of vision, memory, introspection, or the like.<sup>1</sup> Second, intellectual virtues, as I am conceiving of them, are the rather straightforward counterpart of what

we typically think of as *moral* virtues. For our purposes, it will suffice to distinguish intellectual virtues from moral virtues by specifying two distinctive features of the former: first, that intellectual virtues aim at distinctively intellectual or epistemic ends like knowledge, truth, and understanding; and, second, that they are immediately applicable to distinctively intellectual contexts or practices, for example, to education and to scientific inquiry. Put very simply, intellectual virtues are the character traits of an excellent knower or inquirer—rather than those of, say, an excellent neighbor or citizen.<sup>2</sup> Third, on the present conception, intellectual virtues are “personal excellences,” meaning that they are traits that make their possessor good or admirable *qua person*.<sup>3</sup> This way of thinking about intellectual virtues, while perhaps not entirely familiar, should be familiar and intuitive enough. For we admire persons who are, for instance, reflective and thoughtful about important questions, careful and thorough in their reasoning, who do not cling too tightly to their own beliefs, but rather are willing to listen honestly and charitably “to the other side,” and so on, not merely (if at all) because they are thereby more likely to increase their stock of true beliefs, but also *as such*—that is, on account of the very *persons* they are. It follows that if a given trait is epistemically useful or reliable, say, but fails to warrant the relevant kind of personal admiration or praise, this trait is not an intellectual virtue in the present sense. Of course there may be another viable conception of intellectual virtue according to which such a trait is an intellectual virtue. But this is not the conception or variety of intellectual virtue I am concerned with here.

## 1.2. Motivation for the project

My aim, again, is to defend a cognitive or doxastic requirement on intellectual virtue. This may seem like a rather unambitious task given that my concern is *intellectual* (rather than, say, moral) virtue. However, this suggestion underestimates the challenge at hand in at least two ways. First, most accounts of intellectual virtue in the virtue epistemology literature offer distinctively *affective* or *desiderative* characterizations of the traits in question, for they portray intellectual virtues as principally involving certain epistemically relevant desires or related emotional or

affective states. Linda Zagzebski (1996: 134), for instance, characterizes the psychological basis of intellectual virtue in terms of a motivation for “cognitive contact with reality,” which she in turn characterizes as a disposition to have certain emotions. Similarly, James Montmarquet (1993:30) defines intellectual virtues as traits that a person who desires the truth is likely to have. As this suggests, virtue epistemologists, while perhaps not intending to deny a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue, have provided little indication as to whether such a requirement exists, and, if it does, what exactly this requirement might amount to.

Second, in recent years, there have arisen within the virtue ethics and moral psychology literature certain “anti-intellectualist” objections to a cognitive requirement on moral virtue (see esp. Arpaly 2003, Driver 2001, and Hurka 2001). My own view, which will be developed and clarified later in the paper, is that these objections are in most respects no less troubling or problematic for a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue than they are for a cognitive requirement on moral virtue. And because the objections have had some traction in the relevant literature, and enjoy at least some initial plausibility, it is appropriate that they be considered in the present context.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. I begin by laying out three relatively quick arguments in support of what I refer to as a “connecting belief requirement” on intellectual virtue. I then consider what I take to be the most powerful of the forementioned objections to a similar requirement on *moral* virtue—an objection, again, which if successful is also likely to present a serious problem for a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue. After arguing that the objection fails, I proceed to develop one additional argument in support of a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue. I conclude by identifying an important limitation of this requirement. My hope, again, is that in addition to vindicating a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue, the discussion will also provide a deeper and more explanatorily illuminating account of intellectual virtue as a whole.

## 2. The Psychological Structure of an Intellectual Virtue

One reason for accepting a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue is that doing so provides a plausible explanation of a fairly standard and intuitive view of the basic psychological *structure* of an intellectual virtue. In recent years, a number of virtue epistemologists (e.g. Montmarquet 1993, Zagzebski 2006, and Baehr 2011) have either gestured at or explicitly endorsed something like a two-tier psychological model of intellectual virtue. The thrust of the model is that (a) all intellectual virtues have in common something like a “love of truth” or desire for knowledge, but that (b) each individual virtue has its own distinctive and more immediate focus or motivation—a focus or motivation on account of which it can be individuated from other intellectual virtues. But the model also stipulates a certain relation between these two elements of an intellectual virtue: namely, (c) that the immediate focus or concern characteristic of particular intellectual virtues is “grounded in” or “flows from” the more basic concern with truth, knowledge, or the like. Thus an open-minded person’s disposition to loosen her grip on her own point of view in order to give a fair and honest hearing to the “other side” is said to flow from a desire to reach the truth and avoid error—the latter concern is thought to “give rise” to or “explain” the former concern.

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

This suggests the following “connecting belief requirement” on intellectual virtue:

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

My claim, then, is that (CBR) provides a prima facie plausible explanation of a certain aspect of the psychological structure of an intellectual virtue. Indeed, while we will have occasion to revisit this issue below, it is far from clear what an alternative explanation might look like. Why else might an open-minded person, say, be disposed to consider counter-evidence or competing viewpoints "out of" a desire for truth if not because she believes (at some level) that such activity is likely to advance her epistemic goals? Alternatively, how else could this person's desire for truth have the kind of influence it has on her cognitive activity if not by way of a connecting belief?

## 2.1. Clarifications

Before turning to consider additional support for (CBR), some clarification of its basic terms and demands is in order. First, the notion of "virtue-relevant" activity is meant to capture the idea, noted above and widely embraced in the literature, that for each individual intellectual virtue, there is a kind of intellectual activity or psychology characteristic of this virtue—an activity or psychology on the basis of which it can be individuated from other intellectual virtues. Second, I intentionally leave the ultimate aim or end of intellectual virtues somewhat open-ended by saying in (a) that S must believe that A is appropriately related to S's "more general epistemic goals." The most obvious such goal is truth or true belief. However, I do not wish to insist that this is the sole "ultimate" epistemic end or goal. Understanding, for instance, is surely an ultimate epistemic goal as well; and, as some of the recent work on the nature and value of understanding makes evident, it is at least questionable whether understanding necessarily involves true belief or even belief at all.<sup>4</sup> A third and related point concerns the claim that S must believe that A is "suitably related" to a more ultimate epistemic

goal like truth. Here the most obvious and standard relation is that of epistemic *reliability*, whereby S believes that A is a reliable means to truth. I want to leave open the possibility, however, that certain other relations might satisfy this condition. Consider the virtue of epistemic conscientiousness.<sup>5</sup> This trait can be thought of as aiming, not merely (if at all) at true belief, but also (or rather) at the fulfillment of one's epistemic duties. Accordingly, an epistemically conscientious person might conceive of the activity characteristic of this virtue, not really as a reliable means to the fulfillment of her duties, but rather as (at least partly) *constituting* this fulfillment. Fourth, when I say that the belief in question must "partially" explain the disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity, I am gesturing primarily at the fact that it is this belief together with the more basic or general epistemic aim (e.g. a desire for truth) that play the relevant explanatory role.<sup>6</sup>

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

One additional aspect of the belief required by (CBR) must be noted. (CBR) should *not* be read as saying that as a person engages in virtue-relevant activity, she must be thinking about or have present before her mind the relevant connection between the activity she is engaging in and her more general epistemic goals. Nor should it be read as requiring that she consciously *deliberate* about this connection prior to engaging in the activity. Such requirements are unnecessarily demanding. Finally, neither should (CBR) be understood as requiring that the belief in question be particularly conscious or occurrent at other times. A great many of our beliefs rarely (if ever) receive our explicit attention or thought, and I see no reason to think that the relevant connecting belief must be any different. What *is* required is that the person believe the claim in question enough or in the way necessary for satisfying the explanatory condition in (CBR), that is, for partially explaining her disposition to engage in virtuous or virtue-relevant activity. A useful criterion here might be whether, if *asked* or on *reflection*, the person would affirm the connection between the relevant activity

and her broader concern with truth or a related epistemic end. We will have occasion to return to this and related issues below. But it should be clear at this point that (CBR), while undeniably “intellectualist” in some sense, is not strongly or extremely intellectualist.

