<u>The Philosophy of Piety:</u>

<u>How Muslim Women who Veil Allow us to Rethink Automaticity, Agency, Adaptive Preferences, and Autonomy</u>

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Abstract

In 2012, the Canadian government attempted to ban a Muslim woman with a niqab from taking the citizenship oath, while the Quebec government has attempted to ban women who wear the Muslim veil from public service jobs three times and was successful in 2019. One element of the justification of these bans is a feminist argument that these women could not have autonomously chosen to wear the veil because of their patriarchal socialization. My work is a timely intervention on the racialization of the veil, feminist worries about multiculturalism's effect on women's freedom, and the role of religious, veiled Muslim women in the normative future goals of feminism. My dissertation, *The Philosophy of Piety: How Muslim Women who Veil Allow us to Rethink Automaticity, Agency, Adaptive Preferences and Autonomy*, focuses on the problem of agency under contexts of constraint. Using postcolonial feminist work and Saba Mahmood's ethnography in Egypt of the women's *dawa* movement, I argue that the framework of feminist relational autonomy needs fixing and supplementation. Beyond this anthropological work, I bring a set of novel tools to bear on this question that is not typical of the literature. Tools from (i) continental philosophy (Foucault, Bergson and Merleau-Ponty) (ii) virtue ethics and (iii) empirical work on evolution, cognition, embodiment, and emotion. For example, I conclude that we should eliminate using the concept of "adaptive preferences" to evaluate Third World women by borrowing the concept of "niche-construction" from evolutionary biology to argue that adaptive preferences misdescribe the process of socialization. I also conclude that relational autonomy should focus on "affordances" in order to integrate the traditional psychological meaning of autonomy with the feminist concern for social embeddedness and external oppression.

Résumé

En 2012, le gouvernement canadien a tenté d'interdire à une femme musulmane portant le niqab de prêter le serment de citoyenneté, tandis que le gouvernement du Québec a tenté à trois reprises d'interdire aux femmes portant le voile musulman d'occuper des emplois dans la fonction publique et a réussi en 2019. Un élément de la justification de ces interdictions consiste d'un argument féministe selon lequel ces femmes n'auraient pas pu choisir de manière autonome le port du voile en raison de leur socialisation patriarcale. Ce travail présente une intervention opportune sur la racisation du voile, les inquiétudes féministes concernant l'effet du multiculturalisme sur la liberté des femmes et le rôle des femmes religieuses du tiers-monde dans les futurs objectifs normatifs du féminisme. Dans le cadre de cette thèse, La philosophie de la piété : comment les femmes musulmanes voilées nous permettent de repenser l'automaticité, l'agence, les préférences adaptatives et l'autonomie, nous nous concentrons sur le problème de l'agentivité dans des contextes de contrainte. En utilisant le travail féministe postcolonial et l'ethnographie de Saba Mahmood en Égypte sur le mouvement *dawa* des femmes, nous soutenons que le cadre de l'autonomie relationnelle féministe doit être corrigé et complété. Au-delà de ce travail anthropologique, nous présentons un ensemble d'outils inédits à cette question atypique dans la littérature. Ces outils sont issus (i) de la philosophie continentale (Foucault, Bergson et Merleau-Ponty) (ii) de l'éthique de la vertu et (iii) des travaux empiriques sur l'évolution, la cognition, l'incarnation et l'émotion. Par exemple, nous concluons que nous devrions éliminer l'utilisation du concept de « préférences adaptatives » pour évaluer les femmes du tiers-monde en empruntant le concept de « construction de niche » à la biologie évolutive pour soutenir que les préférences adaptatives décrivent mal le processus de socialisation. Nous concluons également que l'autonomie relationnelle devrait se concentrer sur les « potentialités » afin d'intégrer le sens psychologique traditionnel de l'autonomie avec le souci féministe d'enracinement social et d'oppression externe.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and late father.

They supported me despite the very strange path I took to get here.

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Chapter 1: Background on Self-Transformation, Habit, Affordances,
Skill and Automatic Action, and Emotion

Preface: Is the Muslim Veil an Instance of Women Embracing Their Oppression?

In 2014, a Muslim woman who wore a full niqab was stopped from taking her citizenship oath by a ban on the veil by Canada. Part of the justification for the ban was that the veil did not represent Canadian values since "women are full and equal members of society"[1] implying that the veil was inherently oppressive. And although this niqab ban was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada, 82% of Canadians supported this banning of the full face veil[2]. In Quebec, support for veil bans were even higher. From 2013-2019, there were two failed and one successful attempt to ban the veil from public service in Quebec[3]. Even as the 2019 veil ban is being fought in the courts, a familiar feminist justification has continually been brought forward: "For me the hijab is a symbol of inferiority even if they [the Muslim teachers who wear the veil] say they don't feel inferior or superior or equal to men. It's a symbol of inferiority and I insist on that point."[4] The thrust of this argument is not just that the veil is oppressive to women, but that this oppression makes it that women who choose this practice cannot be considered autonomous enough to make this choice.

The goal of this dissertation is to interrogate this feminist worry of the patriarchal socialization of veiled Muslim women such that they cannot be considered autonomous enough

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[1] https://web.archive.org/web/20150627110138/http:/www.conservative.ca/cpc/not-the-way-we-do-things-here/
[2] https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-conservatives-barbaric-cultural-practices-1.3254886
[3] For more on the context and history of veil bans in Quebec, see my two part blog post at the "Religion Factor": https://www.rug.nl/research/centre-for-religious-studies/religion-conflict-globalization/blog/legislative-catharsis-part-one-a-primer-on-quebecs-veil-bans-for-europeans-22-05-2019 and https://www.rug.nl/research/centre-for-religious-studies/religion-conflict-globalization/blog/legislative-catharsis-part-two-a-primer-on-quebecs-veil-bans-for-europeans-29-05-2019
[4] https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bill-21-court-case-quebec-religious-symbols-ban-1.5795610

to choose their practices. This issue is not isolated to women who veil. Multiculturalism as a policy of benign neglect of cultural group practices in the liberal state has always sat uneasily with certain feminists (Okin 1999). An even broader worry that has occupied feminists, just as it did for Marxists, is, why do women embrace their oppression? This goes for practices beyond the veil such as wearing high heeled shoes (Chambers 2008), breast augmentation (Chambers 2004), unequal domestic relationships (Nussbaum 2000), dieting (Heyes 2007) and other practices that enact femininity as subordination (Bartky 1990). Looking specifically at the question of whether the veil represents autonomy-undermining oppression first, we can then begin to think through these other, larger philosophical and political questions.

This dissertation reaches two conclusions about ways of thinking about feminist relational autonomy and then makes a third, positive suggestion, about how we should define relational autonomy. The first conclusion is about what is called "adaptive preferences". Adaptive preferences is the idea that women conform to their socialization and material context by adapting their goals and preferences normatively downward to match their conditions. The tragedy of the phenomenon of adapted preferences is that women become controlled not by external laws in this situation, but are so socialized to their culture that these women actually *prefer* an oppressive practice over non-oppressive alternatives. I argue that we should eliminate the use of adaptive preferences because it normatively leads to the epistemic injustice of Muslim women who choose to veil, but also it misdescribes the process of socialization. Descriptively, adaptive preferences assumes that women only adapt to their circumstance and not that women have agency in creating their circumstance.

My second conclusion is that the way that relational autonomy has been defined appeals intuitively to a narrow section of academic feminists and that if we look to Muslim women who

choose to veil for their input, it conceptually changes how we think about autonomy. The empirical engine of my dissertation is the ethnographic work on the women's *dawa* movement from Egypt from Saba Mahmood's book *The Politics of Piety*. I also rely on other ethnographies of this *dawa* movement in other countries such as France, Germany and Belgium in the decade and a half since Mahmood's book. While the general focus is on Muslim women who veil, the *dawa* movement is a specific group that wants to live a life of Islamic virtue. A group within the larger group of Muslim women who veil who might be most accused of being patriarchally socialized.

Thirdly, my positive suggestions are that we center the concept of relational autonomy around affordances in order to see how both the inner psychology of a person as well as their social and political context interact to provide the conditions of possibility for a person's autonomy. Speaking specifically about the Egyptian women that Mahmood studies, I also make a normatively critical suggestion that instead of tracking the progress of feminist goals by comparing these women to the situation of Western women, it would be better to compare these women's current situation to their past situation. There are certain social, political and material conditions of a society that uphold autonomy and need upkeep and protection from back sliding. I argue that if we are able to retain these conditions, it will be the women themselves that will creatively move their own situations toward their own form of gender justice.

In Chapter 1, I articulate the themes and background that provide a conceptual foundation for the rest of the dissertation. I justify my methodological pluralism and use of anthropology for two main reasons. First, that ethnography of the *dawa* women's movement provides us other intuitions on concepts such as freedom and autonomy. Secondly, interdisciplinarity gives me the conceptual tools to reveal a little investigated "meso-level" of political phenomena below the

structural but above the individual. The methods I discuss in the rest of the chapter changes our focus in order to be able to see this meso-level: Virtue ethics, self-transformation, skill, habit, automatic action, affordances and affect.

In Chapter 2, I argue that while Virtue ethics is the best way to approach this meso-level of phenomena, its traditional, central concept of character needs revision in order to incorporate the long-term influence of the social environment on a person. If we are to understand what socialization and what political context do to women, we have to be able to see how character is affected by situation. I do this by introducing the "situationist" challenge: social psychological experiments that show that the "situation" causes the behaviour of individuals rather than their character. By drawing from ethnography of the women's *dawa* movement, I show that both situationism and traditional virtue ethics idea of character is flawed. This is because both assume that character is an internal disposition, like fragility is to glass, while the situation is completely external to the individual. I argue that the concept of affordances allows us to connect the individual's situation and their character and that character is a combination of both. A secondary purpose of this chapter is to lay out the ethnographic detail that will be the source for examples in later chapters.

Feminist worries about autonomy center on structural worries about socialization and oppression. In Chapter 3, I argue that contemporary virtue ethics has taken on a very individualist bent. In order to properly diagnose the problem, I critique virtue ethics' compatibilist take on "character/constitutional luck". While compatibilists argue that we have enough influence over our character at maturity to be responsible for it, if we really look our lives through the framework of "luck", our character is essentially out of our control. This is because of the influence of history, socialization and individual development before we have a

chance to intervene. I argue that we do not have to settle for a hard determinist conclusion if we change the framework of looking at our socialization away from "luck". Instead we should turn to Merleau-Ponty's Bergsonian concept of "Institution" in order to integrate history, socialization, individual development with the idea of contingency. While an individualist framework does not acknowledge sufficiently socialization and oppression's influence on us, exclusively using a structural framework leaves no room for the concept of autonomy. This is because it looks as if we are determined by our social embeddedness and oppression. I argue that the concept of Institution gives us the ability to integrate the momentum of the past on our current selves while still acknowledging that through the power of community and self transformation, we can use this momentum towards our deepest projects.

Using a close reading of Saba Mahmood's ethnographic story of Abir, a woman who uses her trained skill from the *dawa* movement to confront her husband, I argue in Chapter 4 that changing social norms does not necessarily involve resisting them. Using Mahmood's concept of "inhabiting a norm", I argue that in becoming experts in piety with the women's *dawa* movement, these experts inherently push norms in creative directions. This is done not through resistance but from becoming a virtuoso of the norm. I argue that Western feminists have a tendency to assume teleologically that non-Western women's goal for justice ought to look like Western gender justice. I conclude that if women are allowed this kind of creativity to become an expert at a norm, we should trust these women to push norms toward their own form of gender justice; one that makes sense from within their own form of life.

Feminist theories of autonomy are often anchored by the concept of "adaptive preferences", the idea that women's social situation coerces these women to embrace their own oppression. My goal in Chapter 5 is to argue for the elimination of the concept of adaptive

preferences when analyzing the autonomy of women. I begin by arguing that these kinds of

"false consciousness" arguments lead to epistemic injustice of non-Western women such that

their own voice in the debates over what is oppressive and what is not is taken for granted. While

Serene Khader attempts to rescue the concept in a post-colonial way using non-ideal theory and

universalism, I argue that normatively, non-ideal theory does the important conceptual work and

that we as theorists don't need universalism nor adaptive preferences. Decisively, I argue, that

adaptive preferences as a concept should be dropped because it misdescribes socialization. Using

the concept of "niche construction" from evolutionary biology, I show that individuals don't just

adapt to society. Individuals have a reciprocal, feed-back looping influence on their own

socialization and situation.

In the final chapter, I claim that what I have argued so far in the dissertation should lead

us to thinking about autonomy through the idea of affordances. I argue that many of the

problems within relational autonomy are because of a separation of the inner, psychological

version of autonomy with the more structural version that concentrates on external oppression.

The concept of affordances allows us to integrate the "inner" idea of skill of the individual with

the "outer", the person's social context. I add that a person's context isn't just structural but also

the meso-level revealed by anthropological ethnography that I used throughout this dissertation. I

conclude that this affordance account of autonomy does not leave feminists without critical

normative tools. I argue that affordances have social conditions of possibility that are often taken

for granted. The role of feminist normative critique should be keeping those conditions of

possibility from back sliding and disappearing. Using the arguments about institution from

Chapter 3 and the creativity of non-Western women in Chapter 4, I argue that if we are able to

maintain the condition of possibility for more affordances, these women themselves will creatively push for more autonomy that makes sense within their own form of life.

Section 1 – Methodology

Section 1.1 – The Use of Anthropology

This dissertation uses methodologies that span Continental and analytic philosophy, spans virtue ethics, philosophy of mind, and feminist philosophy, and spans such diverse disciplines as anthropology, cognitive science, and evolutionary biology. This may seem like an eclectic collection of sources and ways of doing philosophy. The goal of this first chapter is to both justify this methodological pluralism and give the conceptual spine of this dissertation.

The reason for my methodological pluralism stems from, as Lorraine Code argues, "a respect for particularity" (2006, 19). It comes from a conviction in the power of the empirical. That our concepts, seen as tools for accessing and probing reality, cannot be useful unless they actually conform to reality. My argument in this dissertation will be that because we don't have the right tools to access the everyday reality of Muslim women who veil, that feminist philosophy has been too quick to judge these women as not autonomous or oppressed. Philosophers often bring concepts and theories that have their own histories in academic debates rather than concepts connected to the world[5]. Philosophers imply that their claims span all

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[5] Quill Kukla (2020) (one among many non-ideal theorists) argues that as academics we are often caught up in "navel gazing" by responding only to the academic literature rather than directly to the world. This leaves philosophers increasingly unmoored from the empirical world and unable to comment critically on it. Kukla argues that like comedy, philosophy can topically be about anything. So we become bad philosophers and bad comedians if we do not engage with the world. "We become self-referential beings who just respond to other philosophy, and this makes us stop being able to display interesting things about the world itself" (Kukla 2020, 62). Both good philosophy and good comedy at its essence is "tasked with displaying how the world actually is, in a novel way, showing us features of it that we have not noticed before even though they were there to be noticed without

contexts when really these concepts are not tried within other forms of life. Martha Nussbaum

refers back to Aristotle to help us think about the relationship of our concepts to the fine-grained

particularity of the world. Concepts and general rules that are thought up without pushback from

reality and our subjects of study are like a straight edge that cannot measure a complex column.

Instead, Aristotle asks us to be the architect who measures the world with a flexible strip that

allows suppleness and responsiveness to the world rather than the crude procedure of the straight

edge of preconceived norms (Nussbaum 1986, 80). This way of letting your subjects and the

world drive the concepts used better represents and responds to the nuance and fine shading of

the matter at hand in a way that principles set up in advance have a hard time doing (1986, 301).

Section 1.2 – Post-Colonial Worries about Ethnography as a Method

Before moving on to explain why anthropology is a unique, qualitative methodology that

is integral to my work, we must first look at the normative problems of ethnography. In his book,

Time and the Other, Johannes Fabian synthesizes many of the post-Colonial critiques of the

practice of ethnography on Non-Western cultures. Fabian gives four general worries which I will

look at here in this section. These worries are about the practical manifestations of unequal

power between the ethnographer and her subject because of the history of colonization. The

practices that make up contemporary ethnography were formed and sedimented during the 19th

and early 20th century when anthropologists would leave Europe to report back on primitive

cultures. This ideological and material imbalance continues to live on today. The West is the

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special equipment. Both philosophers and comedians reveal hidden assumptions that we take for granted, and make us see normal, everyday situations and activities as worthy of curiosity and critical examination" (Kukla 2020, 61).

location of anthropological knowledge production, with wealthy institutions that make it so that only one side has the power to represent the other side.

The first critique is that the ethnographer, in doing their work, tend to put their ethnographical subjects on an evolutionary scale below the West. The second is ethnography tends to be reflective rather than reflexive and the ethnographer tends to erase the autobiographical element in order to seem more scientific and objective. The third worry is the most important yet the hardest to avoid and that is, in the current material state of anthropology, Othering seems to be a constitutive element of the practice of ethnography. The final worry is connected to the second and third worry and that ethnography tends to focus exclusively on vision in the way that the ethnographer is the observer and her subject the observed.

The first critique is that historically, one of the goals of anthropology was not just to study other cultures but to have a window into our (the West's) collective past by studying more primitive civilizations (Fabian 2014, 11). In current anthropology, there remains an implicit Hegelian view of history of the West versus "the rest". Even in explicitly trying to move away from this, particularly in talking about the integration of other cultures into the dominant one there is still talk about an evolutionary cultural scale (Fabian 2014, 17-18). On the topic of my dissertation this manifests itself in the anxiety about gender equality when talking about multiculturalism. This evolutionary scale manifests itself most clearly in Susan Okin's (in)famous *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women* when she argues "While virtually all of the world's cultures have distinctly patriarchal pasts… Western liberal cultures – have departed far further from them than others" (1999, 16). In anthropology, this kind of worry manifested in the obsession with women who wear the veil. As Leila Ahmed describes it over her thirty years of work in Egypt with women who veil, the motivating puzzle for Western feminism that led to this

obsession was the fact that women who had originally abandoned the veil were once again taking up the practice (1992, 2011). This embrace of the veil for many feminists was a reversion, a de-evolution of Western feminist progress. So the question of the ethnography of women who wear the veil really became, instead, the question of why women embrace their own oppression.

In response to this, the ethnography I have chosen to inform my work explicitly tries to avoid putting women who veil on an evolutionary scale below more secularized Muslim women. One of the central arguments of Mahmood's *The Politics of Piety* is one she inherits from Talal Asad and this is to question why the religious is seen as backward and regressive while the secular is seen as progressive and always normatively good. In Chapter 4, I explicitly confront the Hegelian historical view of evolutionary progress and regress that runs implicitly through much of, what I call, teleological feminism.

A second critique of ethnography is that when it is produced, there is a tendency for the ethnographer to erase themselves autobiographically from the work. From structuralists such as Levi-Strauss it was thought that there was a need to create a critical as well as scientific distance from the ethnographic subject being studied (Fabian 2014, 62). Of course, though the subject experiencing the other culture and writing about it couldn't be erased altogether, it was thought that one must be reflective, that the writer could be anyone within the culture doing the ethnography, rather than reflexive (Fabian 2014, 90). But as Fabian argues, the problem with this is that "by censoring reflexions on the autobiographic conditions of anthropological knowledge, one removes an important part of the knowledge process from the arena of criticism" (Fabian 2014, 95).

But as Matti Bunzl writes in a forward to the new edition of Fabian's book, this critique has been one of the problems that contemporary anthropology has most overcome. In response to

this worry, "anthropological knowledge now appears as the product of specifically situated, dialogical interactions between anthropologists and informants, further highlighted by the widespread appearance of the authorial 'I'" (Bunzl 2014, xxii). Mahmood, in the preface to the *Politics of Piety* begins by talking about her background as a Marxist feminist Pakistani. She talks about her opposition to the way the military dictator Zia ul-Haq had weaponized religion to control women. She explains that this experience "cemented in the minds of progressive feminists like myself that our very survival depended on an unflinching stance against the Islamization of Pakistan" (Mahmood 2005, x). In framing her book in this way, what also becomes important as a background narrative is how much the ethnographic experience of contact with the *dawa* movement of Egypt was transformative and how much her views changed. In the next section, I go further into the value of the transformative experience of ethnography.