### 3. Intellectual Virtue and Phronesis

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

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

At a minimum, phronesis involves a knowledge of which ends are most valuable or worth pursuing and how best to balance and achieve these ends.<sup>8</sup> This point, again, is typically understood in terms of *moral* ends and means. However, given that we are thinking of intellectual virtues as character traits, and thus as personal qualities that have a substantial active or practical dimension, it is very plausible to think of this point as applying to an understanding and pursuit of *epistemic* ends as well. That is, we can think of the “phronimos” or person of practical wisdom as (also) grasping which epistemic ends are most valuable, the comparative worth of these ends, which sorts of cognitive activities or undertakings are most likely to promote them, and so on.<sup>9</sup> We may, then, assume that there exists a connection between phronesis and intellectual virtue that is at least roughly on par with the widely recognized connection between phronesis and moral virtue.

What might this connection entail with respect to a particular inquirer’s cognitive perspective on her intellectual habits or activity? A practically wise inquirer presumably



will have a grasp of how these things connect with her broader epistemic goals. More specifically, she will have a sense of how her intellectual habits or activity are *positively* or *appropriately* related to the most worthy epistemic ends. Where the activity in question is that characteristic of, say, intellectual carefulness or thoroughness, she will be aware of the fact that such activity is importantly instrumentally related to the goal of acquiring true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs. Moreover, this awareness presumably will play some role in explaining why she is disposed to engage in this activity. That is, her sense of the efficacy of this activity will not be causally isolated from but rather will form part of the very basis of her disposition.<sup>10</sup>

This just is to say, however, that the phronimos will satisfy the demands of (CBR) with respect to her virtue-relevant intellectual dispositions. Is this a good reason for accepting (CBR)? This depends, of course, on the relation between phronesis and the possession of intellectual virtues. If one embraces a strong “unity thesis” according to which phronesis is both necessary and sufficient for the possession of any particular intellectual virtue, then one indeed shall be forced to conclude that one can possess an intellectual virtue only if one satisfies the demands of (CBR). However, if one rejects such a thesis, then while it will remain that one possesses phronesis only if one satisfies (CBR), it will not immediately be clear whether one can possess an individual intellectual virtue without satisfying (CBR).<sup>11</sup>

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

#### 4. “Appropriating” Intellectual Virtues

Consider the transition from what Aristotle describes as “natural virtue” to what would generally be recognized as genuine or full virtue.<sup>12</sup> I take it that a person’s natural

virtues are her innate or inbred psychological qualities which, while not yet developed or cultivated into actual virtues, nevertheless bear a resemblance to, and give her an advantage relative to acquiring, the corresponding actual virtues. One thing that presumably happens in the transition from natural virtue to genuine virtue is that the traits in question *become the person's own*—they become *integrated* into her psychology or character in a reasonably deep and personal way. Put another way, the person “appropriates” the relevant traits.<sup>13</sup>

While this idea of appropriating a personal trait or quality may be less clear or determinate than we might like, it can plausibly be thought of as involving at least two things. First, a person “appropriates” a given trait only if he (at some level) *identifies* with or *endorses* this trait, which in turn would seem to require, at a minimum, that the person take a positive view of the trait or have some grasp or awareness of its value. This seems necessary because barring such endorsement, the person presumably will be “distanced” or alienated from the trait in a way that will prevent the trait from reflecting well on him as a person or that will bar us from reasonably admiring or praising him for it. The trait, in other words, will fail to be a sufficient part of the person's identity, such that the person himself would be good or better on account of it.

I see no reason to doubt that this point applies to the acquisition of intellectual virtues as well as moral virtues.<sup>14</sup> Assuming this is right, what does it suggest about a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue? According to part (a) of (CBR), a person S's disposition to engage in a certain virtue-relevant activity A is an intellectual virtue only if S *believes that A is appropriately related to his epistemic goals*. This just is for S to recognize the cognitive *value* of his disposition. Furthermore, S satisfies part (b) of (CBR) only if S is disposed to engage in A and S's belief concerning the value of A partially *explains* this disposition. The satisfaction of these two parts of (CBR) would appear to be entirely sufficient for “identifying” with or “endorsing” a given trait, which in turn is essential to the trait's being “appropriated” in the manner required by genuine virtue.<sup>15</sup>

The point can also be made going in the other direction. First, it is plausible to think that one identifies with or values a given intellectual trait T in the sense required for “appropriating” T only if one is aware of the fact that the activity characteristic of T is

suitably related to one's broader epistemic goals, that is, only if one satisfies part (a) of (CBR). This is due to the fact that the primary *value* of such activity presumably consists in the very relation in question, such that one could not relevantly "endorse" T without being cognizant of the fact that the activity characteristic of T instantiates this relation. However, identifying with or endorsing a trait in the relevant sense is not merely a matter of having a favorable belief about it. It is also a matter of a certain readiness to act in accordance with the belief—a disposition to engage in the activity characteristic of the relevant trait. Moreover, it is reasonable to think that the belief and disposition in question must not be causally disconnected from each other, and specifically, that the readiness to engage in the relevant activity must be at least partially grounded in the person's favorable view of this activity.<sup>16</sup> But, again, this is just to say that a person S identifies with or endorses a trait T in the sense required for appropriating T only if S also satisfies part (b) of (CBR) with respect to T. Given that such appropriation is essential to the possession of a genuine intellectual virtue, there are compelling grounds for accepting (CBR).

A second thing that presumably occurs in the transition from natural virtue to genuine virtue—or in the "appropriation" of a natural character trait or virtue—is that the person herself becomes a significant part of the *explanation* of her possession of the trait in question. To see why, suppose that I have been raised by my parents and community to possess a certain virtue-relevant trait T and that at present these influences are the sole explanation of my possession of T. I am not in any way to credit for this fact. If you were to ask me why I have T or why I regularly act in ways characteristic of T, I could, if speaking honestly, say little more than: "That's just how I was raised." These are the words of a (merely) naturally virtuous person.<sup>17</sup> If I am not at all responsible or creditable for my possession of T, it stands to reason that I have not yet appropriated T, and thus that my possession of T does not yet amount to the possession of a genuine intellectual virtue.

How, then, might I become part of this explanation? Here again (CBR) is extremely relevant. Suppose that as time passes I come to understand the value of T: I begin to see, say, that the sorts of activities I am led to engage in out of T play an important role in my success at reaching the truth and avoiding error. Suppose further

that this belief now goes a considerable way toward explaining why I am disposed to engage in T-relevant activity. Thus if you ask me why I tend to act in T-relevant ways, I am now likely to say something like “because I think T is valuable” or “because I see that T is an effective way of achieving certain things that are important to me.” I have, in other words, come to satisfy the demands of (CBR) relative to T. The important thing to note is that once I have done so, it will then be reasonable to think of me as entering in a significant way into the explanation of my possession of T, that is, as having “appropriated” T in the relevant sense.

Moreover, it is difficult to see how I could become part of the explanation of my possession of T *without* having satisfied the dual requirements of (CBR), that is, without being aware of the value of T and without this belief’s playing a role in explaining why I am disposed to engage in T-relevant activity. For it is difficult to imagine what *other* psychological state or states might do the relevant causal or explanatory work in a way that is consistent with T’s making a positive contribution to my own personal intellectual worth.<sup>18</sup> So here again it appears that in order to “appropriate” a given intellectual trait in the sense relevant to acquiring a genuine virtue, a person must first satisfy the demands of (CBR).

In this section, I have identified two putative features of intellectual virtue and have seen that both entail a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue along the lines of (CBR). An objector might, of course, deny that the features in question really are features of intellectual virtue—that one need not actually “appropriate” one’s intellectual virtues or that appropriating an intellectual virtue need not involve either of the two things just noted. My suggestion, however, is that such a move comes only at a significant theoretical and intuitive cost. Again, my claim has been that there are antecedently or intuitively plausible reasons to think that one’s intellectual virtues must be “appropriated” in the sense described above and that this entails a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue along the lines of (CBR). These are reasons the force of which can be appreciated by one who does not already embrace a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue. Thus the argument in this section cannot simply be dismissed or sidestepped on the grounds that it turns on a mistaken or question-begging account of how intellectual virtues are acquired.

## 5. An Anti-Intellectualist Objection

### 5.1. The objection articulated

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

In a well-known and widely anthologized article, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn” (1979), Jonathan Bennett calls attention to the relative importance of moral feelings or sentiments as compared with moral beliefs and principles. Bennett argues that Huck Finn, a Missouri farm boy who undertakes the rescue of his friend Jim from slavery, has “bad morality” or bad moral principles through and through—that Huck is unequivocally convinced that his efforts to liberate Jim are morally wrong (indeed that they amount to stealing from his neighbor). Thus, on Bennett’s view, Huck behaves akratically, acting against his own better judgment or conscience. Nonetheless, as Bennett points out, we still think rather well of Huck, even from a moral point of view (288-90).<sup>19</sup> Bennett concludes that when it comes to being a morally good person or to living a morally good life, it is important to give weight, not merely to our moral judgments, but also to our moral feelings; and indeed that when the two conflict, we should (at least sometimes) allow our moral feelings to shape and inform our moral judgments (294).

Bennett’s central claims about Huck Finn and the relative importance of moral feelings seem unobjectionable. More recently, however, the case of Huck Finn as characterized by Bennett has been seized upon in support of a considerably stronger and more controversial philosophical claim. Both Nomy Arpaly (2003) and Julia Driver (2001) have appealed to Huck and similar figures in an effort to argue against something like a connecting belief requirement on moral virtue.<sup>20</sup> In what follows, I will

focus on Arpaly's discussion, both because it is a bit more precise than Driver's on the relevant points and because it seems more capable of posing a problem for a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue. While my immediate focus here will be the cognitive demands of moral virtue, it should eventually be clear both how a closely analogous objection could be raised against a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue and how my reply to Arpaly could be recast so as to overcome this objection.<sup>21</sup>

Arpaly describes Huck as suffering from "inverse akrasia," which occurs when "an agent does the right thing but does so against her best judgment" (75). It is important to be clear that according to Arpaly (and Bennett as well), Huck really does not believe, *at all* or at *any* level, that his actions enjoy positive moral standing. Arpaly explicitly denies that Huck *knows* or even *believes* that his actions are morally good. In fact, she goes even further, claiming that "[t]he belief that what he does is moral need not even appear in Huckleberry's *unconscious*" and that "he does not have the belief that what he does is right *anywhere* in his head" (77; the first emphasis is mine and the second is Arpaly's).<sup>22</sup> Despite his badly mistaken perspective on his actions, Arpaly claims, Huck still merits a favorable moral evaluation: "Huckleberry Finn, then, is not a bad boy who has accidentally done what is good, but a good boy." The reason, she says, is that Huck is responding to what are *in fact* the morally relevant features of the situation (*ibid.*).<sup>23</sup>

Arpaly's position can easily be parlayed into an objection to a connecting belief requirement on moral virtue. Such a requirement might stipulate, roughly, that a person's disposition to engage in the activity characteristic of a particular moral virtue is itself a moral virtue only if (a) the person in question believes that such activity is suitably related to her morally relevant goals and (b) this belief partially explains the disposition in question. Thus, if Huck *were* to satisfy this requirement, he might (at some level) believe that his efforts to liberate Jim are likely to promote a genuinely good cause (*viz.* Jim's freedom), and this belief, together with Huck's basic concern for Jim's well-being, might go at least some way toward explaining why Huck behaves in the relevant way. This, however, is precisely the sort of belief that Arpaly (and Bennett) want not to attribute to Huck.

## 5.2. An assessment of the objection

What should we make of Arpaly's suggestion that Huck might be genuinely morally virtuous despite the fact that he is entirely oblivious to the moral status of his actions—indeed, despite the fact that from his standpoint his actions are morally *wrong*? Given that our concern is with a “personal worth” or “admiration-based” conception of moral virtue, I find this a very dubious claim.<sup>24</sup>

To get at why, it will be helpful to attend to some of the details of Huck's psychology. I just noted that there is a sense in which Huck is “well-motivated” or “has a good heart.” It can be tempting, on this basis, to think that while he may not exactly rise to the status of moral exemplar or paragon, he does belong squarely in the camp of the morally virtuous (perhaps alongside Forrest Gump, Lennie Small, and other familiar and endearing characters). Bear in mind, however, that Huck is *not* “well-motivated” or possessed of a “good heart” insofar as these states require any kind of awareness of the value or worth of what one is actually motivated to do or the ends on which one's heart is actually set. For instance, Huck is not “well-motivated” in the sense that he is, say, doing his best to do what he perceives to be the right thing, despite having a naïve, skewed, or even grossly mistaken moral perspective. Indeed, in light of this, it would be a mistake to describe Huck as either “well-meaning” or “well-intentioned.” Again, as both Bennett and Arpaly make very clear, Huck is acting *against* his better judgment or conscience. He is severely *akratic*. He has no sense or awareness whatsoever of the value of what he is doing. While, as Arpaly explicitly remarks, there is a sense in which Huck's actions are not “accidentally” good, there is another, equally familiar sense in which they *are* accidentally good. In particular, *from Huck's own point of view*, it is a complete and unequivocal accident that he is doing the right thing.<sup>25</sup> For these reasons, I find it very difficult, despite the objective worth or rightness of Huck's actions, to regard Huck himself as a very admirable or excellent person and thus to treat him as genuinely virtuous in our sense.<sup>26</sup>