The next critique is one of the most important critiques yet also the most intractable. This is because as the discipline of anthropology inherits the history, but importantly, the material conditions of the colonial relationship between the West and the Rest, all ethnography has a constitutive element of Othering the subject being studied. The historical legacy of colonialism is one that was deeply invested and involved "in the Orient almost since the time of Homer" (Said 1978, 11). Currently this legacy is that the West is exclusively the location where anthropological knowledge is produced. This is versus "the rest", which is where the raw ethnographic material is extracted, the data for the knowledge production done later in the West. As I have illustrated with the obsession with veiled women, *who* becomes the ethnographic subject and *why* they are studied is always dictated by the knowledge producer as well since knowledge is regulated first by the local concerns of the specialist (Said 1978, 45). As I argue in the next section, part of what is valuable about ethnography is that the ethnographer has a view

of our form of life in the West but also an understanding of the form of life they are studying.

But this also leads to the Othering of the ethnographic subject. This distance is a descriptively

important methodological tool but it also places the ethnographer on a different footing than the

people they are studying. There are various concrete practices that show this. For instance, while

the autobiographical is now transparent when describing the fieldwork part of ethnographical

work, there is an implicit disavowal of the theoretical decisions and motivations when it comes

to writing it up as journal articles, books and when teaching; basically the entire process of the

representation of the ethnographic experience becomes opaque (Fabian 2014, 173). One

normative strength of ethnography that I will talk about in the next section is that the

ethnographic subject, unlike texts, "talks back" and pushes back against assumptions and so is a

key dialogical producer of the ethnographer's transformative experience. Unfortunately, when

the anthropologist goes back to the West, when representing this knowledge, this dialogue ends.

If, as Fabian argues, ultimately, anthropology's task is to give presence to those who, if at all, are

spoken of only in absentia" (Fabian 2014, 175), then anthropology fails in this at the level of

production of knowledge. There is often "a constitutive suppression of the dialogical realities

generating anthropological insights in the first place" (Bunzl 2014, viii) by not having the input

of those whose experience an anthropologist intends to represent.

  This is an important criticism because at this point in the methodological history of

anthropology as a discipline there is no simple overcoming of this problem. As Anna Tsing

argues, we "cannot escape these dilemmas; [we] can only maneuver within them" (Bunzl 2014,

xxiii). Particularly the first problem of Othering, of the location of power/knowledge in the West,

I can only agree with Said when he argues that "only a change in power relations between an

imperial West and its anthropological other—its interlocutors, as he put it—could lead to a way

out of our crisis of representation" (Fabian 2014, 175). The only thing that can be said is that I hope to show in the next section that ethnographic work is both so unique (as compared to other methodologies such as examples or surveys etc) and so valuable in getting Other intuitions, that the good methodological work that ethnography does out-weighs the problem of the Othering of the representation of the ethnographic subject.

The final manifestation of the way ethnography tends to Otherize its ethnographic subjects is the tendency to focus on vision as the privileged metaphor to the detriment of the other senses. One element of this is a critique of Western ocularcentrism that omits entire dimensions of experience. "No provision seems to be made for the beat of drums or the blaring of bar music that keep you awake at night; none for the strange taste and texture of food, or the smells and the stench" (Fabian 2014, 108). Implicit in this is the distance vision gives the observer, to lift them above the immediacy of sounds and odors. This distancing has a history in colonialism, as Edward Said describes, "The Orient is for the European observer" (1978, 158) … "The Orient is watched, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples of what the *Description de l'Egypte* called 'bizarre jouissance.' The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness" (1978, 104). This is an explicit contrast between the activity and agency of the observer and the passivity of those being observed. "Observation conceived as the essence of fieldwork implies, on the side of the ethnographer, a contemplative stance. It invokes the 'naturalist' watching an experiment. It also calls for a native society that would, ideally at least, hold still like a tableau vivant" (Fabian 2014, 67).

Even in contemporary ethnographic work we see examples of this. Bernardo Zacka and Matthew Longo try to capture what the rich detail of ethnography can give us as political philosophers, but they cannot resist the ocularcentric and scientistic metaphor in doing so. For them, approaching political phenomena through ethnography is not just a scaled-up version of what can be seen from afar with other methods like a "magnifying glass". Instead, the dense description of ethnography introduces a new dimension of reality like a "microscope" (Longo and Zacka 2019, 1068). In the metaphor of the microscope, those observing immobilize their subject, suspending them in solution. It also suspends them in time which undermines one of the most important and unique parts of ethnography, the diachronic thickness of description. Again, there seems to be no way to get around this without altering the power relations of the society studying and the one being studied. But many ethnographers have listened to the first part, the ocularcentric critique. For instance, an important ethnography I will rely on is the work of Charles Hirschkind whose work is not what he observed, but instead the sonic landscape of Egypt. In the next section I elaborate in greater detail the idea of ethnography as thick diachronic description as well as Hirschkind's "Islamic Soundscape".

Section 1.3 – Using Ethnographic Work as an Engine to Drive Our Concepts and Theories

My claims are hardly a call for something radically new, but instead for political philosophers to return our focus on the people we study and their forms of life. It is inspired by the phenomenological call to "return to the things themselves!" in response to Neo-Kantian rationalism in the early 20th century.[6] Phenomenology and anthropology also share the

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[6] For more on the explicit connection between anthropology and phenomenology see McMahon, Laura. "Phenomenological Variation and Intercultural Transformation: Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology and Abu-Lughod's Ethnography in Dialogue." *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philosophia* 66, no. 1 (2021): 67-98.

conviction of the power of the world and our ethnographic subjects to surprise us. But the world cannot surprise us if we do not approach it in the right way. For phenomenology, the right approach has been to bracket our pretheoretical assumptions and approach the world with wonder, with freshness and naivete. I argue the person working with ethnography should do something similar, what Zacka and Herzog call "an ethnographic sensibility." We must be attuned to the richness of the qualitative empirical data given in ethnographic details.

This is not just a call for more empirical work in political philosophy in general, this is a specific argument for the use of and importance of anthropology. To show the unique importance of anthropology, it is useful to separate "ethnography" from other methods of empirical work. Most often the word "empirical" in political philosophy and political theory is connected to quantitative methods. Ethnography gives us something above and beyond other empirical methods; it is not reducible to a case, or a survey, nor experimental philosophy. Ethnography is not a single data point in a reflective equilibrium, nor should we label an ethnography an easily dismissible sample N of 1. In the rest of this section, I will separate ethnography from these other empirical techniques.

Ethnography often functions the same way that cases do. Both ethnographies and cases can produce "detailed evidence of the sort that can flesh out, or call into question, generalizations" (Schatz 2009, 10). If we have strong commitments and intuitions to certain abstract values and principles, cases and ethnographies can help us better understand and hopefully sometimes revise our normative principles and values. "Ethnographic writing shares with literature and journalism the power to capture experiences vividly and to put them before our eyes in a way that can profoundly resonate with us" (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 11). Ethnographic approaches have proven especially apt at uncovering implicit biases and

challenging the universality of normative claims (Longo and Zacka 2019, 1067). This is important work that cases and ethnographies do for the philosopher, I myself use ethnographies for this function. But often the philosopher begins with their concepts first, hoping to make claims of necessity and only turns to cases functionally, merely as counterexamples.

But if approached correctly, ethnographies can go beyond being just counterexamples in two ways. When qualitative work is attacked by people who champion quantitative work, it is accused of being merely a single data point, an N of 1. This means that this is only one person's view, it could be an anomaly and certainly does not accurately represent the views of the whole group. The whole group can only be accessed, so says the quantitative empiricist, through surveys and hard data analysis. This might be accurate of cases that serve as singular counterexamples, but the context that ethnography gives us something more valuable. Context for the anthropologist is important because of the belief, to quote a famous claim by Clifford Geertz, "that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun." These webs of significance have been called ways or forms of life by Ludwig Wittgenstein and often have a logic and rationality of their own that can only be explained by the anthropologist who embeds themselves in that way of life. Beyond the importance of ethnographic work's connections with forms of life, cases, by themselves, give us a diachronically thin and poor description of a human. If a single person might be an anomaly and not representative of a larger group of people, then a single time slice, a single case, might also be an anomaly in a person's life and not at all be representative of a person's general character.

In the Second Chapter we will be talking about the situationist dilemma, social psychology experiments that purport to show that people's behaviour can be predicted by the "situation" rather than their character. The main criticism from philosophers in the tradition of

virtue ethics, and the main reason I supplement this psychology work with ethnography of the *dawa* women, is that these experiments only record *one* instance from a person's life. Can a single instance within a person's entire life tell us if that person is a generally helpful person or not? The situationists seem to think so. As Gopal Sreenivasan argues, against the situationists, character is the kind of thing that is supposed to be a *long-term* stable disposition. A thing that cannot be tested through a one-time performance but must be studied over a long period of time because temporal stability is the thing that interests us about character (Sreenivasan 2002). Yet I argue in Chapter 2 that these experiments confront both the virtue ethicists and the situationists with a problematic shared assumption, that character is wholly on the inside and the "situation" is exclusively on the outside of the individual. Ethnographic work is important to this argument because ethnographic research is a much more diachronically robust method than cases or single experiments. This kind of research is often conducted over a period of months or years and can uncover how people make choices on a repeated basis and if and how they come to revise them over time. "By expanding the temporal horizon, ethnography allows us to explore not only one-off decisions, but also practices and habits of thinking" (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 6). So, it is in fact a fallacy, as Yanow and Schwartz-Shea argue, for quantitative minded political scientists to accuse ethnography of having a sample size of 1. A large number of hours of engaged observation should be seen as a number of interactions, a large yield of Ns that can only be dismissed if one omits countless hours of observations (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, xvii)

Continuing with the thread of the importance of context, we can see why the rich detail of a form of life is important by looking at a problem in experimental philosophy. Experimental philosophy importantly realizes that much normative moral and political philosophy is based on intuitions. They rightly question, "whose intuitions are we basing our normative claims on?"

They look to expand insights beyond the ivory towers by taking surveys of everyday people's intuitions. But as Amy Barnes argues, "although some experimental philosophers have begun to recognize the need for 'intercultural analyses,' these researchers often seem to build simplistic and stereotyped distinctions into their hypotheses, e.g. 'Westerners also have a much stronger sense of agency and independence, while East Asians have a much stronger commitment to social harmony'[7]" (Barnes 2017, 6). These stereotypes can have real world consequences. As Ellen Pader, an anthropologist and policy analyst argues, inaccurate analyses derived from stereotypes rather than from actual familiarity with a group's form of life can arrive at less useful or worse, harmful policy solutions (Pader 2006, 170). This is exactly what I think has happened when feminists have favoured veiling bans for Muslim women in Quebec and Europe.

Unlike surveys, ethnographies do not simply report the values that people hold, but bring "to light a set of implicit commitments that undergird their practices and actions, and that they may not be aware of. It uncovers, moreover, how these commitments are tied to other values and meanings: it not only tells us what people value, but also why they value it" (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 5). Importantly this kind of work not only dislodges intuitions but can surprise us enough that we might change our entire conceptual way of framing political phenomena. The richness of the attention to detail of the ethnographer is what gives ethnography the power to surprise us. The "ethnographic sensibility" assumes that such detail is meaningful and that this meaning depends on context and their subject's form of life. Ethnography shows us the different rules, logics, situations and normative demands, often much different than our own, that the person being studied must contend with. This exercise often reveals a moral terrain that is more complex and nuanced than one we may have suspected from afar (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 6). This

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[7]Joshua M. Weinberg, Shaun Nichols, and Stephen P. Stich, "Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions," in Experimental Philosophy, ed. Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 23.

sensibility holds open that these details won't just serve as a single counter example but will "tell us something more than we knew to ask" (Longo and Zacka 2019, 1067).

This ethnographic sensibility both allows "one to see different things and to see things differently" (Brodkin 2017, 132). It is a means to reach beyond assumptions of what matters and discover the previously unknown and unexpected. The willingness of the ethnographer to be open to having their conceptual way of seeing the world change is a cultivated effort. It takes time and habituation to live with people in the way they do and most importantly this engagement should transform the ethnographer (Barnes 2017, 8). A point that might seem obvious but is important is that while the philosopher might encounter a text that pushes back on an intuition that the philosopher previously held, anthropologists encounter *people* that actually talk back and question the researcher. "Ethnographic immersion requires the theorist to place herself in situations where her ideas are open to critique and questioning from those beyond the known confines of academia… interaction with humans contains greater possibilities for surprises, challenges and pushback" (Zacka et al. 2020, 15) than texts do.

The success of an anthropologist is not how much they can fully embed themselves in the way of life of their subjects. Valuable conceptual work is done because of the fact that the ethnographer is habituated to a different form of life than they are studying. Ethnographic inquiry requires researchers to look at social reality from two perspectives: that of the practitioners they study, and their own. The discrepancy between these two perspectives, and the capacity to move back and forth between them, gives ethnography much of its purchase as a tool (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 8). As I will argue, this is work that Foucault attempted through his detailed historical work on the Ancient Greek form of life. He was able to give us the evolution of our concepts and the conditions of possibility not only for our form of life but for the chances

that our form of life could have been different. I argue that Saba Mahmood, inspired by Foucault's work, does the same thing by showing the *dawa* women's form of life. As Longo and Zacka argue, these contrasting perspectives on juxtaposed forms of life can be seen as another kind of genealogy of the present (2019, 1069).

Section 1.4 – Ethnography Allows Us to See Completely New Political Phenomena

In this section I want to elaborate on the idea that I briefly touched on when I argued that as philosophers we need to have our concepts altered and formed only *after* contact with the world. Work with an "ethnographic sensibility" can allow us to "see" new phenomena that we had not thought important enough to theorize about. This is because our concepts as tools are not honed precisely to access this kind of reality when we only talk to other academics. This ethnographic sensibility alerts us to what Longo and Zacka label "the remainder": "dimensions of social reality that our existing categories fail to capture" (2019, 1067). The dense description of ethnography introduces a new dimension of reality.

All of this is very abstract and theoretical, so to concretize what this means, I show how ethnography helped me solve certain problems in this dissertation by opening up a new level of political reality as a resource I could draw from. This dimension of reality has been called the "meso-level" by Lisa Herzong (2018, 5) and variously as the "middle region", "interstitial space", and "the realm of the between" by Diana Coole (2005, 128 and 135). These phenomena are neither reducible to individual morality, nor to institutional structures.

In Chapter 6, I address a seemingly intractable problem in the relational autonomy literature. The question is whether oppressed people can be properly called autonomous. This question is a dilemma if we pit the individualist conception of autonomy against a more

structural view. The individualist looks at exceptional people embedded in oppressive social conditions such as Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Gandhi and argues that while oppression can be an obstacle to autonomy, surely these counter example figures show that there is no necessary connection between oppression and lack of autonomy. For people with a more structural view of autonomy, these counter examples are exceptions. This ignores the rest of the people for whom oppression isn't just an obstacle that merely correlates with a lack of autonomy, but is in fact, the source of it. This individualist way of looking at things leaves us without the normative conceptual tools to critique a society that might conceptually be "free" for individuals but whose autonomy is hampered by coercive institutional forces. On the other hand, the structural way of looking at autonomy seems too socially deterministic. Surely these exceptional figures achieve the status of autonomy and might in fact be more autonomous as individuals with their moral fortitude than many of those in non-oppressive situations who never take charge of their lives.

I argue that the problem is the taken for granted frameworks that each side begins with. If one stays only at the level of the individual, the level of morality, then we are sovereign in our voluntary choices as long as they are not physically or psychological coerced. Within this worldview, oppression only contingently affects autonomy. While if one only looks at socialization and other structural concerns, then oppression has already robbed us of the conditions for the possibility of autonomy, even though we may subjectively claim to have it. What convinced me that this is a problem that might dissolve if we change our frame of reference is ethnographic work that revealed this "meso-level" of phenomena, where the structural level and individual level interact. Accessing this middle level means using concepts and paying attention to phenomena of a thicker diachronic and transpersonal level than

individualists acknowledge exist but that structural thinkers dismiss as normatively unimportant. We can only access this level through concepts such as habit, affect and, skill. All three of these connect the individual to both their social and material environment; these concepts connect the inside to the outside. All of these concepts can also be linked elegantly through the idea of "affordances". Affordances are literally where inner skill connects with the material environment and the person's way of life. "We have to take seriously the fact that human behaviour is embedded in, and strongly influenced by, contexts. Often, successful moral agency is not so much an individual achievement, but rather results from a successful interplay between individuals and their contexts" (Herzog 2018, 24). Importantly, as I show in the next chapter, it is too reductive to have "context" be restricted to what is usually considered "the political": the structural. Context should refer to anything that can affect our skills, behaviours, habits and importantly, character.

Ethnographic work, because of its ability to access phenomena with a longer diachronic existence as well as the ability to tap into rich mundane detail allows us to see what Cedric Jourde calls "Unidentified Political Objects" (UPOs) (2009, 201). One problem is that the political philosopher's field of vision is too narrow. A second problem is the assumption that political philosophy already knows what the right question is to ask. "In such cases, political scientists walk on their path, not realizing that they are surrounded by UPOs that could be, and often are, politically significant for the actors involved in them" (Jourde 2009, 203).

Using ethnography of the women's *dawa* movement and other ethnographies of Islamic practices made visible to me this meso-level. From this we could conclude that if the individual is necessarily connected to their environment through the concept of affordances then surely an oppressive environment necessarily affects the individual's autonomy. And yet, even if, at the

structural level, oppression is a direct obstacle to autonomy, there might still be access to skills at the "meso-level" that allow a person a new way of being in the world. Surely by tapping into new skills, some individuals can achieve autonomy under structural oppression. And the only way to see where an oppressed person can access these skills is by looking to the meso-level.

A tangible example of this that I refer to again in Chapters Two, Five and Six is what Charles Hirschkind, in his ethnographic work in Cairo, identifies as the "Islamic Soundscape"[8] (2006). This is a semi-permanent sonic phenomenon that is above the individual yet below the structural. This soundscape helps change the affects of people who have the ability to hear it properly such that they are able to retain their piety throughout the day despite environments hostile to their piety. This meso-level phenomenon has the ability to increase the abilities and capacities of individuals and it would not have been "seen" as such without the ethnographic sensibility and efforts of Charles Hirschkind. Organizations in civil society such as the women's *dawa* movement that are not directly connected to changing people's politics are also rarely considered interesting political phenomena. Yet they are communities of practice greatly invested in imparting skills to individuals. These skills can open up new, creative ways of being autonomous within traditional norms. Beyond the women's *dawa* movement as a paradigmatic case of a UPO, these kinds of skills are often ignored because feminist autonomy theorists assume, conceptually, that the sign of autonomy is resistance to dominant norms rather than working within them. As I will argue in Chapter 4, for these reasons, new and creative practices that come from the women's *dawa* movement are often ignored.

Section 1.5 – The Importance of Forms of Life and "the Everyday"

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[8] In his own ethnographic work, Noah Salomon confirms this meso-level phenomenon's effect on pious Muslims in Sudan (2016).

It is not just that political science and philosophy have, as fields, narrow views of what counts as political and what isn't important enough to theorize about. As a technique, the ethnographic sensibility gives us three different and new ways to access social phenomena. As I elaborate more fully below, the first is that ethnography is diachronically thick, the second is that while other techniques that philosophers use can capture the "moral sphere", ethnography captures the everydayness of the "ethical sphere", and finally ethnography can capture the logic of forms of life different than our own.

Firstly, and importantly for this particular dissertation, my concentration on the meso-level involves looking at embodied habits and skills. It also involves being able to track, in a descriptively detailed way, the progress of a person from novice level to expertise in a social skill such as piety. Ethnography's diachronically thick description is able to access this. Surveys and interviews get access to what people reflectively think and are willing to reveal. But what makes ethnographic work challenging but very important is that by becoming embedded with a group, the ethnographer does not just listen to what people reflectively say, but can look at what people do, not just once but repeatedly and habitually. As Herzog and Zacka argue, ethnography can make explicit the knowledge within a community and their shared interpretive sensibility which often goes unspoken. "Much human action occurs in the form of routinized, and largely unreflective, activities that are taken for granted in the form of practices. To evaluate human conduct, therefore, we must look not just at the actions that people consciously and reflectively perform, but also at the practices they engage in" (Herzog and Zacka 2017, 10).

Secondly, connected to this first point, in looking at a particular form of life's practices, ethnography is able to explore a community's concrete ethical sphere. I borrow the term "ethical

sphere[9]" from Bernard Williams (2006) in order to properly contrast this concept with the "moral sphere". Moral philosophers can use trolley problems to pump moral intuitions, experimental philosophers can take surveys access moral intuitions but I argue ethnography is an empirical technique that accesses the ethical sphere. This is because the essence of morality is its universalism[10] while ethnography acknowledges the complexity and plurality of the ethical world. The ethical sphere is grounded in intersubjectivity. Unlike morality, which is concerned with conduct toward other human beings regardless of one's relation to them, the ethical sphere is rooted in a particular community of shared norms. "Moral duties refer to what is fundamentally owed to others, while concrete and particular ethical obligations… arise from the sharing of particular ethical contexts; and they can be neglected only at the cost of damaging one's own identity and that of particular others" (Forst 2012, 16). That the ethical is neither universal nor objective, that it refers to particular people and particular communities, does not mean that it is merely subjective nor that ethical norms are entirely relative. Rather, it means that the capacity for criticism of norms comes from the immanent perspective of the community rather than an *a priori* meditation on what is allowable for every rational subject. The ethical is not solipsistic, but transcends the individual's own perspective, not by asking "what should everyone do?" but by asking "what should a concrete 'we' do?" As Owen Flanagan argues, "many of the great goods in human life are goods that are internal to particular practices and traditions, and emerge in particular relations among particular people at a particular place and time" (2016, 4). Ethics pertains to the sphere of civil society in which practical demands are made on us by our relationships and through institutions and roles. Acting as a surgeon, mother, brother, teacher or religious leader has worth in itself, not only insofar as these roles are each

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[9] For those familiar with work on Hegel, this concept also goes by the name of *Sittlichkeit.*

[10] The exception of course being Jonathan Dancy's version of Particularism (2004)

particular instances of an abstract concept of duty. "As political theorists we should be concerned with how values and forms of life are connected. By separating them, we lose sight of what social practices our values depend on, why these values are attractive to us, and how they might evolve alongside our social practices" (Zacka et al. 2020, 11).

Thirdly, beyond the moral sphere, the ethical sphere is a great source of normativity that is particular to a form of life of a community. Ethnography is a way to access this normativity. While I will look at Wittgenstein's work on the normativity of practices in the Fourth Chapter, it is worth briefly looking at this now. As HLA Hart argued about laws, there is a certain "must-ness" that compels particular actions when one is internal to a practice. This must-ness is absent if one views a form of life or even a game from the outsider's perspective (Hart 1994, 91). For the person raised on baseball, it is an unquestioned, taken for granted, basic *fact* that one progresses around the bases in a counterclockwise fashion. The player, after hitting a ground rule double automatically trots to first base rather than crossing the centre of the mound straight to second base. People are not robots, they are not programmed to do this, it is just that there are certain norms that have a kind of imperativity over us if we are inside a form of life that people outside do not have. Ethnography gives us the explicit but also the *implicit* rules and reasons of these different normative ethical practices. Zacka calls this part of the work of ethnography "endogenizing normativity" (2020). Ethnography shows to the outsider to a form of life the explicit and implicit "why" of the insider by occupying the position of both the insider and the outsider. A good ethnography captures how meanings are anchored in particular forms of life: "how they are evoked, sustained, or even engendered through ordinary practices. The same is true of our values. They emerge, in part, from our struggles to make sense of our circumstances

and make do with them, i.e., from our repeated attempts and failures to make ourselves at home in the world" (Zacka et al. 2020, 10).

To underline the main conclusion of the past three sections, ethnography as an umbrella term for all of these techniques is different in *kind* rather than degree from any other empirical techniques employed by philosophers.

Section 1.6 – The Importance of "Other" Women's Intuitions to Normative Philosophy

Particularly in normative moral and political philosophy, at bottom, the currency that these fields trade in are their audience's intuitions. Yet often this audience is a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) audience. A group that might possibly be, as Owen Flanagan insists, the most unrepresentative group imaginable (2016, 4). The audience that philosophers are trying to convince are most often other philosophers who, sociologically speaking, are socially embedded in the same way of life that the philosopher trying to convince them is. Yet often claims are made to implicitly cover the entire species based on these narrow intuitions.

To take two examples, in political philosophy, cases and thought experiments have traditionally tried to pump intuitions of people who already assume that the most important value is some abstract concept of "justice". Flanagan points out that according to the Buddhist outlook and form of life, *Karuna* or "compassion" is the primordial value (2016, 229). The problems with just assuming that an abstract concept of justice is the natural outcome of mature members of our species has been contested since Carol Gilligan's work on feminist ideas of "care". Ethnography is an important way of incorporating other ways of seeing important political concepts such as freedom and autonomy into our work. This is because, unlike cases, surveys and other empirical methods, of its unique access to marginal people's forms of life. This access

to Other people's intuitions is important, as argued by Kukla, because "first, people with different backgrounds, bodies, and identities are likely to have experienced different dimensions and parts of the world from one another, and hence they have different philosophical material. Second, which norms and ideas show up to us as 'natural' depends on how we are positioned with respect to these norms and ideas. So different kinds of people will be good at denaturalizing different things" (2020, 63).

This lack of epistemic vigilance that assumes species-wide validity based on intuitions from a narrow, elite group can have real world consequences. When thinking about intuitions about what the word "autonomy" means, Muslim women who veil must be very tactical in how they describe this practice. Women who veil are often forced to represent putting on the veil as a deliberated and purely voluntary choice. This is because any other way of thinking about autonomy is illegible to the WEIRD audience that might mistake another way as purely a product of socialization. While this description is surely true of the first time a Muslim women may have decided to don a veil, according to the virtue ethics framework of Islam, as shown by Saba Mahmood's ethnography of the *dawa* movement, peak autonomy in piety is achieved when donning the veil becomes almost automatic and without thought.

The example of women who veil shows us that this is not just an epistemic or purely descriptive problem. Normatively post-colonial feminist work has given us good moral reasons why those in power need to be forced to listen to the input of those culturally Othered women at the margins. Often those in power have the blameworthy privilege of ignoring marginal people's views.[11] Specifically in philosophy, because of the audiences on hiring committees, tenure committees and journals, arguments that rely solely on WEIRD intuitions are rewarded and those

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[11] For more on this, see Chapters 1 and 4 of Jose Medina's *The Epistemology of Resistance*

that stray from these views of the world are punished with marginalization and their work being called "not philosophical"[12]

Section 2 – A More Holistic Naturalism: Why Use a Bio-Social Methodology?

Throughout this dissertation I use concepts such as "affordances", "niche construction" and make metaphors and give examples such as the evolution of intelligence in dolphins and the creativity and contingency of evolutionary "progress". These are all borrowed from evolutionary biology and philosophy of biology and philosophy of mind. I take this bio-social approach for three reasons that I will expand upon further in this section. The first is that just like ethnography, the union of bio and social better helps us to see the meso-level of phenomena. Secondly, philosophers of biology often confront problems of the same form as political philosophers but both labour independently because there are disciplinary silos between them. Thirdly, when biology is looked at holistically, there is a mutually reinforcing overlap between biology, virtue ethics and anthropology.

Thinkers in the humanities have been justifiably suspicious of reductive scientism and so it's worth going into some detail of why my approach is different from this. The worry is that if the humanities embraces biology, every explanation will become reduced to genetics. Another worry is that reductive biology becomes a defender of the status quo. It does this by justifying current practices by referencing some functional adaptation by our ancient ancestors. This kind of Panglossian explanation[13] justifies current practices no matter how descriptively or

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[12] See Kristie Dotson's "How Is This Paper Philosophy?" *Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches toward World Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2012): 3-29.

[13] For more about the problems of evolutionary anthropology's reliance on narrow evolutionary explanations even when social ones are descriptively better but that ideologically justify the status quo see: Sperling, Susan. "Baboons with Briefcases: Feminism, Functionalism, and Sociobiology in the Evolution of Primate Gender." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 1 (1991): 1-27.

normatively bad[14] because natural selection is supposed to be normative. The bio-social work

engaged with in this dissertation is not this reductivist neo-Darwinist paradigm. As Tim Ingold

provocatively declares, "Neo-Darwinism is dead" (2013, 1). The so called "Modern Synthesis"

of the mid 20th Century is losing its venerated place because the biological reality of humans and

other organisms can no longer be seen to conform to the basic concepts that this older paradigm

constructed. What is replacing it is what Muller and Pigluicci call the "Extended Synthesis"

(2010). The Extended Synthesis deals more with development and the experiences of organisms

over their lifetime. The essence of evolution is no longer the mutation, recombination, replication

and selection of transmissible traits. It is rather a life process. And at the heart of this process is

ontogenesis (Ingold 2013, 7) or the development of an organism over a lifetime. Just like the

work on anthropology, this kind of biology allows a more diachronically thick conception of the

organism. Tim Ingold argues that we should "think of ourselves not as beings but as becomings –

that is, not as discrete and preformed entities but as trajectories of movement and growth…

human becomings continually forge their ways, and guide the ways of consociates, in the

crucible of their common life" (2013, 8).

As Lorraine Code illustrates, this kind of work can connect to feminist work in the

humanities since "ecological naturalism builds on the relations of organisms with one another

and with their habitat, which comprises not just the physical habitat or the present one but the

complex network of locations and relations, whether social, historical, material, geographical,

cultural, racial, sexual, institutional, or other, where organisms—human or nonhuman—try to

live well, singly and collectively" (Code 2006, 91). This evolutionary emphasis on the

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[14] Take for instance the claim that Christopher Hitchens makes that women are generally not as funny as men because evolutionarily, men had to impress women with their wit or not reproduce. https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2007/01/hitchens200701

experience of organisms during their lifetime opens the door for a much more holistic approach to biology that can partner with the cultural, the social and the historical. It is an approach that looks more toward ecology rather than genetics because the environment is not just the material, but also the social setting the organism is embedded in.

Section 2.1 – A Bio-Social look at the Meso-Level of Political Phenomena

As mentioned in Section 1, the language of the meso-level is the language of phenomena above the individual and below the structural. The conceptual tools that ethnography gives us to see this level better is the descriptions of habits, skills, affects which all point to the concept of affordances. On a larger scale, we can also talk about concepts such habitats and forms of life. Separating biology from the social robs us of the ability to think through the longer timescale that makes the conditions for enskilment of the human organism over a lifetime possible. Forms of life, which have a social history are but one part of the tripart idea of affordances. The story of the enskilment of an individual is incomplete if we only talk about the social part of skills. We need to talk about the embodiment of the human organism and also its material environment, this necessarily connects the social with the biological aspect of persons.

Skills are not "downloaded" from one generation to another, it involves the training of the developing human organism into correct habits and affects in connection with a certain form of life where that skill makes sense. This all must be in active engagement with that person's material surroundings. When described this way, we can see that "relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling 'social', are but a sub-set of ecological relations" (Ingold 2000, 5). As Marcel Mauss reminds us, even the simplest actions such as walking is a feedback loop between the history of the social technique within a culture, the enskilment of the individual

and the biological foundations that these skills are based on. "Both walking and cycling are skills that emerge in the relational contexts of the child's involvement in its surroundings, and are therefore properties of the developmental system constituted by these relations. Moreover these skills are literally embodied, in the sense that their development entails specific modifications in neurology, musculature, and even in basic features of anatomy… the human body is not ready-made for anything, but undergoes continuous change throughout the life-cycle as it is pressed into the performance of diverse tasks. Indeed the recurrent stresses and strains of everyday life do not just affect the relative development of different muscles; they also leave their mark on the skeleton itself. Thus carrying loads on the head affects the bones of the upper spine; squatting puts a strain on the knee, resulting in a notched kneecap, and no doubt cycling, too, leaves tell-tale signs" (Ingold 2000, 376). It is only through the use of bio-social concepts that one can see these meso-level details.

Section 2.2 – Borrowing Metaphors and Confronting Common Problems

My second reason for using the bio-social frame of reference is that often, as political philosophers, we don't realize that those in philosophy of biology are confronting many of the same conceptual problems. In this section, I show three instances in this dissertation that work in philosophy of biology has helped me with. Firstly, by giving me a way to think through anti-teleological progress as a process like evolution. Secondly in showing me an assumption of virtue ethics and feminist relational autonomy. Finally, in showing me a problem of relational autonomy.

There are many exemplary ways of thinking about normative philosophy teleologically, normative work that tries to show what our political goals should be. From Rawls and G.A.

Cohen's ideal philosophy to the utopian thinking of feminists and Marxist thinkers. But, to me at least, it is much harder to think through non-ideal theories of justice diachronically. How can we know if we are going in the right or wrong direction without a fixed point to give us reference? For those who criticize the normative entailment of Saba Mahmood's work, this kind of non-teleological work means the lack of thinking about a normatively better future. This lack of a normative goal for feminism leads either to cultural relativism or a justification of the status-quo. To confront these kinds of criticism, in Chapter 4 I argue that political and moral philosophy, much like pre-Darwinian biology, is trapped within an Aristotelian framework. Aristotelian thinking in biology can be broadly described as a belief that there is an essence to each species and that any deviation from that perfect model is aberrant and abnormal. This kind of thinking sometimes sneaks its way into neo-Darwinism. That the genes have a perfect blueprint of a creature that would be produced if not for the bad perturbations of the environment. This is the way that the Aristotelian biologist explains variability in organisms. For instance, when we think of the evolution of intelligence, the human manifestation of it is the teleological end and paradigm of intelligence while dolphin social intelligence, while interesting in its own way, is a kind of failed, primitive intelligence. Most other sciences work this way, gold and oxygen all have essences, but biology is not like this. As Elliott Sober argues, Darwinism's population thinking allows us to see that there is no teleological end or essentialism to species (1980). The environment and the organism are connected, the environment does not *interfere* with a preformed perfect organism but is instead partly *constitutive* of the organism. The contingencies of the organism's development are part of each organism's essence rather than a deviation from it. Evolution does not progress but merely tinkers with what features of an organism it has currently that can adapt to the environment.

Evolution became for me an exemplar of an anti-teleological, diachronic system that can help us think through the teleological feminist criticism of Mahmood. If there is one single form of gender justice, then surely any deviation from this essentially just form, especially perturbations from patriarchal environments of these veiled women, are less than just and must be fixed. But what if there are multiple, concrete instantiations that gender justice can take depending on the form of life. Just as there is no normatively correct environment for an organism to perfectly flourish, there is no perfect, normatively correct form of life that allows essentially correct justice to manifest. I argue this point further in Chapter 4, but in this introduction, my main point is to show how biology provides me a kind of "conceptual prosthesis" (Al-Saji 2012). Instead of idealization or utopia, evolution becomes the exemplar of a diachronic yet anti-teleological system. My dissertation is not unique in its attempt at conceptual "biomimicry" (Benyus 1997). Autopoeisis as an example of organization without a central organizer has inspired political thinkers such as adrienne marie brown in her work on "emergence" to think about how to organize a decentralized, leaderless, abolitionist, anti-racist movement (2017).

My use of evolution in the previous example is more abstract and metaphorical, but biology's influence on my dissertation is also more direct. The way that problems have been framed in both philosophy of biology and biology have parallels with problems I have confronted in this dissertation. As described in the previous paragraphs, organisms have no "essence" by themselves such that the environment is a deviating outside factor. The problem with expressing this has also been a conceptual one. It is just assumed and taken for granted in neo-Darwinist thought that the environment is an external factor to the organism rather than constitutive of it. With the use of the concept of affordances by ecological psychology (and the

parallel work done by Merleau-Ponty) philosophy of biology has come up with a conceptual way of expressing the connection of the organism's capacities and abilities with the organism's material and social environment. In the same way, I have seen this assumption of the social or the context as external to persons in feminist relational autonomy as well as virtue ethics. Here I directly take from philosophy of mind and philosophy of biology the concept of affordances to help overcome these assumptions in Chapters 2 and 6. I do the same in Chapter 5 with the biological concept of "niche construction." In trying to move the focus away from genes as the central concept of evolution towards development and ecology, to move from the "Modern Synthesis" toward the "Extended Synthesis", biologists needed a concept to show that organisms have some agency in their own evolution (Walsh 2014). It was thought that genes provided a passive blueprint that the environment put pressure on to change through natural selection. Here the environment was considered the sole, active driver of evolution. Those looking at development rather than just genetics noticed that organisms had a kind of agency in their own evolution. This kind of agency biologists labelled "niche construction". In the same way, I argue, those focused on structural oppression assume that the environment, the social, the cultural and history are the sole, active determining force shaping the individual. Confronted with a parallel problem of environmental determinism, I borrow the concept of "niche construction" to show that the women of the *dawa* movement have agency in their own social construction.

Section 2.3 – The Overlap of Virtue Ethics, Anthropology and Biology

Finally, Lorraine Code questions the antagonism between what has been called the naturalistic turn and the interpretive turn that has separated the sciences and the humanities (2006, 85). If we believe Tim Ingold's claim in Section 2.1, that the study of forms of life are but

a subset of "ecological" relations, then the web of meaning making that is the human organism is an integral part of biological explanation. Also, if the ethical sphere (as opposed to the moral sphere) is one's concrete form of life then ethics is a part of human ecology (Flanagan 2016, 4). I have already argued that ethnography is the best way to investigate the ethical sphere because of its rich detail, diachronically thick work and its connection to the "everyday" of habit, affect and skill. All of this allows us to see how virtue ethics is the best conceptual framework to think normatively about this ethical human ecology. "First, the right unit of attention for ethics is the whole person-in-communal relations, not person parts, say genes, or the emotional centers of the brain, or the rational parts of brains, not brains, period, but persons who seek to live well in relations with other persons in particular natural and social ecologies with histories" (Flanagan 2016, 21). Virtue Ethics has always created conceptual space for itself in opposition to the utilitarian and deontological perspective. This is because of its ability to look at "the whole person-in-communal relation" rather than at individual decisions by an abstract rational person. In this dissertation I use the bio-social perspective along with virtue ethics and ethnography because I see them all as a mutually reinforcing epistemological outlook to studying political phenomena. Here we can again look to Marcel Mauss' example of walking. Biology cannot give us the full explanation through causal mechanism without remainder. Variation in the ways different humans walk also comes down to their different forms of life that we can only know through ethnography. Ethnography tells us the *meaning*, the why, not just the how of variations in ways of walking. We can see three different timescales that give the total explanation of walking: the biological, bi-pedal, embodied organism, the social and cultural history, and finally the development of that individual. In order to see all three timescales, we need the connection of the bio and the social.

Section 3 – Introduction to Foucault and Self-Transformation

In the rest of this chapter, I provide a background on a number of concepts that will be important in the rest of the dissertation. The purpose of this background information is to displace the dominant, cognitivist, intellectualist way in virtue ethics of thinking about transforming the self. I propose to shift to a more embodied framework. This embodied way looks away from propositional, know-that information toward habitual and skill-based know-how knowledge. In the chapters to follow, such as the next chapter and chapter Four, we will be looking at exercises and methods that the women in the mosque movement in Egypt practice in order to transform themselves. These are very embodied methods which do not make sense within contemporary intellectualist virtue ethics. I begin by thinking of Foucault's late work on ethics in Ancient Greece as a kind of embodied virtue ethics that will be the way to think about the practices of the mosque movement. Then I will move to new work in cognitive science and philosophy of mind on embodiment that is usually ignored by virtue ethics in favour of the discipline of psychology. This will be a work of conceptual engineering on a number of common concepts about the body, not only for the mosque movement's practices to make sense, but that we can begin to understand these women as training themselves to become experts at piety. After the introduction to Foucault, I move from the concept of habit, to the concept of affordances. I then take the re-engineered concept of habit and affordances in order to establish a middle ground position about automatic embodied action, know-how and skill that falls between the extremes of intellectualism of Jason Stanley and anti-intellectualism of Hubert Dreyfus. Finally, I take this work and use it to also take a middle ground position on emotions and affect that falls

between the extremes of the intellectualism of Martha Nussbaum and the anti-intellectualism of Deleuze.

It is no secret that Foucault's later work influenced both Talal Asad's view on religion in general and Saba Mahmood's specific account of the mosque movement in Egypt. So, it is worth briefly introducing this work because it starts to give us the tools to see veiling and the mosque movement as an embodied self-transformative project.