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

(V1) A person is morally virtuous only if and to the extent that she is motivated by ends that are *in fact* morally good.<sup>27</sup>

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

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

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

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



appearance is that, while he is motivated by an end that is in fact good, he nevertheless has morally bad or vicious intentions.<sup>28</sup>

Now imagine a third person C, who is one of A's most loyal and generous supporters. Again let us imagine that C has been given every reason to trust and be enthusiastic about A's candidacy and potential impact on her community. On the basis of these reasons, C has given generously of her time and money to A's campaign. Given that A's empowerment is *in fact* a bad thing, C apparently counts as morally *vicious* according to (V2).<sup>29</sup> But again, for all she knows or could be expected to know, C is giving generously to a very good and worthy cause. Her intentions are morally impeccable. Accordingly, (V2) appears to generate precisely the wrong conclusion. C's generosity would appear to be indicative of moral virtue rather than vice.<sup>30</sup>

These considerations provide cogent grounds for thinking that cases like that of Huck Finn fail to pose a problem for a cognitive requirement on moral virtue. Indeed, closer inspection of the cases has clarified the need for such a requirement. Moreover, though I will not develop the point here, it should be clear how an intellectual or epistemic analog of something like the Huck Finn case could be constructed in objection to a cognitive requirement on intellectual virtue along the lines of (CBR) above. Such a case might, say, build on one of Larry BonJour's (1985) well-known clairvoyance cases in which a doxastic mechanism *in fact* tracks the truth, but where the person in question has no awareness whatsoever of this fact—or, more relevant to the Huck Finn case, where the person has reason to think that the mechanism is likely to lead systematically to cognitive *error*. To make this sort of case even more relevant to the concerns of this paper, we might imagine that the activity in question is at least partly the product of an intellectual *character* trait. Thus we might imagine that for the person's clairvoyant capacity to "kick in" or to operate reliably, the person must engage in a certain kind of intellectual *activity*. The question would be whether a disposition to engage in this (clairvoyance-facilitating and ultimately truth-conducive) activity would be a genuine intellectual virtue, even in cases in which the person has no grasp whatsoever of (and perhaps even has reason to doubt) the connection between this activity and her epistemic goals. Here again while the trait in question might be an intellectual virtue in a certain externalist or reliabilist sense, it should be clear how the considerations put forth

above could be reworked into an argument for thinking that this trait would *not* be an intellectual virtue in a personal worth or admiration-based sense.

### 5.2.1. First rejoinder: “pure” *de re* motivation

I turn now to consider two possible rejoinders to the argument of the previous section. It might be claimed, first, that being motivated by ends that are in fact morally good—that is, what we might call “*de re* good motivation”—is indeed the real crux of moral virtue but that it is not the *whole* of moral virtue. Specifically, it might be said of person B above that while he is *de re* well-motivated, he nonetheless possesses certain other psychological states (e.g. certain false beliefs and bad intentions) that *defeat* or *undermine* his claim to virtue.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, it might be held that moral virtue is a matter of *de re* good motivation together with the *absence* of countervailing beliefs, intentions, and the like. Likewise, it might be said that moral vice is a matter of being motivated by ends that are in fact morally bad—of *de re* bad motivation—together with the absence of conflicting beliefs, intentions, and so on. This view would generate the right judgment about person C, who gives generously to what she is firmly and reasonably (though erroneously) convinced is a good cause. It would rule, on account of her mistaken beliefs and good intentions, that she is not morally vicious. This general view of virtue and vice, then, which I shall refer to as the “pure” *de re* motivational view, would apparently be capable of maintaining the thrust of (V1) and (V2) above while avoiding some of their implausible implications.<sup>32</sup>

While I think a pure *de re* motivational view represents a minor improvement on the view considered in the previous section, I think there are at least two major problems with it. First, much of what can be said against Huck Finn and similar characters can also be said against certain persons who satisfy the conditions of the pure *de re* view. Consider, for instance, a variation on the Huck Finn case in which Huck does not possess any beliefs that run contrary to his actions, but where he still fails to believe—at all or at any level—that his actions have a *positive* moral status, that is, where his beliefs are entirely *neutral* with respect to the moral standing of his efforts to liberate Jim. Call this version of Huck Finn “Simple Huck” and the earlier version

“Confused Huck.” Like Confused Huck, Simple Huck is neither well-motivated nor possessed of a good heart insofar as these things require having some sense or awareness of the value of what one is motivated by or the object of one’s desire. Nor does Simple Huck “mean well” or have good intentions, for again, he does not in any way or at any level take himself to be doing anything good or appropriate or right. His actions, while perhaps not positively *irrational* (they do not involve an outright violation of his moral principles or conscience), clearly are not *rational* either, at least in the sense of enjoying any support from his moral beliefs or judgments. Thus the positive status of Simple Huck’s actions is also completely reflectively lucky. Accordingly, I find Simple Huck’s claim to virtue not much more promising than that of Confused Huck.

Second, and more importantly, the view we are considering fails to do justice to the actual implications of the cases considered above. In the case of person B (the spiteful but *de re* well-motivated politician), for instance, the point was not merely that B lacks moral virtue. Rather, it was also that B’s actions are indicative of moral *vice*. Likewise, the point about person C (the reasonable and well-meaning but *de re* poorly motivated political supporter) was not merely that C fails to count as morally vicious, but rather that his actions seem clearly to be an indication of moral *virtue*. The pure *de re* motivational view is incapable of accommodating either of these judgments. For, again, B is not *de re* ill-motivated at all; and C is not *de re* well-motivated.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, according to the view in question, B cannot be morally vicious and C cannot be morally virtuous. Put another way, the cases suggest not only that *de re* good motivation is not sufficient for virtue, but that it is not necessary either, and likewise that *de re* bad motivation is neither sufficient nor necessary for moral vice. Thus the pure *de re* motivational view fails to provide a way around the foregoing argument.

### 5.2.2. Second rejoinder: moral reliability

A second rejoinder involves shifting the focus from *de re* good and bad motivation per se to a certain effect or outcome of such motivation. Someone with a favorable view of Huck Finn, for instance, might argue that what is morally commendable about Huck is not merely the fact that he is motivated by ends that are in

fact morally good, but rather that given such motivation, he is likely to be a reliable or systematic *producer* of morally good states of affairs. Huck is, in other words, a morally *reliable* agent; and it is this fact that explains why he is morally virtuous.

This basic conception of moral virtue (as well as the correlative account of moral vice) is in a much better position to handle some of the cases we have been considering. For it can be said with some plausibility of person B, for instance, that while in the present case his psychology is aligned with an end that is in fact morally good (viz. A's removal from office), this psychology is such that in general B is likely to bring about states of affairs that are morally *bad*. Likewise, it can be said that person C's psychology, while presently oriented toward an end that in fact is morally bad (viz. A's remaining in office), is such that C generally will produce states of affairs that are morally *good*. As this suggests, the present view, unlike the one considered in the previous section, is capable of making sense, not just of the idea that person B is not virtuous and person C is not vicious, but also of the further plausible claim that person B is vicious and person C is virtuous.