To understand the context of Foucault's later work, the first thing we need to understand about Foucault's work is the idea that power is not just repressive but is productive of subjectivities. As anthropologist James Laidlaw claims, "the uncompleted *History of Sexuality* turns out not to be a story about sex acts, but instead documents across the centuries different conceptions of, and methods of constructing, ethical agents" (2002, 323). Foucault tells the story of the ways people have purposely transformed themselves which gives us an idea of the "historically specific and definite (and of course always limited) forms which that ethical freedom has taken" (Laidlaw 2002, 324). This productive power is not top down. It does not act as an intentional plan from those in power to repress those with less power but is pervasive, almost like a medium that we live in. This means that we are always in an immanent relation to power and that our resistance can never be exterior to it (Foucault 1978, 95). Because this productive power is different in kind from repressive, juridico-legal power, the framing of the question of power completely changes. There is no overthrowing power if it is pervasive. What then is possible within power that is pervasive? The traditional solution of liberation and emancipation is not necessarily effective against, productive power. Those solutions are often in fact complicit with it. What does one do when the medium one acts in is itself power? In an interview, Foucault described the strategy of using the momentum of the opponent in judo to turn

them toward your own advantage (Halprin 1995, 114). To empirically see what possibilities there are to turn the momentum of power, we need the right conceptual tools. For Foucault, his empirical method of genealogy opens up the way power frames the possibilities of certain subjectivities in different times, with different material and conceptual contexts. In doing this, Foucault makes a history of the present.

Often Foucault is seen as describing our present much like Weber's iron cage of bureaucracy and loss of freedom. As Colin Koopman argues, "Foucault has been read by critics and disciples alike as sketching a modernity bent on exclusion, oppression, and domination to which liberation is the only possible (but hardly efficacious) response. But Foucault is better read as sketching a modernity bent on purification, to which *transformation* is the most effective reply" (2013, 164). These practices and apprenticeships in self-transformation that can be used against the unfreedom of modernity are something which we are slowly losing our connections to. Instead, we must look to the Ancient Greeks to trace out the patterns of how people practiced transforming themselves. My work here is not to suggest how we can rehabilitate Ancient practices that will lead us back to some lost state of "wholeness" again. I instead concentrate on anthropology of groups where these older practices of self-transformation are already being immanently and creatively implemented. Anthropologists have shown in detail how these practices are still alive in Muslim and Catholic contexts but also, as Cressida Heyes shows in her work, is alive in more secular practices such as yoga, fitness, and dieting practices.

Section 3.1 – Foucault's Three Elements of Self-Transformational Practices

Foucault shows us the three elements that help us understand all ancient and modern self-transformation projects: i) the ethical substance one has to work with; ii) the method of

subjection; and iii) the *askesis* or training and work on the self one has to undergo (Foucault

1990, 26-27). I will define and discuss each of these in turn.

i) Foucault controversially argues that the famous Delphic "know thyself" was not the

goal of philosophy, but instead instrumental to the goal of taking care of the self. In order to

transform yourself, you had to have an accurate picture of what you are beginning with. One

cannot prescribe an *askesis*, or way of training without knowing this, just as a gymnast must

know what kind of body they are working with in order to know what types of exercise that body

needs. Foucault looked purposely to the Greeks to historically get behind what he called the

Cartesian moment in epistemology where knowledge became yoked to method rather than a

transformation of the self. Knowing yourself in the Greek paradigm did not involve

introspection. Knowing oneself in order to transform oneself "should not be confused with the

kind of psychologization or estheticization that shrinks the world to the size of oneself. Rather,

this conversion, [worked on] dilating the self beyond itself" (Davidson 2005, 137). The ethical

substance goes beyond the individual. Instead, as James Faubion notices, in French "ethical

substance" is a translation of Sittlichkeit as it appears in Hegel's Philosophy of Right, "not least

in its emphasis on embodiment" (2011, 38). This self is also constituted by one's material and

political context and one's education. It is one's *bildung* or second nature: those forces that shape

the ethical character.

ii) Seneca says: "What hinders us most of all is that we are *too readily satisfied with*

ourselves." In order to change yourself there must be motivation to change. You must realize that

you are so lacking that only a complete change in your character will do. Foucault goes to a

reading of Plato to show how this happens.

In Plato's *Alcibiades*, Socrates sets out both to seduce and shame Alcibiades into taking care of himself. Socrates shows Alcibiades that he is not fit to rule because his birth is neither the noblest in Greece, his riches are dwarfed by the Persians, and his education is rudimentary as compared to the princes who have had the wisest men teach them. Worst of all, Alcibiades is ignorant about his ignorance. Socrates as philosopher wants you to know that you know nothing and because you know nothing you must take care of yourself by transforming.

Foucault argues that for the Ancient Greeks, knowledge was more like a *techne* or an artisanal craft, which suggests that this knowledge is know-how, embodied knowledge (Foucault 2005, 35). That you have to exercise and practice on yourself to take care of yourself, to even be a "self" captures the idea that caring for yourself is a kind of achievement and not a natural fact. It is the solution to the problem of realizing that one is not satisfied with oneself. Foucault links this Ancient notion that knowledge should properly be used toward self-transformation for the sudden change in his own work from the *History of Sexuality I* to the more ethics focused *History of Sexuality II* and *III*. "After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all" (Foucault 1990).

Just as one gains the *techne* of being a shoe cobbler by working as an apprentice under a person who is an expert shoemaker, so too must your care of yourself be treated as a vocation. Foucault calls this vocation spirituality. Spirituality is "the set of these researches, practices, and experiences… which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth" (Foucault 2005, 15). Only literally as a different person

can that person have access to the truth that really matters. The mode of subjection is not only realizing propositionally that one must change one's being, but it is an emotional and even bodily realizing. For Alcibiades, he must realize that he cannot become a ruler, a person who exercises power over others until he has transformed himself (Foucault 2005, 36). If he cannot even help himself, how can he help others?

It must be a total transformation because one's education and habits keep a person mired in one's original ethical substance. It is only through a vocational work on yourself as well as the help of a Master who has themselves finished the work of transforming themselves that a person can transform themselves. How do I know who I am if not through introspection? It is through a teacher or friend. We are often opaque to ourselves. The biggest obstacle to self-transformation is the way we delude ourselves. Like Socrates, the teacher both knows the person well enough to see who they are, see their ethical substance, but also to help pull them out of their mire of their social embedded upbringing. We are always mediated through the other. The teacher helps through example, as a model of behaviour, being competent, with their know-how and superior technique to free the pupil from their ignorance and lack (Foucault 2005, 128).

iii) This change in the self is not a sudden conversion. If the ethical substance is like *Sittlikheit*, if the knowledge to be gained is a *techne*, a know-how kind of knowledge, an embodied knowledge, then the self-transformation cannot be a sudden break or *Metanoia*. It is instead an *epistrophe* a slow turning, through repetition of new habits and practices. Foucault links *metanoia* to the modern spirit of the French revolution, of the desire for a break in history. *Epistrophe* in contrast is a more immanent way of transformation.

Askesis in Greek is an embodied labour and comes from gymnastic training. It is a form of vigilant, continuously applied regular activity rather than a mental attitude (Foucault 2005, 84). *Askesis* is also not a set of rules to be followed. Foucault uses the care of the self as a

stalking horse to show how an ethic can still be austere and demanding while not falling into morality: the conceptual realm of the juridico-legal. "What distinguishes *askesis* in the Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman world, whatever the effects of austerity, renunciation, prohibition, and pernickety prescriptiveness this *askesis* may induce, is that it is not and basically never was the effect of obedience to the law. *Askesis* is not established and does not deploy its techniques by reference to an authority like the law. In reality *askesis* is a practice of truth" (Foucault 2005, 317). Just as the trainer must tailor a regimen for each different athlete based on what their body is like and what game or goal they hope to achieve, so is the practices of the self set by the teacher particular to the student in caring for themselves. For the stoics, the *askesis* was a *paraskeue*, a training against vulnerability, misfortune and setback. It was "the equipping, the preparation of the subject and the soul so that they will be properly, necessarily, and sufficiently armed for whatever circumstance of life may come from the external world" (Foucault 2005, 240). The athletic metaphors in *askesis* are apt, it is like a preparation for a race or for a struggle (Foucault 2005, 222).

The Cynic Demetrius tells us that when training a wrestler or a dancer, you should not teach the student every single possible move they could encounter. They are asked to master a basic set of moves so that they become so familiar with these that they are always available and can be resorted to whenever the opportunity arises (Foucault 2005, 231). But the good teacher always keeps an eye on the future, to prepare the student for the unforeseen. As the student moves from amateur to intermediate, it is not only the number of moves that must be increased, but an increased adaptability to different circumstances (Foucault 2005, 321).

The athlete learns what is useful, but in order to be useful when it is time to wrestle against an unfamiliar opponent or dance to a piece of music you have never heard, the training

must be so well learned so that the student can make immediate use of it when the need arises.

The knowledge, practices and techniques one must learn to care for oneself must become

embodied and almost second nature. Foucault says the knowledge must be "ready to hand, that is

to say we must have it, so to speak, almost in our sinews. We must have it in such a way that we

can reactualize it immediately and without delay, automatically. In reality it must be a memory

of activity, a memory of action… becoming part, as it were, of his muscles and nerves" (Foucault

2005, 325). When the day of sorrow comes, of mourning or mishap, when death threatens, when

we are sick and suffer, this equipment must come into play to protect the soul, to prevent it being

affected, to enable it to preserve its calm (Ibid).

But why use Foucault's care of the self? James Laidlaw argues that Foucault in his later

work shows us that meso-level, between complete autonomy and the deterministic reproduction

of society that is the focus of many structural theories. Even in theories that purport to link the

agent, her body and the social structure, like Bourdieu's, how the agent practices any freedom

seems to go missing. The agent's perceptions and dispositions are structured by objective,

material conditions and their actions, generated by those perceptions and dispositions, in turn

tend to reproduce those same material conditions (Laidlaw 2014, 5). In focussing only on the

reproduction of society, agency becomes defined only as a resistance to society (Laidlaw 2014,

6). As Laidlaw quips, "we only mark them down as agency when people's choices seem to us to

be the right ones" (Laidlaw 2002, 315)[15]. Foucault's care of the self feeds into our deep intuition

that people are more than the passive effects of the structures within which they exist.

Often work on ethics, especially in the analytical tradition, assumes the agent is already

rational and free and therefore all that is left to ask is what is the correct moral decision.

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[15] We will come back to this concern in feminist work in Chapter 4.

Foucault's later work instead has a more concrete interest in the nature of the agent and therefore in processes of character formation and moral pedagogy. And since character formation takes place in the context of social relations and institutions, it shares a view of ethical philosophy as an intrinsically empirical, historical and comparative enterprise.

Section 3.2 – Foucault as Radical Virtue Ethicists

There is another philosophical tradition that also traces itself back to the Ancient Greeks, focuses on character, habits, emotions and the body. This group too finds itself in a compatibilist position about freedom because of this focus on character. I argue that Foucault belongs to a strand of this group, what David Solomon calls "radical virtue ethicists" (2003). Solomon names Elizabeth Anscombe, Alisdair MacIntyre and early Phillipa Foote as radical virtue ethicists. I include Foucault's work on the care of the self to this group. Solomon lists ten features in the works of radical virtue ethicists and I think seven of them could be said of the late Foucault: i) a suspicion of rules and principles as sufficient guides to action; ii) a rejection of conscientiousness, in the sense of acting out of respect for the moral law, as the appropriate motivation state in the best human action; iii) a turn to an understanding of the ethical life to concrete terms like the virtue terms in preference to more abstract terms like 'good', 'right', and 'ought'; iv) a critique of modernity and especially Enlightenment models of practical rationality; v) an emphasis on the importance of community; vi) an emphasis on the centrality of contingently based special relationships with family and friends; vii) a special emphasis on thick moral education (Solomon 2003, 68-69).

I explore criteria v) community, vi) friendship and vii) thick moral education here because it sets up the background to my contemporary Islamic virtue ethics in the next chapter.

There has been a tendency to see Foucault as a kind of anarchist dandy because of his emphasis on an aesthetics of the self. As Boyle notes, we should not lump together "care of the self" with an idea of "fashioning the self" (*Selbstbildung*) (Boyle 2012, 141). As Jana Sawicki comments, many sex radicals fail to notice that Foucault was urging us to move beyond the tendency to regard sexual transgression as the most heroic gesture, since genealogy is only part of the work of freedom. Once we grasp the contingency of the present, we must confront the work of developing new cultural forms (Sawicki 2004, 169). The term care of the self sounds "new age-y" in a narcissistic self-involved way that suggests neo-liberal answers rather than solutions involving others. Foucault repudiates this association. He argues, "in the Californian cult of the self, one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truth thanks to psychological or psychoanalytic science, which is supposed to tell you what your true self is. Therefore, not only do I not identify this ancient culture of the self with what you might call the Californian cult of the self, I think they are diametrically opposed" (Foucault 1997, 271). Instead of freeing ourselves of all constraint so that we can create ourselves anew, care of the self can be thought of as creating small communities of friendship below the level of the state where new norms can be formed and scaffolded. We can see this in Foucault's later interviews. He remarks, "the problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but, rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships" (Foucault 1997, 135). He goes further in the same interview to talk about the link between the care of the self and the concreteness of these relationships. "Yet it's up to us to advance into a homosexual ascesis that would make us work on ourselves and invent - I do not say discover - a manner of being… To be 'gay,' I think, is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual but to try to define and develop a way of life"

(Foucault 1997, 137). Friendship here is thought of as a local but powerful shaper of the self as well as a former of new ways of life.

Related to community and friendship, I have mentioned that we can never know the ethical substance without the mediation of the other. The mode of subjectification is also impossible without the hand of the friend who helps drag you out of the mire of your current life. To go beyond Foucault's analysis, we should not think of the friend who has taken care of themselves as caring only in one direction. The care and mediation go both ways. In his reading of the *Alcibiades,* Foucault seems to miss the ending of the dialogue where when Socrates pledges to take care of Alcibiades, Alcibiades also pledges to take care of Socrates (Joosse 2015). This I think demonstrates the power of reciprocal habit and virtue formation that occurs in smaller groups. Foucault's care of the self is not about the self, but really about pedagogical relationships among friends.

Aristotle, for instance, considers our closest friends as a mirror and also as an other self. This other self, while so similar to me also has enough distance from me that the friend can make better judgments about me than I can. Foucault talks about *parrhesia,* frank and candid talk geared toward the truth of the other that can only happen between those who are close. I might be in a relationship that I cannot see is bad for me, but if a stranger or even someone whom I consider merely a colleague comes to me and says "They are just not good for you, you are at your worst when you are with them!" I would be offended because this kind of candidness is not appropriate for that kind of relationship. I might in fact hold harder to my vicious relationship because of this. But if a close friend were to tell me this, it should break through my defensiveness. We might almost consider this the *job* of a close friend.

This appropriateness can be connected to another Aristotelian argument, that in someway, our friend has a hand in shaping our character and we have a hand in shaping theirs. To enter into friendship is to open oneself vulnerably to be shaped by the other (Cocking and Kennett 1998, 503). Our closest friends shape us the most because of our constant interaction with them such that our habits and dispositions seem to synch as we get to know each other better over the years. Living together with a friend provides for, as Aristotle says, a "training ground for virtue" (1170a11–12). Each friend is at once both the shaper and the shaped. This is what Anthony Carreras calls reciprocal shaping (2012, 327). The influence of a friend is internalized, solidified in one's psyche and mundane habits and becomes the matter with which one then goes on to shape and influence one's friend (Carreras 2012, 328).

Section 3.3 - Habit

Before thinking more technically about habit, we must understand that our agency is fundamentally constituted by our inter-relation with the world. The view that the world constrains rather than partly constitutes our actions assumes that our potential actions are preformed before we encounter the world out there. Instead, we must think of agency as constituted by a world that always motivates us toward new possibilities. As I interact with the world, my body and gestures already contain impressions and references to the object through anticipation. When we reach out for the cup, whether it is a small teacup or large tumbler, our hands are given directions from the object through our perception on how to hold it. These directions that the object gives us are like invitations or solicitations that we can take up or not. As David Morris explains, "even when I am spontaneously exploring something (rather than being goaded by the barbs of the world), the thing is an accomplice in enveloping explorations"

(2004, 117). Since our perceptual essence is as sense making creatures, the world's

inexhaustability for exploration beckons us to continue to explore it. But this exploration is not

just random, but in the way that the world wants to be explored. I say that the world "wants"

because to Merleau-Ponty, the world is already normed. To sense something is to be given a way

of sensing it. As Morris points out, in the French, "'sens' not only connotes meaning and the

senses, but direction" (2004, 24).

These norms that invite us to take them up are what Merleau-Ponty calls motivations.

Motivations are not physical causations of action (PP 51) but instead express multiple

dispositions that incline the body to take one of them up. To our perception, the world arranges

itself in the manner of a gestalt, where certain possibilities are lit up because others recede.

Merleau-Ponty gives an example of the gestalt structure of the world through the idea of lighting

and colour. Lighting only works because we do not perceive the lighting in a room. Lighting is

instead the background that motivates and points to how to see the colour. Each object's

motivation is not just an isolated solicitation, conflicting with invitations from other objects. It is

a whole situation that calls for action. When the tailor sits at their "workbench, the scissors, and

the pieces of leather are presented... as poles of action; they define, through their combined

value, a particular situation that remains open, that calls for a certain mode of resolution, a

certain labor. The body is but one element in the system of the subject and his world, and the

task obtains the necessary movements from him through a sort of distant attraction" (PP 109).

Although we cannot reduce motivation to causing action, neither can we just take motivation to

be a roadmap that we can fold up and choose to ignore. If motivations were just signs from the

world pointing us in particular directions, we could just interpret these signs as we chose,

imposing on them whatever significance we wanted onto them (Rojcewicz 1984, 39). Intention,

to Merleau-Ponty, cannot be separated from the *initial* invitation of the world since no intention could truly be an intention if the object toward which it intends were presented to it as ready-made and without motivation. "Every perception is a communication or a communion, the taking up or the achievement by us of an alien intention or inversely the accomplishment beyond our perceptual powers and as a coupling of our body with the things" (PP 334).

Take the example that Lambros Malafouris details so elegantly, of the relation of clay to the potter. He describes how the materiality of the clay itself, the intention of the potter as well as the lived expertise and motor capacity of the potter interact in a way that locates agency not "in" the potter but in the "dialogue" of the dynamic-coupling between potter and task-environment (Malafouris 2008a, 24). Agency can be seen as a collaboration between the potter and the mass of wet clay. This is not to say that there are not important differences between the potter and the emerging pot in the roles that need to be played in order for the task to be accomplished. Instead the point is that trying to separate the potter by calling her the cause from the pot by calling it the effect is wrongheaded. Many things about the clay, its texture, consistency, chemical makeup, speed of the wheel, wetness of the clay make up a motivation rather than direct cause for the potter to react. Motivation and the skill to react to motivation are so entangled that one must say that at times it is hard to see who is leading the dance in the making of the pot. It is the wheel and the wet clay, the affordances[16] that the potter is able to perceive through their own skill that both enable and constrain the final shape that emerges from the amorphous clay. To deny the agency of the clay is to misconstrue the efficacy of material culture. "The isolated object may not be in position to move in itself, but neither does the human hand in the absence of some 'intention in action' that arises only in the presence of such an object" (Malafouris 2008b, 122). The material

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[16] We will get more detail about "affordances" in the next part.

itself is the indispensable and unavoidable mediation of all our motions and motor habits. All of our actions are propped up by or inscribed in a given materiality (Malafouris 2008b, 117). Agency is the relational and emergent product of material engagement. It is not something given but something to become realized. (Malafouris 2008a, 35)

This is where habit becomes important to our agency. Possible actions are constituted by motivation and intentionality, but the means to take one of these possibilities up relies on our skills. Without these skills "the sensible is nothing but a vague solicitation" (PP 222). Skills rely on our past motor habits. We can only take up the possibilities as a real body if our habits allow us to anticipate the solicitations of the world. Habit is the ability to always resume our activities without having to learn how to do them again. It is a harnessing of the past in the service of present activity. The process of habituation gives greater clarity to what can be taken up. This is done through sedimentation: the accumulation of greater and greater confirmation by the world in taking up a particular movement or gesture. This gesture or movement then becomes "privileged for us" (PP 466). Familiarity is an effacing of the body, letting the body take care of itself in the normal routines of the day, in order that we can attend to other aspects of our life.

Habits also allow us, through ever increasing familiarity with a place, to begin to see *new* kinds of possibilities. For instance, the motor habits of a new skateboarder allows her to perceive only long flat surfaces such as roads or sidewalks as appropriate for skateboarding. But at some point, the skateboarder's habituation with the skateboard becomes so familiar that she not only skates faster and better, but she actually begins to perceive stairs and railings as appropriate for skateboarding. Habit "expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world" (PP 145) and allows for creativity. In this way, habit mediates between the sedimented and spontaneous (Casey 1985, 47). Merleau-Ponty describes this creative moment of perception as "a richer

signification that was, up until that point, merely implied in our perceptual or practical field or that was merely anticipated in our experience through a certain lack, and whose advent suddenly reorganizes our equilibrium and fulfills our blind expectation" (PP 155).

Our way of being familiar with, of taking up possibilities and of spontaneously acting is always unique. This is because habit gears each of us differently into the world. This particularized repetition of the way we inhabit the world, the individualized way we handle situations (PP 342) is called our "style." Situations always call for multiple actions to be taken up, but our style, through habits, allows for a situation to have "an echo in me" (PP 330) that then sediments and motivates our way of doing things for the most part. When reaching for a phone while sitting back in a chair, I could lean forward completely, roll my chair closer, extend my arm further etc. And yet for the most part, I will consistently only take up one of these actions. Even the most routine activities we do have a certain style. When we become familiar with people by living with them for a certain amount of time, we can begin to tell who has come into the house just by their style of going up and down the stairs, walking around or using kitchen appliances (Morris 2004, 45). Style is both a historically coherent pattern of activities yet also open-ended and so styles change over a lifetime.

Section 3.4 - The Double Law of Habit

But habit is not always thought of as a way of dilating the world. Some philosophers take habit to be the opposite of skill. We see this particularly in virtue ethics and their analysis of automatic action. I explore further skill and its relation to automatic action in the next section. But for now, it is useful to explain how habit can be seen as machine-like, repetitious, and without cognition. Take the famous example of digger wasps. A digger wasp stings and

paralyzes other insects in order to bring these insects to their lair so that their young can feed on the prey. The routine for the digger wasp is to leave the prey at the entrance, go in its chamber to prepare it and then bring the prey down. In an experiment, after the wasp went into its chamber, the biologist Niko Tinbergen moved the prey a short distance away. When the wasp emerged, it could not find its prey so it wandered until it found its prey again, brought the prey to the entrance and instead of taking the prey straight down into its lair, the digger wasp went down into the chamber to prepare it again. This happened multiple times when Tinbergen moved the prey. Barrett comments that the digger wasp "did not appear to retain any memory of chamber preparation, nor did it keep track of its own behavior in any way. Rather, each stage of the process seemed to be controlled by specific cues… so that events would always follow each other in a particular order. The completion of one step helped to create the conditions for—and cue the wasp into—the next" (2015, 83). This is considered the bad side of habit, the kind that runs both automatically and ballistically uninterrupted until completion, regardless of context.

This is the double edge of habit. It makes us more creative because it helps us run things automatically so we are cognitively freer to either do other things simultaneously or concentrate on perfecting what we are doing. But habit can also leave us in inflexible mindless repetition, sometimes against our will. Ravaisson labels this the "double law of habit" (2008, 37). This law is that "prolonged or repeated sensation diminishes gradually and eventually fades away. Prolonged or repeated movement becomes gradually easier, quicker and more assured" (2008, 47). This is what happens when we are captured and trapped by a habit, when we just fall into a rut and cannot get out. But there is another facet of habit and this is the way that habit can become flexible through deliberate practice that I will call "sensitizing."

Section 3.5 - Sensitization

According to Ravaisson, what happens in the hours of effort and attention in sensitizing a habit, judgement is added to the habit. Ravaisson contrasts the routine drinker who is falling into alcoholism to the wine connoisseur. The former's "taste becomes more and more obtuse in the one who, by passion, is delivered over to the frequent use of strong liquors; in the connoisseur who discerns flavours, it becomes more and more delicate and subtle" (2008, 49). In the former there is a passivity in the repetition that leads to a double passivity of sensation and effort, in the latter, there is activity in the repetition and practice that leads to greater activity in sensation while there becomes greater passivity in relation to effort.

We can see how habituation and sensitizing works by looking at an experiment to map a monkey's sensory cortex by Merzenich and Jenkins that Norman Doidge relates in his book *The Brain that Changes Itself.* Merzenich and Jenkins trained a monkey to touch a spinning disk with its fingertip with just the right amount of pressure for ten seconds to get a reward. This required the monkey to play close attention and effort to sensitize its finger. After thousands of trials, Merzenich and Jenkins remapped the monkey's brain and showed the area of the brain mapping the finger tip grew larger; the brain had responded plastically. More important to showing how sensitizing works was what the mapping showed about effort but also about how sensation increased. When the brain maps got bigger to begin with, there was a change, a decrease in effort was shown as the individual neurons get more efficient in two stages. "At first, as the monkey trained, the map for the fingertip grew to take up more space. But after a while individual neurons within the map became more efficient, and eventually fewer neurons were required to perform the task" (Doidge 2017, 66). So along with this ease in effort, Merzenich and Jenkins showed that individual neurons got more selective through this sensitizing training. "Each

neuron in a brain map for the sense of touch has a 'receptive field,' a segment on the skin's surface that 'reports' to it. As the monkeys were trained to feel the disk, the receptive fields of individual neurons got smaller, firing only when small parts of the fingertip touched the disk. Thus, despite the fact that the size of the brain map increased, each neuron in the map became responsible for a smaller part of the skin surface, allowing the animal to have finer touch discrimination. Overall, the map became more precise" (Doidge 2017, 67). Here we see what sensitizing means. While there becomes an efficiency in less brain "power" being used for the fingertip in the normal case of habit acquisition, in sensitization, more brain power is being used for less surface of the fingertip. This leads to a more fine-grained and detailed feeling of sensation. Doidge reports that this same effect happens when we compare the finger that reads braille to the one that doesn't (2017, 200).

We can see how this sensitizing works in real skillful experts when we look at Ellen Fridland's work on professional basketball players. By tracking the eye movements of basketball players, we know that while novice basketball players only look at their team-mate when passing the ball, experts look at additional sources of information such as the position of the nearest defender and the space available between defender and basket as well as team-mate and basket (Fridland 2017, 150). With habituation, there is less effort needed visually in order to pass and so the expert is able to begin to take on further complications. But we can see that there is also a visual sensitization as well. Professional basketball players also fixate on fewer locations than novices on top of looking for more sources of information. Through hours of practice, professionals know where the most rich and relevant sources of visual information are in the perceptual array and turn their attention directly to those areas while novices are less efficient and instead search the entire array with their eye movements (Fridland 2017, 152). With

sensitization, professionals are able to have a clearer gestalt, as useless information recedes to the background and the most relevant information to the domain of basketball comes to the fore.

Section 3.6 - Affordances

A concept that helps connect the link between the active perception of the body, its habits and the way the world is already normed to perception is the idea of affordances. According to J.J. Gibson, we do not just neutrally perceive properties of things in the environment but also what we potentially can do with or in the environment. An affordance is the demand by the environment for appropriate behaviours (Gibson 1977, 102). We do not just see a rock, especially when we are tired, we see instead a flat, hard surface, that 'affords' us the ability to sit on it. Affordances are integral to acquiring a habit because habit is partly a matter of learning to perceive opportunities to exercise them.

There are two views on the metaphysical status of affordances. Either they are properties of the environment or they are considered a relational property of both the organism and the environment. In this dissertation, we are going to take affordances as the latter. Affordances can be integrated into a Merleau-Pontian vocabulary because affordances overcoming the subject /object dichotomy. Affordances do not assume that the subject and the world are separate but instead are "equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer" (Gibson 1977, 130). Affordance is the way intention and motivation work together to constitute our free possibilities of an action. An affordance is not an objective fact, it is defined only relative to habituation of the body, social practices, moods and intentions that can take advantage of certain things in the environment.

Gibson defines an affordance as "neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective–objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer" (Gibson 1977, 129). Tony Chemero gives a helpful example of how we can think of affordances as relational. Shaquille O'Neal is taller than Muggsy Bogues. This taller-than relation is not a property of either Shaq or Muggsy but depends on both of them for its existence. Chemero argues that affordances are like this "taller-than" relation. They are neither of the person or the environment but both. Affordances are "objective" in the sense that this relation really exists. That Shaq is taller than Muggsy is directly perceivable and measurable (Chemero 2009, 142). When thinking about Merleau-Ponty's work on motivation, we can see that affordances are the glue that hold the organism/environment mutuality together (Chemero 2009, 146).

It is also important to highlight that by claiming that affordances are just between the environment and the organism, Chemero does not quite get the full picture of affordances for humans. Our abilities and skills are not just bare abilities. Neither is there, within the human milieu, bare material environment. What Chemero misses is how both abilities and material environments are always shaped and sculpted by the rich variety of social practices that humans engage in (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014, 326). So, Erik Rietveld and Julian Kiverstein amend Chemero's definition by arguing that affordances are, instead, the relation between the organism, the material environment and the specific human *form of life* (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014, 335). All three are related. If an entire culture died so would their form of life, but also the materials and tools they used in their form of life would no longer afford the same use, the

affordance would disappear. Apprenticeships in certain practices are dying out and so certain materials no longer have affordances because the transmission of skill is no longer happening and so the affordance disappears altogether. Finally, if all pianos disappeared, while people would still have the skills and abilities as well as the infrastructure of teachers to teach, without the pianos themselves, there are no affordances.

This supplementation of the definition of affordance gives us additional tools and allows us to look at affordances on two more grains of analysis. The first is the particular socio-cultural practice ie. the regularities within society or within a smaller group that afford action. The second is the much more fine-grained particular affordances of any person inaugurated into a form or life (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014, 330). Here we can see two kinds of normativity of affordances as well. We started with Merleau-Ponty's concept of motivation, that the world solicits certain actions if one has the ability, but there is now a more common sense of motivation which comes from the form of life. We can now conclude that what is judged correct or not depends on both the material environment and the sociocultural practice. "To give a very simple example, a red pen does not afford completing a customs form to be filled out in blue ink. The red pen does not offer this possibility for action partly because of its ink—a physical fact about the pen that can be seen as a constraint from the world but also because of the norms that apply to the filling out of customs forms, what our practice requires us to do" (Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014, 344).

Section 4 – Know-How, Automatic Action and Skill

This section takes the previous work on habit, embodiment and affordances and builds on it to look at automatic embodied skills. Until recently, there had been two positions at the

extremities of the debate. It was claimed that skilled action was either anti-intellectual, embodied, know-how knowledge or that in its essence, skilled action was wholly psychological, cognitive, and that all know-how could be translated into know-that, propositional forms. In this section I quickly abandon both these extremities to look deeper at more recent hybrid theories that try to recombine the mind and body to rethink bodily automaticity. I begin by quickly going over why we must abandon Jason Stanley's (2011) strong intellectualism but also Hubert Dreyfus' (2006) polar anti-intellectualism.

In tennis, a person must know if they are going to use the "Western" grip, whether they want to put top spin or back spin on the ball, whether they want to hit the ball aggressively for a winner or whether they just want to get the ball inside the court. Yet to describe this propositional knowledge as sufficient to describe the skill seems strange. To see why, Neil Levy jokingly references a Monty Python sketch where John Cleese teaches children how to play a flute by instructing them that one should "blow in one end and move your fingers up and down the outside." Even though the audience is able to blow and move their fingers, we could not say that they know how to play the flute. We must conclude from this that leaving out the non-propositional elements of flute playing leaves out the skill (Levy 2017, 516).

We can better see the non-propositional nature of skill when we think about the difference in someone's performance before and after practicing a skill. A coach is someone who sees your performance and then conveys through feedback and demonstration what one is doing wrong mechanically and how one could improve. We might even say the job of the coach is to turn their know-how into words so that they can convey new technique to the player. Let us imagine the player learns the techniques and mechanics of, for instance, how to serve a tennis ball from the coach's verbalization. The coach is satisfied that the player has correctly listened to

her instructions, used the right technique and motion of the serve and so leaves the player to his own devices. At this time, the player starts to practice on his own with the propositional knowledge the coach gave him. At the end of a week of practice, he is noticeably better at returning serves. What has happened between the start and end of the week, what has the practice done? What is crucial here is that in practicing, the player is using the *same* propositions that the coach gave him. If the player is governed by the same propositions both at the start and at the end of the week, then the explanation of the improvement using practice time alone is the automatic, embodied, know-how of skill (Fridland 2012a, 885-887).

We will go into deliberate practice farther down, but surely this is exactly how we think practice should be. What is the point of thousands of hours of practice if not to be completely ready for a performance where, under pressure, one does not have to think out each individual action. This is because one's attention is needed for much more pressing matters at the time of performance: changing situations, adjustment of goals and strategies which can only be freed up with the automaticization of skill that comes from the repetition involved in practicing something. A non-propositional part of skilled action is inevitable for creatures with finite cognitive and attentional resources such as us.

Just as decisive is the critique against strong anti-intellectualism. Strong anti-intellectualists make the implausible claim that once a person is no longer an amateur but an expert, they perform their skill automatically. Yet empirically this just is not true. Many athletes report that while every minute action is not deliberated over, the style or strategy of play is. Depending on the context of the other person's play, one might be aggressive or conservative, and this might even go against what one has practiced for that particular game. Especially in skills that demand stopping and starting, deliberation like this comes in very handy. Baseball

players often deliberate about strategy depending on how many outs there are, how many people are on base, what kind of pitcher is throwing, what kind of batter etc., (Papineau 2015, 300).

A strong anti-intellectualist might push back against this criticism by arguing that in the moment of action, deliberation does not happen. While, as will be shown in the rest of the chapter, I am sympathetic to this, I think the strong anti-intellectualist does not take seriously how much planning, monitoring and deliberation goes into practice. This is especially true for an expert. Deliberate practice never ceases, especially for an elite skilled performer. (Toner Montero et al. 2014, 1133) The expert is continually trying to get better, they do not stop once they have hit a norm recognized as what an expert would do. The mantra of "use it or lose it" is especially relevant to the expert because of the sheer amount of practice needed merely in the *upkeep* of elite performance.

Most damning for Dreyfus, as a follower of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, is that strong anti-intellectualism is merely the flipside of strong intellectualism. Describing the expert's performance exclusively through the concepts of "flow" or "absorbed coping" puts a clear wedge between thinking and acting and evacuates the psychological from the realm of embodied activity in such a way as to reinforce Cartesian dualisms between mind and body (Sutton et al. 2011, 92). Part of the conceptual problem between intellectualists and anti-intellectualists is that they tend to conflate "automatic" action with "ballistic" action and ballistic action is conflated with habit. Another part of the problem is what is meant by the word "cognitive." As we will see in the next chapter, these conceptual problems plague the virtue ethics literature on habit and automatic action. Automatic action is considered "dumb" and not cognitive and so virtue ethics tends to ignore the body for more intellectualist practices of transformation.

Section 4.1 – Defining "Automatic" and Separating It From the Concept of "Ballistic"

This section is an explicit attempt to conceptually engineer the term "automatic action." This is so that we have the right term going forward in the rest of the chapters of this dissertation when we talk about skilled embodied practices. The first way I do this is to chip away at the wrong-headed idea that automatic action is unintelligent by conceptually separating "automatic" from "ballistic" movements. Defining "automatic" in an exacting way has been a complicated affair in psychology and philosophy. For example, Moors and De Houwer looked at twelve criteria within the literature and found that none were necessary or sufficient for a distinction between automatic and nonautomatic processes (2006).

The term ballistic should conjure up the idea of mechanism or possibly the idea of billiard balls hitting each other. It is the idea of pure causality. Mandelbaum defines a process as ballistic "if, when the process starts, it cannot be stopped by any endogenous means… once the process starts, one cannot stunt it, either through top-down effort or via other roughly psychological means… It simply describes how the process unfolds, namely, in an uninterruptable fashion" (2014, 2).

Many philosophers, when they refer to automatic action, assume that all automatic actions are ballistic. Often this assumption comes out differently depending on whether the philosopher is an intellectualist or anti-intellectual about skilled action. For Stanley, the mindless movements activated by propositional thinking "just happen" from start to finish, mechanically, until cognition intervenes. While for someone like Dreyfus, skilled movement has been so well practiced that automatic movement also "just happens" because the body is in the flow. While

not quite mechanical, it is still ballistic in that if they are an expert, cognitive processes are not supposed to intervene if things are going well.

To better pin down a conceptual definition of automatic action, it helps to turn to one of the more famous attempts to isolate four characteristics that make up the essence of automaticity. John Bargh calls them the "four horsemen of automaticity": awareness, intention, efficiency and control (1994). Another way of putting this is that the four features of automaticity are that movement is 1) unintentional, 2) unconscious, 3) uncontrollable, and 4) effortless (Fridland 2015). I have tried to show here, uncontrollability is not necessary to automaticity, but it is to ballistic actions. Fridland in her article, *Automatically Minded* makes a convincing case that automatic action can be intentional[17] and that this relates to the ability of the expert to closely control their actions. This again is the point of practice, surely. The more expertise one has, the more automatic skill becomes. But in becoming more automatic, it is not that one is *less* in control, but that expertise surely means one is *more* in control in a finer grained way (Fridland 2015, 9). The mark of virtuosity has always been the seeming effortlessness of something an amateur would consider very difficult. And so the major claim of this chapter is that skilled, expert action is automatic, but not ballistic and actions can be unconscious and effortless while still being *cognitive*.

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[17] An empirical argument that both Shaun Gallagher (2017, 89) and Fridland point to is a famous experiment by Yarbus. "Yarbus presented subjects with a painting entitled, 'The Unexpected Visitor.' In that painting, four people surround a table looking towards a fifth person who has just entered the room through a door that is being held open by a maid. Yarbus fitted participants with a primitive eye-tracking device and asked them, "How long has the visitor been gone?" In response to this question, participant's eyes moved in long sweeping motions from the person at the door to the people sitting down at the table and back. In contrast, when asked, "How old are the people in this picture?", participants' eyes circled on the individual faces of the people in the room. The participant's eye saccades responded in a systematic way to the distinct questions they were being asked. Their eyes moved in a manner that would allow them to extract the relevant information from the scene in order to provide answers to the specific questions that they were asked. When it comes to telling someone's age, the face is a great place to attend. When trying to figure out how long someone has been away, the expressions of greeting between people is a better indicator" (Fridland 2015, 19). Yarbus found that the visual scan paths varied systematically with the nature of the task. Thus, the saccades are in some way governed by the intention.

Section 4.2 – Redefining the Cognitive

To further set the stage for the embodied practices in the rest of the dissertation, I redefine and conceptually shift another controversial and vague word: cognitive. One of the reasons that the debate between the strong intellectualists and strong anti-intellectualists has been so intractable is that to completely cover what intelligence and cognition are, it is sufficient to only talk about propositions and language. Because philosophers of action are obsessed with intentions and plans, anything that falls short of this is considered not intelligent *at all*. This type of definition has "rigged" the outcome in the intellectualist's favour. With agreement that cognition or intelligence involves only propositional knowledge or language, this has forced those who want to give importance to the body very little to work with. In the rest of this section I defend why cognition must involve know-how, embodied skill and then based on this, articulate a better definition of the cognitive given by Neil Levy (2017) that has been taken up in the literature such that a more plausible hybrid position can be given about skill.

Those that adhere to the assumption that "only organisms that possess a complex brain exhibit true cognition," suffer what Marc Van Duijn calls "cerebrocentrism" (2017, 1). This is the parochial mistake of construing *human* cognition as cognition simpliciter. This causes us to neglect the extent to which the concept of human cognition is no more than a special case of another concept that is much broader in scope (Jones 2017, 5). Two types of ontogeny are ignored to be able to assume this position. The first thing that intellectualists about cognition must account for is straightforward human development. If intelligence involves only higher human brain functioning, how does a cognitive person move from an infantile, pre-linguistic

state to suddenly making and responding to utterances as a cognitive being (Turner 2014, 40). At a different, larger scale, intellectualists have a hard time dealing with our evolutionary continuity with animals. We share with these beings such things as perception, memory, action and other skills (Keijzer 2017, 2). What intellectualists must explain is how higher-level consciousness "one day sprouted out of a neural blue" instead of cognition itself evolving along with other living moving creatures (Sheets-Johnstone 1998, 276). What this suggests is that instead of being different in kind, cognition is a continuum.