One thing to note in connection with this view is its bearing on the Huck Finn case and similar cases. As just noted, this view of virtue might be regarded as a way of upholding the claim that Huck is virtuous while denying this status to figures like person B. But it is not clear that the view has this implication at all. For it is far from clear that Huck (at least according to the initial characterization of his psychology) really is morally reliable in the relevant sense. Indeed, Huck's psychology seems extremely morally unstable. Not only does he vacillate and struggle, at least internally, between helping Jim and turning him in, thereby suggesting that there are nearby possible worlds in which Huck doesn't help Jim at all, but it is also reasonable to think that Huck's moral orientation is not sufficiently discriminating—that, for instance, if Jim had been a criminal, but also one of Huck's acquaintances, Huck would have gone to the same (but in this case morally questionable) lengths to secure his freedom. Thus, one apparent cost of embracing a reliability account of virtue is a denial of Huck's and similar characters' claim to virtue.

My view, of course, is that this is the *correct* view to take of such characters. Therefore, let us turn to a more pressing problem with the rejoinder. In order to

circumvent the sorts of issues just noted, it will be helpful to focus our attention on reliable moral agents whose psychology is “simple” rather than “confused,” that is, who lack any beliefs about the moral status of their virtue-relevant dispositions but whose psychology is not conflicted in ways that are likely to raise questions about their reliability.<sup>34</sup> Again, the question is whether such persons might be morally virtuous—and, specifically, whether they might be morally virtuous in a personal worth or admiration-based sense.

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

A second and related point is that moral reliability seems clearly to be too much a matter of *luck* (of a metaphysical and not merely a reflective or epistemic sort) to form the basis of moral virtue understood in the relevant way. Whether our actions are morally successful or unsuccessful, whether we affect the world or others positively or negatively, is often and to a very significant extent outside of our control. It can require that we not be deceived or misled in various ways, that we receive the cooperation of other moral agents, that events unfold in ways that we have reason to expect they will, and more. The basis of personal worth, on the other hand, while not completely immune to luck, *would* seem to be immune to luck of this sort.<sup>35</sup> As noted earlier, when a person’s moral efforts fail on account of factors that are well beyond her control, while this may affect our judgments about the moral status of these efforts, it does not affect our judgments about the moral status of the agent herself. We do not allow bad luck of this sort to diminish our estimation of persons qua persons.<sup>36</sup> Assuming we are right in doing so, we may conclude that moral reliability, which is shot through with luck, cannot form the basis of moral virtue understood in personal worth terms.

A third problem concerns the reliability view’s ability to generate the right result in the cases of persons B and C above. Again, on the face of it, a major advantage of this

view is that it has this ability, for B's psychology does not appear likely to systematically produce morally good states of affairs and C's psychology does not appear likely to systematically produce bad states of affairs. We can, however, imagine worlds in which B's psychology *does* systematically produce good states of affairs and in which C's psychology systematically produces bad states of affairs. For instance, we might imagine a world in which all persons in positions of power are corrupt and deserve to be ousted but are also especially adept at concealing their corruption.<sup>37</sup> In this world, B's psychology presumably would be systematically productive of morally good states of affairs and C's psychology would be systematically productive of morally bad states of affairs. While there may be a sense in which B would have a virtue in the world in question, I take it that this would not and should not cause us to rethink our estimation of him as a person. After all, while motivated by objectively morally good ends, B's intentions remain putatively vicious. Likewise, while there may be a sense in which C's generosity is a moral vice in the world in question, I take it that we would not cease to admire C from a personal worth standpoint. Again, C is firmly disposed to do what she has every reason to think is good, right, beneficial, and generous.

A likely move at this point would be to claim that moral reliability in the *actual* world—in *our* world—is what matters for moral virtue, not reliability in worlds different from ours. This would, at any rate, provide a way of avoiding the implausible conclusions about B and C just noted. I do not have the space for an exhaustive reply to this suggestion. I shall limit myself to three brief remarks.

First, it is difficult to imagine what a non-ad hoc motivation might be for privileging reliability relative to our world or for disregarding a trait's reliability in one or more other worlds, particularly when the trait under consideration is, as a matter of hypothesis, possessed in one of the worlds in which it is reliable.<sup>38</sup> A second and related problem, which I have elaborated on elsewhere (2007), concerns the fact that when we make the sorts of judgments just noted in connection with the modified versions of the B and C cases, we do not tend to do so with a *mind* to or on the *basis* of the probable efficacy of the relevant traits in worlds very different or far removed from the worlds in which they are possessed. That is, our intuitive judgments about the persons in question do not appear to be based on considerations of reliability that fail to apply to the worlds these

persons are in but that do apply to our world. Rather, these persons strike us as virtuous or vicious in the worlds in which they exist and on account of who they are or what they are like in these worlds—*period* (*not* because who they are in these worlds would generate certain outputs in other very different worlds like our own). This, then, is at least *prima facie* reason to think that “real world” reliability is not the basis of virtue understood in a personal worth or admiration-based sense. Third, even if there is nothing inherently problematic about appealing to the notion of actual world reliability in this context, this hardly makes for a decisive objection to a cognitive requirement on moral or intellectual virtue. For a reliabilist account of virtue must be assessed in light of the full range of considerations in support of a cognitive requirement, which we have seen are several. I conclude that the mere possibility of a reliabilist account of moral (or intellectual) virtue that does not incorporate a cognitive requirement fails to provide a good reason for thinking that no such requirement exists.

## 6. The Putative Basis of Personal Worth

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

Let us begin, then, by considering in a more or less direct way when or under what conditions we tend to admire or praise persons *qua* persons. In other words, what is the apparent basis of personal worth? We have already considered reasons for thinking that this basis is *not* a person’s actual accomplishments or successes. This is not to deny that we sometimes praise such things or even the persons to whom they

can be credited. It is, however, to deny that we praise or admire such persons *qua* persons.<sup>39</sup> This again is evident in the fact that when a person fails to succeed or accomplish something on account of factors that were unforeseeable or otherwise well outside of her control, it is precisely from a personal worth standpoint that we still feel confident making a favorable assessment of the person. We do not allow failures or bad luck of this sort to undermine our estimations of the relevant persons *qua* persons.

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

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

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

Yet (PA1) is problematic as it stands. To see why, we must return briefly to Bennett's point about the potential importance of moral sentiments *vis-à-vis* moral beliefs or principles. A further case discussed by Bennett is that of Heinrich Himmler, who, on Bennett's characterization, operated in strict accordance with his moral principles. The suggestion is that, in orchestrating the deaths of millions of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and others, Himmler did what he believed was morally best or right. Thus (PA1) would apparently rule that Himmler and similar persons are admirable or good *qua* persons.<sup>40</sup>

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

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



Given (PA2), Himmler and similar characters fail to count as personally admirable. The problem is that we have already considered decisive grounds for rejecting (PA2). For (PA2) is very similar to (V1) above, according to which a person is morally *virtuous* only if and to the extent that she is (suitably) motivated by ends that are *in fact* morally good. We have seen, however, that a person can be motivated by ends that are in fact good while nonetheless being far from personally admirable or virtuous. Thus while (PA1) is objectionably weak, (PA2) is objectionably strong.