Neil Levy has a better definition which has now been taken up by Fridland (2017), Sutton et al. (2016), and Shepherd (2017) as a more neutral one with regards to whether animals, babies and the body has cognition. "The genuine mark of intelligence… is the capacity to flexibly adapt in an appropriate manner to environmental perturbations… The more flexibility and sensitivity to environmental conditions a mechanism exhibits, the more it counts as intelligent. A reflex, for instance, is triggered by a narrow range of cues (say high heat) and cannot modulate its unfolding in response to relevant information; for that reason, it doesn't count as intelligent" (Levy 2017, 518-19). In the language of this first chapter, reflexes are ballistic and uncognitive but automatic action can be flexible and so may be considered cognitive.

Section 4.3: Moving from the OK Plateau to Skill with Deliberative Practice

A good example for why experts practice is to think about typing. When people first learn to use a keyboard, they improve very quickly, from sloppy single finger pecking to careful two-handed typing. Eventually the fingers move so effortlessly across the keys that the whole process becomes unconscious and the fingers seem to take on a mind of their own. At this point, most people's typing skills stop progressing. They reach a plateau. We've always been told that

practice makes perfect. Many people sit behind a keyboard for at least several hours a day, in essence practicing their typing. Why don't they just keep getting better and better? K Anders Ericsson, an expert on expertise argues that with more experience, individuals' behaviours adapt to the demands of performance and become increasingly ballistic (Ericsson 2006, 694), just like the digger wasp. Jonathan Foer calls this the "Ok plateau" (2011, 163). This is the point at which you decide you're OK with how good you are, turn on autopilot, and stop improving. We all reach Ok plateaus in most things we do and so we forget that people want to excel at things and not just be Ok.

There is a popular and intuitive view of experts and how they get to be that way. According to his view, performance increases as a function of practice until an asymptote representing a fixed upper bound of their own innate talent and ability. As Ericsson argues, this view cannot explain why some of the most remarkable creative individuals had parents, children, and other relatives that were quite undistinguished and showed no signs of exceptional talent (Ericsson 2014, 323). When the performance of child prodigies in music and chess are measured against adult standards, they show gradual, steady improvement over time (Ericsson 2006, 688). In fact, by the time the best expert musicians had reached age 20, it is estimated that they had accumulated an average of more than 10 000 hours of deliberate practice. This was several thousand hours more than their less accomplished peers at the same music academy (Ericsson 2014, 330). Yet this still does not tell us why we are not all expert typists.

The best violinists were found to spend more time per week on activities that had been specifically designed to improve performance, this specifically is what Ericsson calls "deliberate practice" (2006, 691). Amateur musicians, for example, are more likely to spend their practice time playing songs, whereas pros are more likely to work through tedious exercises or focus on

specific, difficult parts of pieces. The best ice skaters spend more of their practice time trying jumps that they land less often, while lesser skaters work more on jumps they've already mastered. Deliberate practice, by its nature, must be hard (Ericsson 2006, 693). Deliberate practice presents performers with tasks that are initially outside their current realm of reliable performance. These tasks can be mastered, but only with hours of practice. But this practice must be done by concentrating on critical aspects and by gradually refining performance through repetitions after feedback from a teacher or coach. Hence, the requirement for concentration sets deliberate practice apart from mindlessly doing a task. Practice involves not necessarily accomplishing a goal but concentration on the task itself. This seems to "democratize" expertise by taking away the ceiling of innate talent. Yet, this way of thinking about expertise means dedication, motivation, concentration but also just being able to find the time to practice over a sustained period of time, usually ten years or more. Not many can commit the resources and emotional energy to this kind of work for that long and so this becomes a limit.

Section 4.4 – Fine-Grained Motor Skill and Perturbations of the Environment

Since Daniel Dennett's famous critique of Evan Thompson et al's the *The Embodied Mind,* intellectualists continue to argue that once cognition gets complicated enough, it is intuitive to think that representational, deliberate thought must take over. "When situations do not call for large-scale alterations of technique, in sports such as golf, performers must adapt to the specific constraints presented by an ever-changing environment (i.e., new course, new pin positions on greens, changing weather conditions) and this means drawing on mental representations to cope with these evolving conditions" (Toner and Montero et al. 2014, 1138).

Basically that situations faced by experts in "competitive contexts, have too much variability for them to rely solely on automatic processes" (Toner and Montero et al. 2014, 1140).

Yet the anti-intellectualist can turn this assumption on its head. The absolute dedication of the brain to try to keep track of all this information but also to discover new possible behaviour sequences is impractical. This becomes, to Andy Clark, a "representative bottleneck" (1998, 21). This is because "the incoming sensory information must be converted into a single symbolic code so that such a planner [the brain as CPU] can deal with it. And the planners' output will itself have to be converted from its propriety code into the various formats needed to control various types of motor response. These steps of translation are time-consuming and expensive" (Ibid). Why does one need to represent the world first in order to interact with it? The world is already structured. Organisms have evolutionarily, behaviourally and even culturally adapted to directly accessing the world in order to guide their actions without first forming complex inner models.

What is forgotten when talking about the "variability" of the environment is the particularity and context of each new situation. The intellectualist is convinced that representational thinking is propositional language. As Ellen Fridland points out, the attunement of a skier to their own skeletomuscular constitution, the incline, layout of the terrain, sharpness of her ski edges and other small details that can have a huge impact on the skilled action make this idea of being able to represent, verbally or otherwise, less plausible. "The number of propositions that will exist in order to govern skill instantiations will be nearly infinite. After all, we can either say that we know a general proposition and something else takes care of all the fine-grained stuff or that the proposition that we know is situationally specific and all the fine-grained stuff gets incorporated into the proposition" (Fridland 2012a, 888). Consider that Charlie

Parker, one of the greatest saxophonists, was known to be able to play at an unbelievable 400

beats per minute. Now let us add that he was not just hitting random notes, but both playing

music beautifully but also improvising the melody. Finally, let us also add that he was choosing a

precise length for the note, precise speed, and precise timbre. "Although intentional, these aren't

actions that can plausibly be fully captured in any sort of propositional/conceptual description"

(Carruthers 2006, 284).

It is not just the fluid and flexible motions that experts do that makes automatic action

cognitive and "not unintelligent." It is also how experts are easily able to recover with grace

from perturbations from the environment. We should remember that the key to intelligence as

defined by Levy was all about flexibility. "It is by an agent's ability to respond to both expected

and unpredictable environmental circumstances and to revise her strategy accordingly, that we

measure skill" (Fridland 2014, 2731). In an experiment by Kelso et al., subjects were put in a

harness that held their head and told to speak from a script. Every once in while, at random

times, a machine would manipulate their jaw, upper lip and lower lip in different combinations

right at the moment a phoneme was pronounced. The reason for these interruptions to speech

was to see how well the subjects could recover. Surprisingly, speech was not affected let alone

interrupted (Kelso et al. 1984)! In this experiment, the ultrafast nature of recovery from

perturbation shows that the mastery of a sensorimotor situation cannot involve internal functional

calculations since the agent's brain simply has no physical time to implement any calculation.

We turn the assumption on its head that when things get complicated, we are forced to stop

automatic action and rely instead on stepping back to deliberatation. Peter Railton cites a study

where "experimental subjects facing a hypothetical choice with a small number of variables did

better… when they were given peace to concentrate and time to deliberate. But when the number

of variables grew, the same individuals made better choices… if they were distracted and allowed insufficient time to deliberate, so that they were forced to rely more heavily on intuition or hunch" (2011b, 97).

A good way of seeing this new framework that Railton brings up for fluent, flexible but automatic movement is speech. Mature, native speakers of a language do better using their grammatical 'intuition', seeing particular affordances rather than explicitly applying rules, when constructing sentences. We often improvise in response to unforeseeable interactions with others. I often "see" if a word is spelled wrongly or a sentence ungrammatical, but I would not be able to offer you an explicit reason why. This is a picture of an open-ended capacity to respond fluently and appropriately which cannot be the result of a fixed repertoire of trained responses (Railton 2014, 817). Yet, "think how false it would be to say that because fluent speech or writing is the exercise of a habitude acquired by modeling, training, and practice, rather than a self-conscious and deliberate application of principle, it is somehow 'robotic', mechanical, or mindless" (Railton 2011a, 324).

Section 4.5 – The Brain/Body Complex: Predictive and Bayesian

So, what is the brain's role in all of this? The brain rather than a CPU is integrated with the rest of the body. Instead of being a "Central Processor", the brain is a "Predictive Processor". In the Predictive Processing paradigm, the brain is characterized as a "restless, proactive organ, constantly using its own recent and more distant past history to organize and reorganize its internal milieu in ways that set the scene for responses to incoming perturbations" (Clark 2016, 163). But we should not take the brain to be a passive interpreter. In line with enactive thinking, one proactive thing the brain does is make the body move and explore and selectively "harvest"

new sensory stimulations. Perception and action are thus locked in a kind of endless circular

embrace (Clark 2016, 7). The brain updates through experience via "discrepancy-reduction"

learning processes that continuously generate expectations. The brain then compares these

expectations with actual outcomes and uses this information to produce a neural "teaching

signal" that guides future revision of expectations. Such discrepancy-reduction learning tends,

with experience, to attune expectations to actual outcomes (Railton 2014, 835).

Bodily exploration allows the brain to filter out "superficial noise and ambiguity in the

sensory signal, revealing the shape of the distal realm itself. In that (restricted) sense it provides a

powerful mechanism for 'carving nature at the joints'… Our perceptual 'take' on the world is

thus constantly conditioned by our own 'action repertoire'" (Clark 2016, 185). There are many

ways the body reduces "superficial noise and ambiguity" for the brain. For instance, a creature is

always surrounded by a totality of affordances. These affordances are not static and change all

the time as the abilities and perception of the creature changes. We can call this the *umwelt* of the

creature. The *umwelt* is the world as it is experienced by the organism. So even though two

organisms, say a mouse and spider, may occupy the same objective environment, they will have

a different *umwelt.* This is because through evolution, body scheme, size, enculturation,

development, perception and abilities, respond *only* to those aspects of the environment that are

relevant to it.

Enculturation, habit and skill penetrate perception and allow the body to be active in

preprocessing and giving meaning to what we encounter. Henri Bergson famously gives an

example of the difference in perception it makes in having even a little training in a language

versus having none. "I listen to two people speaking in a language which is unknown to me. Do I

therefore hear them talk? The vibrations which reach my ears are the same as those which strike

theirs. Yet I perceive only a confused noise, in which all sounds are alike. I distinguish nothing

and could not repeat anything. In this same sonorous mass, however, the two interlocutors

distinguish consonants, vowels and syllables which are not at all alike, in short, separate words.

Between them and me where is the difference? The question is, how can the knowledge of a

language… modify the material content of a present perception, and cause some listeners

actually to hear what others, in the same physical conditions, do not hear" (MM 109). As Andy

Clark explains, "the sound stream itself, however, is perfectly continuous, as a spectrogram quite

dramatically reveals. Those gaps are added by the listener. What we encounter in perception is in

that sense a construct. But it is a construct that tracks real structure in the signal source" (Clark

2016, 195). But here Clark can only call it a construct if we don't believe that cognition,

learning, enculturation and ability do not penetrate our perception pervasively.

　　As soon as we are born, we are experiencing. According to the Predictive Processing

account, we have a past that our brain uses to better predict the future. It does this is in a

"Bayesian" way. Early in our development, we have very little experience with different

phenomena and how our body should react to the motivation from the environment. But through

development and experience, our brains begin to put different weights on what will happen based

on subjective experience in similar situations. This is what I mean by "Bayesian". This will be

important to this chapter because we find out that emotions are Bayesian as well.

　　For Andy Clark, this Bayesian method can seem like "inference" (2016) but I think

Shaun Gallagher provides us with a better vocabulary than giving the brain this almost

homunculor power. The brain is dynamically coupled to the body that is also dynamically

coupled with the environment. We cannot forget the great plasticity of the brain. This means the

brain does not need to be inferential to be Bayesian because it literally, physically changes and

adapts to a person's experience. Over time, with dynamic adjustment, the brain just attunes to the

environment. It does this by adapting through experience but also as part of a body that gains

capabilities which change perception and affordances. Affordances are another way we do not

need the language of inference in describing the Bayesian manner that the brain predicts.

Affordances assume not just that cognitive penetration of perception is true, but that perception

is pervasively penetrated. Because of this pervasiveness, our perception does not just see a flat

rock, value free. The link between perception, cognition, norms, culture and, action is much

tighter. Hard flat surfaces just afford sitting and do not need representation for action.

Section 5 – Emotion and Affect

Martha Nussbaum begins her magisterial *Fragility of Goodness* by comparing the good

of human life with the good of a plant's life. We are fragile and in constant need of external

things such as nourishment and community. Yet no matter what our good starting conditions are,

we are always open to catastrophe because so much of our flourishing is constituted by external

goods. Nussbaum suggests that part of the peculiar beauty of human excellence just *is* its

vulnerability. "The tenderness of a plant is not the dazzling hardness of a gem. There seem to be

two, and perhaps two incompatible, kinds of value here. Nor, perhaps, is the beauty of a true

human love the same as that of the love of two immortal gods, only shorter" (Nussbaum 1986,

2). This points to a second kind of vulnerability: our internal vulnerability to our appetites and

emotions. Emotions in the view of modern moral theory are not to be trusted. It is objected that

the emotions are innate, internal, blind forces that have nothing to do with reasoning. "Like gusts

of wind or the swelling currents of the sea, they push the agent around, surd unthinking energies.

They do not themselves embody reflection or judgement, and they are not very responsive to the

judgements of reason" (Nussbaum 1995, 366). To be emotional is to be both infantile but also passive to these internal forces. Contrast this to reasoning. Reasoning involves complex intentionality but also learning and is a sign of maturity.

Nussbaum argues that Aristotle provides us with a different view of emotions. Emotions are not irrational pushes and pulls, they help us make sense of the world. Emotions are directed toward an object; emotions are a way of perceiving. Emotions can be trained. In being trained, emotions must react correctly and to the right context. A person is not brave if they are afraid of a mouse, because a mouse is not the appropriate thing to be afraid of. Meanwhile a person who fears nothing would not be brave either but reckless, unbalanced and not someone who possesses practical reason. In this way someone can actually be said to have the *wrong* emotion and they need to be educated. Like perception, even bodily appetites can be trained. As Nussbaum explains, "appetite is one form of *orexis,* a 'reaching out for' an object. When a dog goes across the room to get some meat, its behavior is explained not by some hydraulic mechanism of desire driving it from behind, but as a response to the way it sees the object. Aristotle also holds that appetite—unlike, for example, the animal's digestive system—is responsive to reasoning and instruction" (Nussbaum 1994, 81).

I think Nussbaum's rehabilitation of emotions by making it cognitive and a part of thinking is important to rethinking agency, but her work does not get us the whole way there. Nussbaum sought to save emotion from the emotivism of Ayer and Stevenson but in doing so, I think she makes emotion too cognitive. While I will not explore Nussbaum's opposite, neither do I think a Deleuzian conception of affect is appropriate either because it swings too far in the opposite direction. Here affect is viewed as below the cognitive, in the recesses of the body

where it accesses the body before culture can shape it. I think there is much to retain from

Nussbaum's take on emotions but there are problems.

Throughout her early philosophical corpus,[18] Nussbaum claims that there are no

constituent parts of an emotion that are not part of a judgment of value. Her most explicit

statement of this is the opening paragraph of her book on emotions, *Upheavals of Thought*. Here

she makes the definitional statement, "Emotions, I shall argue, involve judgments about

important things, judgments in which, appraising an *external object* as salient for our own well-

being, we acknowledge our own neediness" (Nussbaum 2001, 19). In other words, she denies

that we should see an emotion as partly constituted by non-cognitive or bodily elements.

(Nussbaum 2001, 57) She writes this explicitly, but it also comes out in the way she writes about

emotions: "how simple life would be, if grief were only a pain in the leg, or jealousy but a very

bad backache. Jealousy and grief torment us *mentally*; it is the thoughts we have about objects

that are the source of agony – and in other cases, delight" (Nussbaum 2001, 16). Here we can see

that Nussbaum relies on a sharp distinction between the mental and the physical, the internal and

the external, the controllable and the uncontrollable. It is because of these assumptions, of the

complete separation of subject and world, body and mental that Nussbaum assumes that it is only

by making emotions cognitive and in the head that a person could train their emotions.

Section 5.1 – From Nussbaum's Cognitive Emotions to Bodily Affect

I argue that we should shift our theory of affect/emotions away from the more cognitive

aspects of Nussbaum's account. In my account, the body is more worlded and more minded.

From this view we have a different story about retraining the body and emotions. When we

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[18] Specifically, *The Fragility of Goodness, Therapy of Desire* and *Upheavals of Thought*

define emotions in this way, we can see how habit bridges our agency, social and, cultural influences with physiology. Embodied theories of emotions also synch well with our evolutionary past. Evolutionarily, emotions are homeostatic reactions of an organism to its environment and connected to action and perception just like affordances (Hufendiek 2017, 152).

My main target will be the dominant embodiment theory of emotion in psychology, the "dual-process" model. This model grounded what Jonathan Haidt calls the "affective revolution" in psychology that proceeded the "cognitive revolution" of the 1970s (Haidt 2007, 998). It is grounded in a claim that our affective system often responds to perception more rapidly than the higher cognitive functions and then this affective response influences cognitive processing (Railton 2011a, 106). Notice that these faster affective pathways are *separate* from the slower representational, cognitive processes that are primed by the speedier affect. To be clear, this theory states that fast affective processes and slower cognitive processes run simultaneously in the mind and that irrational, emotional, and heuristic fast thinking greatly influences or even overrides our slower, calculating conscious thinking. Empirical work in dual-process theory often has a view of the brain as very modular and that affective parts of the brain are also the automatic, animalistic parts of the brain and are completely separate from the more evolved, cognitive centres of the brain. These claims make it hard to understand how affect could interact with cognition to influence cognition. Work within this theory of psychology is usually an attempt to get people to switch tracks, from the quick, heuristically emotional to the cooler, slower cognitive track. This dual track theory has been taken up by virtue ethics such that just like embodied automatic action is considered ballistic and noncognitive, so too is emotion. Emotion is something alien that overcomes someone, to be dealt with through cognitive means rather than trained and integrated.

I take great pains to argue that the link between affect and cognition is seamless. My claims put me in a position in between non-cognitive affect theorists and those that claim that emotions are mental, representational, cognitive judgments. My middle position raises three important questions that need to be answered if I want to reject the dual track theory. First, how can affect and cognition be seamless? Secondly, what would it mean for emotions to be cognitive? Third is the question of how bodily and non-representational feelings can generate such rich, complicated, and culturally different emotions? I argue that in humans, the gut (which has also been called the "second brain") is pivotal to affect being both non-representational, cognitive but also quick. I also claim that affect and cognition are seamless both because the brain is not modular, but also because through experience, emotions can be trained to a finer grain. This emotional training is also Bayesian and allows me to answer the second question. Finally, emotion becomes rich through life experience and that this richness is multiply realizable. This means that such emotions like anger or jealousy can be manifested through different body-brain-environment interactions.

Most empirical work on emotions have just assumed the six basic, "biological" emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. These basic emotions are considered the basic building blocks of "higher" emotions but also that they are "innate and universal, automatic, and fast, and trigger behaviour with a high survival value."[19] Each of these basic emotions are supposed to correspond with six paradigmatic facial expressions but also that each emotion corresponds, transculturally, to a unique bodily manifestation. For instance, with fear, "I suddenly discovered myself to be feeling hot and alert and primed for further action. This basic fear response is so primitive that even the lizard seemed to share in it, and so automatic as to be

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[19] https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201601/what-are-basic-emotions

'cognitively impenetrable', that is, unconscious and uncontrollable, and more akin to a reaction than a deliberate action."[20]

I begin by looking at recent empirical evidence that the brain is not modular. To keep things simple, I only look at the amygdala, famously argued to be the "fear" centre of the brain. I make four claims based heavily on new work in cognitive science. The first is that the amygdala does not only manifest "fear" since one can feel fear without the amygdala and the amygdala is activated with other emotions. My second claim is that the amygdala is also associated with cognition. With those two claims established, I argue that emotion does not manifest only in one way in one place in the brain and that unlike biologically reductive emotion theorist[21] claims, emotion does not manifest only one way bodily. Finally, I claim that emotion *is* bodily and not just "in the brain" but that this bodily manifestation of emotion is multiply realizable.

One of the experiments that seemed to show that the brain was modular, and that the amygdala was the centre of the brain for the basic, biological emotion of fear was one done on a patient, SM. This patient had a genetic disorder that obliterated her amygdala called "Urbach-Wiethe disease." At the time, scientists could not induce SM to feel fear and so concluded that the amygdala was the fear centre of the brain. Lisa Feldman Barrett contests this classic evidence with new work done with SM. Scientists "found a way to make SM feel terror, by asking her to breathe air that was loaded with extra carbon dioxide. Lacking the normal degree of oxygen, SM panicked. (Don't worry, she was not in danger.) So SM could clearly feel and perceive fear under some circumstances, even without her amygdalae" (Barrett 2016, 17-18). Furthermore, it

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Although biologically reductive theorists about emotion are very much the minority in philosophy, they make up the majority of scientists in psychology and empirical cognitive science.

has been shown that the amygdala showed activation during studies of anger, disgust, sadness and happiness (Barrett 2016, 21).

Neuroscientist, Luiz Pessoa's book, *The Cognitive-Emotional Brain*, is dedicated to these three theses: "first, brain regions viewed as 'affective' are also involved in cognition; second, brain regions viewed as 'cognitive' are also involved in emotion; and critically, third, cognition and emotion are integrated in the brain" (Pessoa 2008, 148). More specifically, when looking at the amygdala again, Pessoa states that in lab work he has done, the amygdala is not just the fear centre or just an emotion centre, but is involved closely with certain functions needed for cognition such as attention, associative learning and perception (Pessoa 2008, 149).

That the brain does not have places dedicated to certain emotions makes sense because of how plastic our brains really are. But beyond neuroimaging, phenomenally, the same emotion does not manifest itself the same way in different bodies. While it might be easy to argue that fear primes an organism for stress and flight and then reverse engineer the bodily symptoms of fear with that knowledge, that is not universally how all humans react to the six basic emotions. For instance, just in Western culture, during anger, some fume, some cry like in sadness, others do a slow burn and become cunning and others just withdraw (Barrett 2016, 14). As Barrett claims, you can experience anger without a spike in blood pressure (2016, xiv) and one can have fear without activating the amygdala.

A question that a bodily theory of affect about automatic action needs to answer is an explanation of the cultural relativism of many emotions. Evolution cannot be the only explanation. It is easy to claim that fear is linked to the survival of an organism, but as Hufendiek points out, there are other, socially thick emotions that cannot be connected to biological value or bodily well-being. Jealousy, guilt and shame are essentially concerned with social rules and

norms. What would these emotions even be outside the social situation (Hufendiek 2016, 32)?

These emotions aren't genetically predetermined. "Your familiar emotion concepts are built-in only because you grew up in a particular social context where those emotion concepts are meaningful and useful, and your brain applies them outside your awareness to construct your experiences. Heart rate changes are inevitable; their emotional meaning is not. Other cultures can and do make other kinds of meaning from the same sensory input" (Barrett 2016, 33).

While emotion is biological and bodily, we should not look at it from the perspective of reductive biology but from a more holistic manner that I introduced in Section 2 of this chapter. We must look at emotion from the perspective of Development Systems theory. Barrett writing for a popular audience expresses what this means perfectly, "an instance of fear has irreducible, emergent properties not found in the ingredients alone, such as unpleasantness (as your car skids out of control on a slippery highway) or pleasantness (on an undulating rollercoaster). You cannot reverse-engineer a recipe for an instance of fear from a feeling of fear… To understand how salt transforms a recipe of bread, you must watch it work in context. Likewise, each ingredient of emotion must be studied in [context]" (Barrett 2016, 37).

While Barrett, as a neuroscientist, seems to focus only on the brain, I would like to explain what the claim that an emotion is multiply realizable means. To start holistically in the way of developmental systems theory, a better definition of emotion/affect is that they are complex whole-organism responses shaped *both* by evolution and culture (Hufendiek 2016, xi). Emotions involve interoception such as homeostatic reactions to environmental cues but they are also a balanced interplay spanning the brain, body and world. For instance a certain kind of fear might trigger an autonomic response depending on the environmental cue or stimulate a musculoskeletal response or as we parse fear into a more rich emotion, it could involve both

responses in different ways mixed with different hormonal changes. This integration of responses gets further complicated holistically with feedback loops. A simplified example of this is from facial expressions modifying autonomic responses and autonomic responses modifying facial expressions. A number of different components could trigger each other without there being a fixed sequence. I now move from critiquing the modularity of emotions in the brain to how the gut allows for both speed and cognitive flexibility of affect.

Section 5.2 – Gut Feelings and Interoception as Emotions

Our guts react to perception and experience. The anger at traffic trigger in our culture vigorous contractions and production of acid, as well as intestines twisting and mucus production when we are anxious or upset. Emeran Mayer claims that "in fact, we now know that your gut mirrors every emotion that arises in your brain" (2017, 31). I focus on emphasizing the sensitivity of the guts to experience but I amend the claim by Mayer to say that the gut's reaction *and* communication with the brain is a large part of what interoception is. The gut isn't just mirroring a disembodied emotion but is *constitutively* a large part of the emotion itself. It is the body telling the brain what it is feeling.

Michael Gershon argues, based on his decades of lab work on the gut, that separate from the brain, "the brain in the bowel may also have its own psychoneuroses" (1999, xiv). Elizabeth Wilson, in her book *Gut Feminism,* argues that one of these neuroses is bulimia. Bulimia is dominantly thought of as a social problem of body image, one's relationship with food and need for control over one's body. What is rarely considered is what is actually involved in the biological "reworking" of the autonomic pathways for peristalsis (the downward wave-like movement of the digestive tract) to reverse its movement by conscious triggering. Peristalsis is

autonomic and to be able to train it to go the other way through the act of will is a kind of

psycho-somatic miracle in the framework of the dominant view of the body's relationship to the

mind. But, secondly, why, biologically, is bulimia responsive to antidepressants? Wilson is

careful to make it clear that the antidepressants "do not have effects on mood simply by

influencing the brain; they also directly enliven the viscera—in the case of bulimia, calming

distress that is now more enteric than cerebral in character" (2015, 67). This is not to say that

psyche and soma are the same thing, but that only together can we make sense of something like

bulimia. It is also how we can make sense of affect as both a product of evolution and culture.

Mood is not added onto the gut secondarily, disrupting its proper function; rather, anger, like

digestion, is one of the events to which enteric substrata are naturally inclined through evolution

(Wilson 2015, 66). As long as organisms have been moving, they have had to know not only

what is going on outside of them through perception but also what is going on within through

interoception and proprioception. "One might want to say that the origin of proprioception is not

an historical event as such; it is an event tied to the evolution of animate forms" (Sheets-

Johnstone 1998, 281).

　　In humans, it is often hard to tell the difference between emotion and other reactions of

the body. Take for instance this story by Barrett of a date she once had with a colleague.

> I didn't know him very well and was reluctant to go because, honestly, I wasn't
> particularly attracted to him, but I had been cooped up too long in the lab that day, so I
> agreed. As we sat together in a coffee shop, to my surprise, I felt my face flush several
> times as we spoke. My stomach fluttered and I started having trouble concentrating.
> Okay, I realized, I was wrong. I am clearly attracted to him. We parted an hour later —
> after I agreed to go out with him again — and I headed home, intrigued. I walked into my
> apartment, dropped my keys on the floor, threw up, and spent the next seven days in bed
> with the flu (Barrett 2016, 30).

This story gives us evidence that emotion has its roots in interoception. Your body is trying to tell you something, based on previous feelings and the context you are in. Certain feelings that initially seemed like attraction was really an early manifestation of a flu. Yet, I imagine that if Barrett is interoceptively self-aware, the next time this feeling comes over her, she could tell in a more fine-grained way whether what has come over her is desire or sickness.

Here I am gesturing toward, just like I have characterized our brain, our interoception and emotions are also predictively based on experience and context and therefore also "Bayesian". Biology has given humans certain interoceptive machinery that communicates to the brain through the automatic and autonomic parts of the body. We should not be surprised that developmentally, early interoception and emotion begins in the gut. A baby's whole life revolves around the digestive tract, orally fixating, getting food and getting others to clean them after defecation. All of this is controlled by the Enteric Nervous System (ENS) in the gut. Mayer hypothesizes that developmentally, our "gut feelings related to hunger comprise your earliest signals about what is good and bad in the world and they begin at birth. The gut feeling of an empty stomach may be a newborn child's first negative proto-emotion" (Mayer 2017, 175). As we continue to grow and make decisions that give feedback to our bodies in either positive or negative reactions, we also begin to learn in a more fine grained way what this bodily feedback means to us and to distinguish one interoceptive reaction from another. Because the relationship of the gut to the brain is non-representational, emotions can hit our brains fast, as fast as perception. But also because this information is non-representational, like in Barrett's story about mistaking a flu for desire, our emotions can be particularly imprecise (Barrett 2016, 67). Barrett presents this fact as if we should be surprised that emotions give us imprecise judgments. But using prediction from past experience is always imprecise!

But unlike the dual track theory of emotions, while imprecise, emotions, like automatic actions can be trained because they are cognitive. Even with perception, automatic action will always be imprecise when there is very little domain specific experience. Habit and other automatic actions become precise and skillful only after the hard work and hours of training. Surely it takes a lifetime of experience and interaction with different contexts but also with enculturation for emotions to become rich, subtle and fine grained. Our emotionally triggered gut reactions do not remain tied up in the twists and spasms of our gut. They also trigger a myriad of gut sensations, which then travel back to our brain, where they can modulate or create gut feelings and where they are stored as emotional memories of a particular experience (Mayer 2017, 80). Mayer calls this repository the "library of gut feelings." This library is composed of an enormous amount of personal and salient information about each of us that has been collected every second of the day of our development and represents countless emotional states. We can begin to see how our emotional library would also store our emotional reactions to feedback from our decisions and how this could train our automatic reactions in everyday life. I turn to this in the next section.

Section 5.3 – A Critique of Dual Process Theory of Emotions Through Bayesian Emotions

My critique of the dual-process theory is *not* that it claims that the automatic system uses emotions as heuristics, but that this makes automatic action separate from the cognitive realm. My claim is that emotion is informational to the brain like perception is. The brain integrates all of this information through deliberation. So just like perception, emotion is crucial and constitutive of our slow, cool kinds of cognition. If we remember from Section 4.4, cool, slow, deliberative cognition cannot actually handle too many variables and needs automatic gut

feelings when things get complicated. This is because emotion distills a lifetime of collected emotional memories and throws out a judgment based on previous experience to help the brain make decisions.

But if emotion is the domain of automatic action and slower cognition formulates semantically our intentions, how does propositional cognition interact with emotional, non-representational automatic motor control? In this section I explain one heuristic the automatic system uses for making action flexible but that this heuristic, the Bayesian brain, is only able to be the way it is through its integration with affect. So instead of being on separate tracks, emotion and cognition are inseparable. Just like the cognition of the Bayesian brain, emotions too are linked directly to experience over time that fine tune different emotions. As one is brought up in a society, in one's *Bildung* certain experiences combine with visceral interoception to form thick social emotions. When one experiences loss and this coincides with a certain gut and visceral interoception, this is what sadness *is*. This is then fine-tuned when you have different kinds of loss. Loss of one's pet becomes separate from the loss of your favourite childhood toy and different from the devastation of the loss of a parent.

The dual-track model portrays automatic, affective judgments as running on "push buttons," "biases," "stereotypes," or "blunt" emotions—mental simplifications, short-cuts, or "point-and-shoot" responses that interfere and lead us astray irrationally. Scientists that try to apply the lessons of the dual-track model assume that when affect fails, the effortful cognitive system can swoop-in to the rescue. But more recently, philosophers have been using this same empirical literature to come to different conclusions about emotions. Philosophers such as Andy Clark and Peter Railton have come to see affect as "a flexible, experience-based information-processing system quite capable of tracking statistical dependencies and of guiding behavioral

selection via the balancing of costs, benefits, and risks. Indeed, this appears to be its core function—what it was 'designed' to do as it evolved over the course of our mammalian and primate past… The emotions… are seen as responses to internal and external stimuli evolved to attune the organism systemically with respect to the challenges and opportunities it faces" (Railton 2014, 834).

To make sense of this, Giovanni Pezzulo, in an article titled *Why do you Fear the Bogeyman*, asks us to imagine a dark and stormy night. You have gone to sleep with your nerves frayed because you watched a horror movie. During the night you hear what might be a tree branch scratching up against the window because of the wind. Yet tonight you are convinced it is the beginning of a home invasion. The main question is, why are you convinced of this and why do phenomena like this happen? A question I would like to add to this is, why is this reaction based on *rationality*.

Your Bayesian brain taps both perception *and* your previous experience in order to make a decision between "branch on window" or "home invasion." You do not *hear* the dog barking, which it normally would if a stranger were in the house. You *see* no movement of human shaped shadows. This is all sensory evidence that *should* be contrary to your conviction about a home invasion. Pezzulo argues that in only mentioning the senses and experience, we miss out on interoceptive information such as your heart rate being higher than if what was happening was just the wind pushing a branch. "After a horror movie or a small car accident, your body state can be altered, and interoceptive signals may report a high heart rate or sweating. If you also consider this interoceptive information in the aforementioned predictive coding scheme, then the calculations become quite different, because now the 'thief' hypothesis explains more evidence… Let's introduce another element of the predictive coding picture that I have skipped

up to now: the uncertainty of the data. Not all data are treated equally in the inference, because some are more uncertain than others. For example, you can be a bit uncertain of the fact that you really heard the sound of a window squeaking" (Pezzulo 2013, 904). Waking in the middle of the night when it is dark and you have not been awake long enough to have experience of the current situation means that rationally, you really are uncertain. Because of this it makes sense that you begin to trust interoception as the most reliable source and therefore change the weighting of our evidence (Pezzulo 2013, 905). The horror movie's role is not crudely priming the decision as might be suggested by the dual-track theory. Instead the horror movie effects the body state of the individual to a heightened level with higher heart rate, sweat and guts automatically sending messages of urgency through the vegus nerve. This feeling does not just go away but lingers and also may train associations between when we felt this scared previously in our lives and what we are feeling right now.

So far, I have given evidence about the epistemological nature of emotions by giving examples of phenomenon that happen to us that are best explained by but are also made rational by the Bayesian, experiential nature of emotions. But these examples have been about failures of reasoning. This might lead someone to reassert that the role of emotion is to distract and lead cognition astray. To this I present an example of how automatic Bayesian emotion helps us navigate the complex and tricky milieu that is our social world, without our conscious awareness. Interoception in our bodies allow our long-term experience with a phenomenon, or in this next case a person, to be a single manifestation of a "gut feeling" or proto-judgement. This can register as unease and in some cases, we might think the emotion is wrong as Barrett did, but as Antonio Damasio shows with his patient, David, often our gut reactions are right and help us.

In his book, *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio describes a patient who has the severest problems with learning and memory he has ever encountered. David cannot learn any new facts (2000, 43). Damasio is intrigued that even though he cannot recognize them, David seems to have consistent preferences and avoidances for particular people. Damasio decides to empirically test this by having David, in controlled circumstances, experience three distinct types of interaction with three separate people. One is with a welcoming and pleasant person that always rewarded David with a positive answer when asked for something, another was someone who was neutral and a third type of interaction who would say no to any request, was brusque and engaged David in frustrating and tedious psychological tasks[22]. Exposure to these three experiences were done over five consecutive days after which David was asked to look at sets of four photographs with the face of one of the three individuals in the experiment and asked "Whom would you go to if you needed help?" and "Who do you think is your friend in this group?" Damasio reports that David picked the "good guy" *eighty percent* of the time and the bad guy was almost never chosen. Although when asked if he knew anything about these people in the photographs, even the good guy, although David could say nothing about them, he was still able to pick the guy who was positive to him very consistently (Damasio 2000, 44-45). A further qualitative observation from Damasio helps us to see that this was emotional, gut feelings that were biasing his choices toward the correct photographs. Later in the experiment, the last few times that David was brought to the person who would give him a negative experience, "a few feet away, he flinched, stopped for an instant, and only then allowed himself to be led gently to the examining room… I have no doubt that the sight of the bad guy induced a brief emotional response" (Damasio 2000, 46). The emotional flinch is that moment when bad visceral feeling

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[22] Damasio seemed to think it important to his experiment that this third, unpleasant person also be an attractive woman.

gave David an emotional, proto-judgment, but because these kinds of gut feelings colour our mood automatically and unconsciously, David could not articulate his unease.

Section 5.4 – A Segue Into Chapter 2: Scaffolding Our Affect

Finally, in this section on emotion and affect, I briefly introduce the idea that we can externalize our emotions into the environment. This will be important in the next chapter as being able to scaffold emotion into the environment can help a person change their moods and their habits. Affects can be culturally scaffolded both, diachronically by sociocultural norms, and synchronically by the concrete, material context with which one interacts (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1160). This greatly enhances the extent to which affectivity is not just a matter of passively undergoing bodily and experiential changes, but also of actively modifying one's environment for the sake of one's affective life. We are constantly doing it, just as part of our repertoire of habitually dealing with the world. There are multiple examples of this: we listen to music to relive past emotions, indulge in comfort food, move furniture around for novelty and wear certain clothing for its tactile properties or its familiarity. A prevalent example is provided by increasingly portable technologies for listening to music. People often rely on portable music to feel more energetic and enthusiastic, to unwind and relax, create a romantic atmosphere, or rekindle past experiences (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1162). This habit insinuates itself very deeply into our routines and habits. We can think of how difficult the prospect of a workout becomes when, if after arriving at the gym, we discover that the battery of our mp3 player has died and we no longer have a soundtrack to push us through a workout[23] (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1163). We scaffold our affects interpersonally as well. The context and

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[23] For me the prospect of even leaving the house becomes much harder without music, as I will risk being late rather than not find my mp3 player in the house.

scaffolding can change quickly depending on who we are interacting with, as we move through different interpersonal contexts (e.g., speaking to the boss at work, eating lunch with colleagues, having a friendly chat with a stranger in the neighborhood market) (Colombetti and Kreuger 2014, 1170). Certain affective states of ours only come out when we are part of a group of certain kind. Often if we are away from our childhood home for a long time, we experience certain familiar and comforting affects when we hang out with a group of old friends even if the place is not where we all originally met. This kind of feeling and the scaffolding of memory that is associated with these groups of people can be linked with what we do to ourselves when we slip on a ragged but familiar sweater or eat comfort food.

In this Chapter, I introduced the idea of meso-level phenomena. These are occurrences that happen in the "level" above the individual yet below the level of the structural. An example of this phenomenon is what Lisa Herzog calls "organizations", public bureaucracies and private companies (2018). I argued that anthropology and the vocabulary from evolutionary biology could help us access this often forgotten zone of human activity. Herzog was only able to access this level of human activity through her own ethnographic work. As a phenomenon, organizations are often thought of either as a place where decisions come down completely to individual morality or people within an organization are merely cogs within a larger structural machine. Herzog attempts to show what the difference makes politically analyzing where individual daily activity meets the situation of the organization.

In the rest of this chapter, I introduced concepts such as habit, skill, affect and affordance that will help us in the next Chapter access and analyze the meso-level phenomena of the women's *dawa* group as a kind of organization within Egyptian political life. The purpose of this next chapter is both as an ethnographic resource of this women's movement so that in later

chapters we can refer back to these meso-level phenomena when talking about autonomy but also to solve a problem of how to conceptually connect the individual and their situation. We do not have the meso-level without connecting both the individual and their context and so in the next chapter, we explore what has been called the "situationist problem". This is a problem for the framework of virtue ethics which I argued would be used in the rest of the dissertation to help us think through the ethical and political importance of the meso-level. So it is urgent that we have an answer to the situationist who makes a kind of structuralist claim, that individual's behaviour are determined and can be predicted by their context or situation. Of course, if it is the situation, not us that controls our actions, then we don't even have the conditions of possibility for *any* autonomy at all let alone Muslim women who wear the veil.