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

(PA3) A person S is good or admirable qua person only if and to the extent that S attempts to achieve what S has *good reason to believe* is (epistemically or morally) good.<sup>41</sup>

(PA3) lays down what we might think of as a “rationality” or “reasonability” constraint on the basis of personal admiration. This constraint is strong enough to overcome the difficulty with (PA1) but weak enough to avoid the problem with (PA2). For instance, (PA3) would count person C (the generous but misled political supporter) as personally admirable, but would not generate a favorable evaluation of Himmler (given, of course, that his moral beliefs were not supported by good reasons). Likewise, it would issue a negative judgment of person B, who is motivated by what in fact is a morally good end (A’s removal from office), but who is oblivious to the relevant good-making properties.<sup>42</sup>

Let us, then, suppose that something like (PA3) successfully captures the basis of personal admiration. What does this, in turn, suggest about the plausibility of (CBR)? (PA3) and (CBR), while not identical, nevertheless converge in an important and illuminating way. (PA3) is about the basis of personal worth or admiration (not, immediately at least, about virtue) and it is intended to range over both the moral and intellectual dimensions of this domain. (CBR), on the other hand, is about virtue (not, immediately at least, about personal worth or admiration) and its scope is limited to *intellectual* (not moral or other kinds of) virtue. Nevertheless, (PA3) apparently requires

the possession of a connecting belief of precisely the sort that is also required by (CBR).

To see how, note that according to (PA3), a person's habits of inquiry, say, will make her admirable qua person only if they compel her to do her best to achieve what she has good reason to believe is epistemically good. This requires that she have some kind of perspective on or awareness of the epistemic quality of her inquiries, including the epistemic quality of the sorts of activities she tends to engage in as she inquires. This in turn requires that she possess precisely the sort of connecting belief described in part (a) of (CBR). Specifically, it requires that she believe that the intellectual activity in question is a suitable means to her epistemic goals. What this suggests is that one of the main conditions laid down by (CBR) is embedded within the requirements of (PA3), in which case, if we are committed to thinking of intellectual virtues as traits that merit personal admiration or that contribute to personal worth, we ought also to embrace a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue.<sup>43</sup>

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

(CBR\*) A person S's disposition to engage in virtue-relevant activity A is an intellectual virtue only if (a) S reasonably believes that A is suitably related to S's more general epistemic goals and (b) this belief partially explains S's disposition to engage in A.<sup>44</sup>

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

## 7. A Final Qualification

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

To make sense of this, we can begin by noting that some intellectual virtues (like some moral virtues) have *negative* or *passive* “expressions” or applications. That is, some intellectual virtues can be manifested in negative or passive psychological occurrences. Bob Roberts and Jay Wood (2007: Ch. 9), for instance, offer a lengthy characterization of intellectual humility, according to which this virtue is primarily a matter of *not having* certain concerns or desires (e.g. a concern with intellectual status or a desire to dominate the thinking or beliefs of others).<sup>45</sup> Given the foregoing discussion, and the content of (CBR\*) in particular, we would do well to consider whether, to possess intellectual humility in this sense, a person must believe (at some level) that her *lack* of the relevant desires or concerns is useful for achieving her broader epistemic goals. This strikes me, not only as unnecessary, but indeed as a rather odd way of thinking about the psychology of a genuinely intellectually humble person. At a minimum, I see no reason to think that an intellectually humble person *must* have a belief of this sort. Similarly, some intellectual virtues can be manifested in *passive* psychological occurrences, for instance, in the passive “noticing” of certain logical or empirical details or in one’s being *moved* by certain sorts of epistemic considerations. Here again I would not want to say, with respect to these expressions of intellectual virtue, that the person in question must possess a connecting belief. The intellectually observant person, for instance, might habitually be struck by certain features of her environment even though she has no belief whatsoever about the tendency of such occurrences to promote her epistemic goals.<sup>46</sup>

How, then, are these considerations to be squared with the foregoing argument in support of a connecting belief requirement on intellectual virtue? My claim is that a connecting belief requirement holds only with respect to the *active* dimensions or

expressions of intellectual virtue. That is, I maintain that where a particular intellectual virtue *V* has an active expression *E*, a person's disposition to manifest *E* is an instance of *V* only if the person possesses a connecting belief with respect to *E*—only if she (reasonably and at some level) believes that *E* is appropriately related to her broader epistemic goals. This requirement is entirely consistent with (CBR\*), which pertains only to dispositions to “engage in virtue-relevant activity.” Finally, the present point underscores the idea noted earlier that intellectual virtue (as with moral virtue) involves a kind of *practical rationality* or *integrity*. (CBR\*) makes this requirement explicit. However, since the negative and passive aspects of intellectual virtue presumably are not part of such rationality or integrity, they need not (and indeed should not) fall within the scope of a belief requirement on intellectual virtue.

Does this mean that it is possible to possess an intellectual virtue without possessing a corresponding connecting belief? This depends primarily on whether any intellectual virtues are such that they can be manifested exclusively in non-active ways, that is, virtues the full range of expressions of which are passive or negative in character.<sup>47</sup> This is not something I will attempt to resolve here. Again, what I do maintain is that insofar as an intellectual virtue has an active dimension, a person can possess this virtue only if she possesses a corresponding connecting belief.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Thus I align myself with so-called virtue “responsibilists” rather than virtue “reliabilists.” For works in the latter vein see Sosa (2007) and Greco (2010). For a discussion of the relationship between the two approaches, see Baehr (2006).

<sup>2</sup> For a more in depth account of the relation between intellectual and moral virtues, see the appendix of Baehr (2011).

<sup>3</sup> For an elaboration and defense of this way of thinking about intellectual virtues, see Chs. 6-7 of Baehr (2011).

<sup>4</sup> See for example Zagzebski (1996; 2001), Grimm (2006), and Kvanvig (2003). Bob Roberts and Jay Wood (2007) identify “acquaintance” as a further basic and non-propositional epistemic value.

<sup>5</sup> For a related and illuminating discussion, see Roberts and Wood (2007: 78-80).

<sup>6</sup> “Primarily” because I want to allow that certain “genetic” or etiological considerations (e.g. parental and community influences) can also figure into the relevant explanation.

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, given that the phronimos is characteristically able to adjudicate between different *types* of ends, it is reasonable to think of the standard or traditional view of phronesis as already ranging over the active dimension or dimensions of the intellectual life. See Whitcomb (forthcoming) for a recent treatment of phronesis that addresses its moral and epistemic aspects.

---

<sup>10</sup> This is important because otherwise the person would lack a kind of *wholeness* or *integrity* that is plausibly regarded as an essential part of phronesis. The present point is reminiscent, not just of Aristotle's general view of the connection between phronesis and character virtues, but also of his narrower and very plausible claim in Book 2 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the effect that a genuinely virtuous person, by contrast with, say, a mere virtuous-person-in-training, acts "in a certain state," one which involves, among other things, a certain kind of *knowledge* (1105a). I do not profess to know what exactly Aristotle had in mind here. But given the context of his remark (in particular, the immediately preceding comparison of virtues and skills), it is not difficult to imagine that part of what he is suggesting is that a virtuous person will have some awareness of how his virtue works or of how it is useful or valuable—a perspective very similar to that involved with the possession of a connecting belief.

<sup>11</sup> Doing so would require getting clear on whether something *approximating* phronesis or any of its elements is required for the possession of any particular intellectual virtue; and, if so, whether the psychological state in question involves something like a connecting belief.

<sup>12</sup> See especially Book 6 of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1144b - 1145a). My primary concern here is not with Aristotle's account of the transition from natural to genuine virtue (though I think my discussion fits nicely with what he has to say on the matter). Rather, it is with the initial distinction between natural and genuine or full virtue, which I assume is sufficiently familiar and intuitive.

<sup>13</sup> I shall take for granted that this also happens when a person lacks the relevant natural virtues, that is, where the initial source of a person's virtues lies beyond her natural qualities or temperament.

<sup>14</sup> Obviously, here and elsewhere I am speaking only about intellectual *character* virtues, and thus not of intellectual virtues in, say, either a reliabilist or even a strictly Aristotelian sense. (My focus, insofar as it relates to Aristotle, is on the intellectual or epistemic counterpart to what he describes as *moral* virtues.)

<sup>15</sup> Here and elsewhere the appearance of plausibility is intended to be intuitive and theory-neutral; that is, one need not have a prior commitment to (CBR) or anything like it in order to appreciate the force of the relevant claims. More on this issue below.

<sup>16</sup> The person could value the relevant activity on other, *non-epistemic* grounds and thus "endorse"—and be disposed to engage in—this activity in ways that do not require the satisfaction of (CBR). While this might be sufficient for "appropriating" the relevant trait in some sense, it would not be sufficient for appropriating it in the sense required for the trait's being a genuine *intellectual* virtue. Again, for more on the distinguishing features of intellectual virtues (as compared, say, with moral or other kinds of virtues), see Ch. 6 and the appendix of Baehr (2011).

<sup>17</sup> My point is that a genuinely virtuous person never would or could answer in this way; it is just that such a person could not really possess the utter and complete ignorance suggested by the remark. (Obviously there are various reasons that a person lacking such ignorance might nevertheless say the relevant words—reasons that do not threaten the person's claim to virtue.)

<sup>18</sup> As suggested in note [16] above, my disposition to engage in T-relevant activity might be grounded in an epistemically irrelevant belief of mine. In such a case, while there may be a sense in which I figure into the explanation of my disposition, this would not be sufficient for the kind of "appropriation" required for making this disposition an *intellectual* virtue. Likewise if my disposition were (if this is even a genuine possibility) grounded in a series of *arbitrary* choices or decisions on my part.

<sup>19</sup> Page numbers are from the version of Bennett's article reprinted in *Moral Philosophy: A Reader*, third ed., ed. Louis Pojman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003): 287-295.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hurka (2001: 171-80) defends a similar position, though not in direct connection with the Huck Finn case. Driver, while defending the position just noted in connection with *moral* virtue, stops short of extending it to intellectual virtue (102). However, I think her reasons for denying a cognitive requirement on moral virtue have more or less equal force in connection with intellectual virtue, and thus that she should (given her view of moral virtue) be less hesitant than she is to adopt a similar view of intellectual virtue.

<sup>21</sup> It bears noting that Arpaly's immediate target is a cognitive requirement on what she calls "moral worth." While her conception of moral worth may not correspond perfectly to a conception of moral

---

virtue understood along the “personal worth” or “admiration-based” lines sketched above, any discrepancy between the two should be irrelevant to our concerns here. Therefore, for ease of discussion, I will present Arpaly’s argument as an argument against a cognitive requirement on moral virtue thus conceived. It is also worth mentioning that Arpaly’s discussion of the general issue at hand is much richer and more complex than I can do justice to here. I will limit my focus to her arguments against a cognitive requirement of the specific sort that I am defending (thereby leaving open that she successfully refutes similar requirements that others may have some interest in defending).

<sup>22</sup> Nor is Arpaly claiming merely that Huck lacks a robust or carefully worked out conception of “morality” or of “moral rightness.” First, it would be uncontroversial to claim that a person might do or be good without a sophisticated grasp of morality (satisfying (CBR) hardly requires such a conception). Second, it is doubtful that Huck lacks such a conception. This is evident in the sustained and articulate moral condemnation that he heaps upon himself for his attempt to liberate Jim.

<sup>23</sup> He is, as Arpaly says, responsive to moral reasons in “*de re*” rather than a “*de dicto*” sense. See pp. 73-79.

<sup>24</sup> I see no problem with regarding Huck as a “good boy” or as “good-hearted” or “well-motivated” in some sense. Indeed, provided that the operative dispositions in Huck’s character are such that they would systematically produce good consequences under similar circumstances, I am happy to say that they qualify as moral virtues in a purely “consequentialist” or “externalist” sense. After all, a virtue is simply an excellence of character, and a particular character trait’s being systematically productive of morally good states of affairs surely is sufficient for its being an excellence of some sort. More on this below.

<sup>25</sup> For an extensive discussion of various kinds of epistemic and moral luck, including the kind of “reflective” luck at issue here, see Pritchard (2005).

<sup>26</sup> Arpaly concedes that if Huck *did* have the relevant perspective on his actions, this would add *something* to his moral standing (see e.g. pp. 36 and 77-78). However, given that she clearly thinks of the real substance or basis of personal worth in the plainly external way noted above, I think we must (if we are to avoid a charge of blatant contradiction) understand her as thinking of this added value as a kind normative “icing on the cake,” and *not* as the possible basis of any deep or substantial claim to moral worth. See note [30] below for a related point.

<sup>27</sup> Again, see pp.73-79. I say “to the extent” to reflect the fact that virtue is not an “all or nothing” affair, that is, that one can be more or less virtuous or virtuous to a greater or lesser degree.

<sup>28</sup> This case illustrates the interesting and important point that “*de re* good motivation” is compatible with morally bad or vicious intentions. Indeed, this point underscores the critical difference between Huck Finn, say, on the one hand, and characters like person B, on the other: namely, that while Huck and person B are both *de re* well-motivated, B but not Huck possesses vicious intentions.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the more precise (if more cumbersome) way of putting the point is that C counts as vicious *in respect of* the fact that she is motivated by a morally bad end. This does justice to the fact that in other respects C may be morally virtuous. This point does not, I take it, significantly mitigate the implausibility of the implications of (V2) relative to this case.

<sup>30</sup> At one point, Arpaly appears to want to make room for the possibility that certain figures resembling person C can exhibit personal worth. The relevant remarks come in the context of a discussion of cases involving a “misguided conscience,” in which a person acts conscientiously but nevertheless is motivated by ends that in fact are bad. Arpaly indicates that in at least some such cases she would not want to deny that the person could exhibit moral worth (112). This suggests that her actual view is that *de re* good motivation is *sufficient* but not *necessary* for moral worth. There are, however, serious problems with this interpretation. The first is that it contradicts many of Arpaly’s other explicit statements. For instance, elsewhere she explicitly rejects the idea that moral worth is a matter of “doing what one feels or believes, even as a background belief, that one morally ought to do.” She adds: “For a right action to have (positive) moral worth, it is neither sufficient nor necessary that it stem from the agent’s interest in the rightness of his action” (73). This seems clearly to conflict with the former claim, since the reason for making a favorable moral evaluation of a person with a misguided conscience presumably would be that

---

she is attempting to do what (by her lights) she has good reason to think is right. A second problem is that this weaker formulation of her position has implications that Arpaly apparently would want to repudiate. For instance, it entails that person B noted above merits a favorable moral assessment (for again he is motivated by an end that in fact is good). This implication is implausible on its face; and given her interest in making a favorable assessment of person C, it seems especially clear that Arpaly would want to deny a similar assessment of person B (who again is a kind of mirror *opposite* of person C). My suggestion, then, is that Arpaly's concession relative to cases involving a "misguided conscience" introduces a deep instability to her view, and thus that she is best interpreted as holding that *de re* good motivation is both necessary and sufficient for moral worth. See note [32] below for some further discussion on this point.

<sup>31</sup> This tracks certain replies to the clairvoyance cases noted in the previous sections. Some reliabilists about knowledge argue that if the clairvoyant has evidence against the reliability of his unique cognitive ability, then beliefs produced via this ability are not epistemically justified, but that if he merely lacks any evidence one way or another on the matter, then, provided that the ability is in fact a reliable one, beliefs arising from this disposition are epistemically justified.

<sup>32</sup> In note [30] above, I observed that there is some textual evidence for thinking that Arpaly holds that *de re* good motivation is sufficient but not necessary for moral worth, that this would entail (implausibly and contra other things she says) that person B is virtuous, and thus that Arpaly cannot consistently hold to the weaker position just noted. It might be said at this point, however, that Arpaly could accept the *pure de re* motivational view and avoid the implausible implication just noted, for B clearly possesses "countervailing psychological states" and thus does not count as exhibiting moral worth on the pure *de re* view. The problem, however, is that this would very substantially undermine the initial motivation for Arpaly's view. For the pure *de re* view denies the status of moral worth or virtue to figures like Huck Finn; and it is precisely such cases (and the Huck case in particular) that drive Arpaly's initial argument. So, again, I think the best interpretation of Arpaly's view remains one according to which *de re* good motivation is both necessary and sufficient for moral worth.

<sup>33</sup> Recall that B is motivated by A's *removal* from office (a good end) while C is motivated by A's political *success* (a bad end).

<sup>34</sup> One problem with such characters, which I note simply in passing, concerns the possible morally relevant *grounding* of their motivation. If they are not disposed to engage in the relevant moral activity at least partly out of a sense of its value, why are they thus disposed? And on account of what are their dispositions morally relevant? This is an especially pressing question for someone like Arpaly, who (rightly in my view) suggests that if a disposition is a function of purely natural or instinctive human sentiments, this is not sufficient for its generating the kind of personal praise or credit essential to judgments of moral worth (76).

<sup>35</sup> Personal worth is not, however, immune to so-called "constitutive" luck. See Williams (1981) and Nagel (1979).

<sup>36</sup> This claim is, of course, reminiscent of Kant's (1993) famous words about a good will, which "wholly lack[ing] power to accomplish its purposes" and "[achieving] nothing," nevertheless shines like a jewel "by its own light, having its full value in itself," its "usefulness or fruitfulness ... neither add[ing] nor [taking] anything from its value."

<sup>37</sup> How exactly we should specify the world in question depends on how exactly we characterize the dispositions of B and C, which is a tricky issue. However, I take it that whatever the most precise or accurate characterization turns out to be, it would not be impossible to specify a world in which B's disposition is systematically productive of bad states of affairs and C's is systematically productive of bad states of affairs. Moreover, if it were to turn out that in fact no "right" or non-arbitrary specification is possible, then so much the worse for the reliabilist view under considerations, for the viability of this view clearly requires we be able to give reasonably specific and non-arbitrary characterizations of the relevant dispositions.

<sup>38</sup> See Driver (2001: 78-83) for a relevant discussion.

---

<sup>39</sup> An exception might be if the accomplishment were substantially or entirely the person's own doing or a product of actions that were largely or entirely under his voluntary control. This is not inconsistent with the present point.

<sup>40</sup> See Arpaly (2003:98-114) for a related and illuminating discussion.

<sup>41</sup> In fact, for reasons I will get to in the final section of the paper, this principle stands in need of an additional refinement (pertaining to the possibility of "negative" or "passive" contributors to personal worth). But this refinement is minor and need not occupy us here. For further illustrations of the need for the kind of "rationality constraint" just introduced, see Arpaly (2003: 101-111) and Hurka (2001: 178-180).

<sup>42</sup> Admittedly, more ultimately would need to be said in clarification of what it is to "have a good reason" in support of one of the relevant sorts of beliefs. However, I take it that this notion is sufficiently familiar and intuitive for present purposes.

<sup>43</sup> Whether part (b) of (CBR) is also embedded within (PA3) is less clear. The question here is whether if S were to believe that some virtue-relevant activity A is likely to be helpful for promoting his broader epistemic goals G, do his best to engage in A, but do so for reasons entirely independent of the forementioned conviction, S's actions would still bear favorably on his personal worth. I find this very dubious. However, I will not stop here to explore or defend the point.

<sup>44</sup> The Himmler case and related cases suggest the need for an additional minor revision which, for the sake of simplicity, I refrain from incorporating into (CBR\*): namely, that the person's "more general epistemic goals" must also be reasonably or rationally conceived. Imagine, for instance, a person who satisfies all of the conditions in (CBR\*) but whose only "broader epistemic goal" is the accumulation of "trivial" or "junk" knowledge. It is doubtful that the relevant disposition would contribute much (if anything) to this person's personal intellectual worth.

<sup>45</sup> One of Julia Driver's (2001) main reasons for rejecting a cognitive belief requirement on moral virtue concerns the trait of modesty. Driver argues that necessarily a genuinely modest person will lack the relevant kind of perspective on her modesty (16-41). If modesty can be understood in negative terms, then, for reasons I am about to get to, I might very well agree with her.

<sup>46</sup> This is not to deny (where the concern is personal worth or admiration) that the relevant negative or passive manifestations of virtue must in some way be traceable to the person's agency, that is, that they not be strictly and entirely a matter of luck. For more on this see Baehr (2011: Ch. 2).

<sup>47</sup> I say "primarily" because it might also depend on whether a particular virtue V that has both active and passive applications could be possessed (albeit necessarily in a limited or incomplete way) by a person who is disposed to manifest only the passive aspects of V.

<sup>48</sup> Many thanks to Susanne Mantel, Ernest Sosa, Jennifer Lackey, and other participants in the conference "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action," which took place in Jena, Germany, in the fall of 2010 for helpful comments and conversation on an earlier draft of this paper. Thanks also to Bob Roberts and Stephen Grimm for (independently) raising serious doubts about an even earlier (much quicker and underdeveloped) version of some of this material.