<u>Chapter 2: The Micro-Situationist Challenge</u>

Imagine you are at a mall and you see someone with a small hole in her shopping bag with candy leaking out. Or picture yourself getting out of a phone booth and suddenly a stranger spills the papers they are carrying everywhere. Would you help these two people out? Most people seem to think that they would be helpful. What about if you were asked to predict how many random people out of twenty would help these hapless strangers out? What kind of information would you want to know about the potential helpers to aid your prediction? You might ask which of these people would be described as "good people" or you might ask about times previously when they had an opportunity to help, if they had helped. The psychologists who designed experiments like the situation with the phone booth argue that, if presented with the opportunity to help, it is not what is "inside" of you, not your kind heart and generosity that would determine the outcome. Actually, what predicts if you will help a stranger has more to do with the external conditions than with your character. Whether you found a dime just before, whether you are in a place with pleasant odors or are near loud traffic, they claim, largely predicts whether you will help a stranger. This is the "situationist challenge" that confronts virtue ethics, a field that holds great stakes in the concept of character as an inner, causal motivator of action. Virtue ethicists claim that your character, who you *really* are, manifests itself in these situations. But if we act wildly differently depending on the circumstances, especially depending on minor things in the background of the situation that should not be relevant, what is left of character?

This is the problem that this chapter confronts. In this chapter, I give an account of a contemporary, Islamic virtue ethics using ethnography of Muslim women who attend small

groups to help train themselves in Islamic virtues such as piety. I use this Islamic virtue ethics to think differently about the situationist problem.

I start by claiming we should concentrate only on two exemplary experiments from the situationist challenge. The first one is about how mood affects our decisions behind our back which I call the micro-situationist problem and will the subject of this chapter. The second is the Milgram experiments which shows how easily our actions can be swayed by authority. The Milgram experiment is different in kind as a challenge to our character and I will deal with it in the next chapter as what I call the macro-situationist challenge.

I confront the micro-situationist challenge by adjusting some assumptions traditional virtue ethics makes about dispositions as an intrinsic property. Instead I claim that character and virtue's location is an affordance, which we learned in the previous chapter is a relation between the agent, the social milieu and the material environment. I also dismiss traditional virtue ethics' assumption of the truth of dual track affect theory. I then lay out how pious Muslim women who veil start pedagogical groups in order to confront the challenges that the micro-situationist challenge throws as an obstacle to their being virtuous at piety. I look at how these women train their affects but also manipulate their own situation by scaffolding affect onto their environment. I then look at a second way these women create their own situation by looking at how friendships and family create feedback loops of correct habit and correct affect to help their mood. Finally, I explore how this group of pious women use heuristics such as concentration during prayer to give themselves an idea of how well their training in piety is going overall. After presenting these women's lifestyle and how this answers the initial micro-situationist challenge, I answer the objection that one cannot control all situations one faces. I answer this by arguing that the veil is a portable mood enhancer that the Muslim woman takes around with her.

Section 1 – Two Major Experiments of Situationism

In this section, I quickly go over two of the experiments that traditionally make up the situationist challenge to virtue ethics because they are the ones that have stood up in social psychology's "replication crisis". I split these experiments into two types of situationism, the micro and macro situationist problem. I will save the macro-situationist problem for the next chapter and elucidate more on the experiment that make up the micro-situationist problem.

The Milgram experiment involved forty adult males who sat behind a glass observing a "learner" who was prompted to answer questions by a "scientist" who was located with the experiment subject behind the glass. Every time the learner got a question wrong, the subject was instructed by the scientist to press a button that would deliver, unbeknownst, a fake electric shock to the learner. The force was increased by 15 volts for each incorrect answer. As the shocks increased, the learner would protest and cry out in pain. At 150 volts, the learner said that they refused to go on, at 330 volts the learner stopped responding. Against the hypothesis that most would stop at 150 volts, 65 percent of the candidates continued to obey the scientist to the very end, beyond 330 volts to the very highest level of shock, 450 volts (Milgram 1974).

Although there are many different versions of the mood experiment, Isen and Levin's (1972) is the most iconic. The experimenters observe 41 men and women exiting a telephone booth who encounter a confederate who drops a folder of papers that scatters all over the floor. 15 of the 41 people that leave the booth found a dime that the experimenters left there and 14 out of 15 of these people help the person who dropped the folder of papers, while 24 of the 26 people who did not find a dime do not help the person who dropped their folder of papers.

Section 1.1 – Micro and Macro Situationist Problem

Since John Doris presented his six experiments in 2002, two of them, the Good Samaritan[24] and the Stanford Prison experiment[25], have not survived empirical scrutiny while Hartshorne and May's study on children doesn't hit the target against virtue ethics[26]. The experiment testing the effects of the presence of others on our willingness to help, while surviving replication leads to underdetermined conclusions about character. But there are two experiments, the dime in the telephone and the Milgram experiments that are empirically robust and do present a challenge to virtue ethics.

Replication specifically of the dime in the phone booth experiment has seen mixed results, with one replication attempt correlating more with the gender of the subject rather than if they had found a dime. Yet, while this exact experiment might be cast in doubt, this *kind* of experiment about mood and pro-social behaviour, has been replicated many times since 1974. Increases in helping have been linked to positive moods brought on by other trivial situations such as the smell of cinnamon buns, pleasant weather, imagining oneself taking a vacation and lighting quality while anti-social behaviour has been coaxed out of people through the loudness of ambient noise levels and watching unpleasant slides (Miller 2009, 150). Not only is there strong empirical evidence of a causal connection between mood and behaviour[27] but it has been shown to have significant real-world consequences. In the 1980s, pharmaceutical companies were allowed to give lavish gifts to doctors, but legislation was announced to curb this kind of

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[24] See (Elliott 2017, 74)

[25] See Elliot 2017 again but also journalistic piece by Ben Blum in Medium, based on previously unreleased records and contemporary interviews with the participants, reveals that Zimbardo might have been coaching some of the guards and a famous replication attempt in 2006 called the BBC prison study performed by the British Broadcast Company showed that while some prisoners immersed themselves in their roles, all the guards were very reluctant to take up their roles. (http://www.bbcprisonstudy.org/pdfs/bjsp(2006)tyrannny.pdf)

[26] See (Sreenivasan 2002, 58)

[27] See Miller 2009 about further experiments on mood and helping behaviour and their empirical validity

lobbying by only allowing gifts under $100 to be given. "It was thought that smaller gifts such as pens, pads, calendars, and samples of drugs would pose no threat. This line of thinking was false. Several studies now confirm that even minor gifts of this sort can lead to major changes in physicians' practices, including rising volumes of prescriptions, erratic prescribing patterns, preferences for new drugs with unproven benefits, and increased prescription spending overall" (Sarkissian 2010, 1). Studies like this challenge the idea that good character leads to consistency in action since, not only can a person's behaviour be changed by the situation, but worse, that their behaviour can be changed by something about the situation that seems irrelevant to reasons to change one's mind or actions. If you were to be asked why you helped someone, you would likely not say it was because you were in a good mood or you smelled cinnamon buns. Nor would these be reasons that you would recognize or endorse as good reasons to do something. It is the problem of something small and irrelevant in the background eroding our attempts at having a consistent character that I call the micro-situationist problem.

Virtue ethicists mostly concentrate on the other five experiments and responses to the mood experiments are thin. Christian Miller finds this particular situationist challenge strong enough that he bases his "mixed traits" theory around it. He argues that situationists are right, in the strong sense, ordinary people have neither virtues nor vices but merely a mix of traits that can be at times consistent and at other times not (Miller 2013; Miller 2014). Nancy Snow does not reject the results but says more could be learned from more serious helping situations. She also argues that the results are compatible with Aristotle's claim that truly virtuous people are rare. The Milgram experiment is persuasive when it comes to serious helping situations. But the sting of the mood experiments are their mundaneness and ubiquity. Even worse is that we are *constantly* being put in these situations. Over time the effect could be tremendous.

Rachana Kamtekar makes the general point about traditional Aristotelian virtue ethics that character just is a disposition to respond with appropriate feeling. So rather than being irrelevant, your mood when you make a judgment and do an action is a central concern. This does not quite take the sting out of situationism, but instead makes the point that this problem of one's passivity to moods has always been a central problem for virtue ethics.

The Milgram experiments are considered the most significant of the six classical studies because the original experiments themselves had tight controls and multiple variations. Although there has been attempts to show, in 2013, that some of the scientists giving instructions may have gone off script[28] and the possibility that some of the actors knew the person being shocked was just acting, there have been multiple replications done by people other than Milgram. Part of the reason the experiment is so convincing, as Doris argues, is that one could clearly see that the people who cooperated were under a great amount of stress when complying. Sometimes crying, sometimes begging the experimenter to stop. This visible discomfort was also replicated. Yet if these people thought this was a hoax, why was there such noticeable stress? There was one replication where dogs were *actually* shocked and about sixty five percent of those who took part, under much stress, continued to shock the dogs to very dangerous limits (Doris 2002, 45). The replications have happened cross culturally as well. The conclusions from the 2015 Milgram replication was that "the results achieved show a level of participants' obedience toward instructions similarly high to that of the original Milgram studies."[29] Most people accept that the results suggest that this shows that people are very obedient to authority. I will go further and explain the relation of the Milgram experiment to character formation and the problem it poses to

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[28] https://psmag.com/social-justice/electric-schlock-65377
[29] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1948550617693060

virtue ethics in the next chapter, but for now, because of its different timescale, I will call it the

macro-situationist problem.

Section 2 – The Relation of Character to the Situation

Section 2.1 – Character is not Intrinsic

In one sense, virtue ethics does not take situationism seriously enough, by continuing to

claim that our characters are intrinsic properties even though our characters seem clearly

influenced by things external to the person. On the other hand, virtue ethics concedes too much

to situationism because it takes for granted that the dual track theory of emotion and affect are

true. This makes micro-situationist challenge as it relates to mood particularly intractable for the

virtue ethicist. If affect just overcomes a person, then a person is just passive to the moods given

by the environment. In the previous chapter we established that automatic action was not-

unintelligent, that the brain is not modular and the emotion part and cognitive parts of the brain

interpenetrate. Also, that affect helps automatic action be not-unintelligent by being a Bayesian

like, predicting and updating system. The stakes of this description of affect is that mood, unlike

in the dual track theory, can be trained such that when our mood updates the affective weights in

a judgment, a person can be less manipulated. I will use much of this chapter to show how veiled

women train their affects to help resist mood alteration, but in this section I concentrate on the

problem that what stops traditional virtue ethicists from taking situationism seriously is that they

believe that character and the virtues are dispositional and inherent properties of people.

The normative stakes for virtue ethicists is that if our dispositions are not inherent

properties, we won't be the ultimate source of who we are. This touches on fundamental

concerns about moral and personal responsibility, about being rendered passive to our own lives

and not being the author of our actions. Character in some sense is the deepest and clearest expression of who we are. Normatively, you want your character to be explained by your *own* agency rather than someone else's or maybe worse some irrelevant, alien force changing your mood.

Most who work on virtue ethics take the idea that character just is inner dispositions for granted.[30] Here I give Christian Miller's account of the standard virtue ethics position. If character is an intrinsic disposition then, for example, the person with compassion possesses a *property* that the person without compassion doesn't. This property plays a significant causal role in the first person being compassionate. The fact that it is intrinsic and a property creates expectations that the first person will be reliably compassionate (Miller 2013, 9).

Identical stimulus conditions can have a variety of reactions to it, so it is the agent's internal constitution that really explains a person's compassionate behaviour. What the right circumstances means for the manifestation of a disposition will be a main fracture point between my position and the traditional account of dispositions, so I will elaborate more on this. The paradigmatic example is of fragility. Glass has the intrinsic property of being fragile, yet this fragility may never manifest if the right stimulus condition doesn't come about, such as if I push a vase off a dresser (Miller 2013, 8). Beyond the stimulus condition, background conditions also play a part. Going back to our vase, even though my pushing it may be a good stimulus condition for the manifestation of its fragility, a change of gravity would effectively mask this fragility (Miller 2013, 8n13). The vase having the property of fragility does not go away if it is never manifested. Crucially to the traditional view of character as intrinsic dispositions, the property of compassion is there in the person even if in their entire life the first person never comes into a

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[30] In a note that takes up half the page, Miller gives a very long list of the main figures within virtue ethics who subscribe to this position (2013, 7n12)

situation where it can be manifested. Although empirically unverifiable, the virtue of

compassion, as an intrinsic property, can be latent yet still be real. To make these implications

even more explicit: just as a vase has the property of fragility but never manifests this fragility, it

is possible, according to the traditional account of character as intrinsic dispositions, that a

person could never have been compassionate in their life, yet metaphysically, they can have had

the property of compassion all along.

Before I make the case that character is not an intrinsic disposition, I will make the case

that not all dispositions are intrinsic. Jennifer McKitrick inquires after why so many philosophers

hold the mistaken belief that *all* dispositions are necessarily intrinsic. She argues that

philosophers have not thought beyond the one or two paradigmatic cases of disposition such as

fragility and solubility (McKitrick 2018, 171). Here I think it will be helpful to quickly give four

cases of dispositions that are not intrinsic.

The first is a historical example. Locks and keys, by themselves, do not have any ability.

But, as Robert Boyle noted in 1666, a lock can "obtain a new capacity" of "being made to lock

or unlock" by the fabrication of an appropriately shaped key. Being lockable and unlockable are

dispositions that the lock acquires without undergoing intrinsic change (McKitrick 2018, 159).

The second example is important because it is an example of an extrinsic disposition in the way

that I think situationists envision character. As McKitrick argues, perfect duplicates of a thing

can differ in the way and extent that they are vulnerable. "A military target, a city, is protected

by a Star Wars-like defense system. The system has sensors that bring out defenses when there is

a threat, rendering the city invulnerable. However, the sensors and anti-aircraft weapons are all

located outside the borders of the city and are built, maintained, and staffed by a foreign country.

Should the defense system be disabled, the city would change from being invulnerable to being vulnerable" (McKitrick 2018, 160).

We can now move to more human examples of non-intrinsic dispositions. McKitrick gives examples that require social institutions and social contexts in order to have dispositions. Think of the disposition of "bankruptability". We can imagine two people intrinsically alike but that differ because they happen to be situated in places with different markets and financial institutions. Once this makes sense, a torrent of examples can follow: "A coupon is redeemable. A new invention is marketable. A candidate is electable. A statement can be humorous, provocative, offensive, or inflammatory" (McKitrick 2018, 165). Finally, an example that is not necessarily extrinsic, but is not intrinsic either, but that will be important for my argument that virtues are like embodied affordances: visibility. Something is disposed to being seen if it is perceivable to some seer. The circumstances of manifestation, though, depends not only on the capacity and skill of an appropriate type of perceiver but also the background context, such as the lighting in a room (McKitrick 2018, 161).

Now that it's been established that there are non-intrinsic dispositions, what should convince us that human character, specifically, is non-intrinsic? A lot rests on the fact that humans are not inanimate objects. With the paradigmatic cases of fragility, it is obvious that a vase can metaphysically be fragile whether this manifests or not. Having epistemological access to a vase's fragility is a different problem. Without the vase cracking or smashing, how will we *know* if it is fragile or not? But with humans, the question of manifestation isn't an epistemological worry, but a metaphysical worry. Dispositions are different in inanimate objects than in humans. For instance, dispositions never fail in inanimate objects. They might be masked, finked, not have the right background or even never come across the right stimulus, but

once activated, they never fail. While, as Anthony Chemero argues, "even on a firm surface, with no wind, while perfectly healthy and sober, I may fail in my attempt to climb a step that affords climbing for me" (2009, 145).

My argument against traditional virtue ethics is: in humans, manifesting a character trait is *constitutive* of what it means to have that disposition. If we go back to the traditional view, we might ask, but what if a person just never had the opportunity to manifest the disposition? The vase still has the property of fragility, why not a person? But what would it mean to say that someone has the disposition of courage yet never confronted danger? This seems an empty claim. In humans, the disposition metaphysically does not precede its manifestation and even given the chance the person acted courageously, having acted only once, one cannot yet say that a person has the disposition of courage but that the person has a capacity for it. As Maria Alvarez argues, with the single act of courage the way we might frame it is one of discovery rather saying the person possessed it all along (Alvarez 2017, 83). There are good normative reasons that this should be the case. Aristotle always emphasized that a good life is one of activity and so never discovering one's dispositions, one should not rest easy that the disposition was there all along, "otherwise a perfectly desirable life might be spent asleep" (Kosman 1999, 62). Is the situationist challenge plus these arguments against intrinsic dispositions definitive? Maybe not, but I think at this point we can at least say the burden of proof now lies with the person who defends the idea of character as intrinsic dispositions so that I can now shift to my positive account of virtues.

Section 2.2 – Character as Affordances

At the start of this section I argued that traditional virtue ethics concedes too much to situationism, but traditional virtue ethicists might argue that if virtues aren't intrinsic to a person,

I have already conceded everything to situationists. With my account of a contemporary Islamic virtue ethics, I take a more moderate position between these two positions. If virtues can't *only* be inculcated through habit, that doesn't mean that habituation as a strategy is completely closed off to me. A situationist like Doris will argue that instead of habituation, the person worried about their character should strategize to get better at putting themselves in good making situations. But I agree with Rodgers and Warmke when they argue that there is a fatal flaw in this logic. For a person to follow this advice involves skills to judge when to go into a situation and they would need years of practice and experience to become a reliable situationist. Yet his looks like they are habituating their character to be better at manipulating situations (Rodger and Warmke 2013, 19). "So what is the problem? … [I]t appears as if [a skilled situationist] will possess the very thing from which the situationist has attempted to distance herself: the robust character trait or virtue of being a 'good situation-chooser'" (Rodgers and Warmke 2013, 20). Rodgers and Warmke argue that if this is true we have to go back to traditional virtue ethics, but I don't take this argument as a reduction to the absurd, instead I agree that habit, skill, *and* competence at getting into better situations are all needed for the way I define virtue.

Here my positive account follows closely Mark Alfano's definition of virtues as affordances and affordances[31] as a triadic concept. Alfano argues that virtues are a relation between the agent's capacity and skills, the social milieu and, the material environment (Alfano 2014, 73). We have seen from the major experiments of situationism that the environment can dispose the agent to do things, yet for example, loud environments don't *uniformly* dispose one toward morally bad behaviour, nor do pleasant smells invariably dispose one toward morally good behaviour. What this triadic account leaves open, importantly for the account of practices

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[31] See Chapter 1 for more on affordances

of pious Muslim women that I present later in the chapter, is three ways to acquire and retain a certain disposition. Although I have critiqued traditional virtue ethics, the traditional path of habituation is still a way to become honest. But now there are more tools we can work with such as social mastery, when we notice others signaling their expectations or through controlling the material environment like increasing luminescence or getting away from places with loud ambient noise (Alfano 2014, 84). While in philosophy I might occupy a minority position taking this triadic view of virtues, as Alfano (forthcoming) and Skorburg both point out, "philosophers would do well to take note that among psychologists, 'now a days, almost everyone is an interactionist' and the debates are no longer about whether dispositions or situations are better predictors of behavior, but instead, 'the major issues in contention center on the type of interactionism espoused'" (Skorburg 2018, 2346).

We can now go back and see that the paradigmatic metaphor of a disposition for a human is not fragility as traditional virtue ethics represents it. Nor are dispositions completely extrinsic and dependent on the situation like the disposition of vulnerability for the city defended by external satellites. Instead it is like vision. Vision is a relation of the capacity of the agent to see but also the background condition of lighting context plus also the materiality of the object being seen. This way of thinking about character and virtues as affordances also puts me firmly in the camp of virtue ethics that argues that virtue is like a skill[32] rather than practical wisdom[33]. More specifically, as can be seen from the previous chapter, I also lean toward the anti-intellectualist, enactivist camp of virtues as skills[34]. But we should not forget that part of my work in the previous chapter was to overcome these two binary positions by arguing that the body and

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[32] See Stitcher and Stalnaker for classic examples of this position
[33] See Phillipa Foot and John Hacker-Wright for two examples of this more traditional virtue ethics position
[34] See Annas (2011) for the more intellectualist version and Hasselberger (2017) and both of Fridland's 2017 articles for positions closer to my anti-intellectualist but "not uncognitive" position

automatic action are "not uncognitive". This is important because if we just assume that the body, habits and automatic action are dumb, ballistic, unskilled and not cognitive we can only come to the conclusion that Nancy Snow (2010, Ch. 2) comes to, that training habit is not enough for virtue. This is because habit in this view is just ballistic, unconscious action triggered by a stimulus and so always needs supplementation and endorsement of deliberation and an intellectualist view of practical wisdom. In this chapter, implicit within my arguments are that habits are skillful and cognitive enough to be improvisatory and open ended to confront the micro-situationist problem without the intervention of deliberation. But what makes habits this skillful is high quality teachers, high quality practice, and dedication.

Section 3 – Rethinking What is Usually Understood by "Religion"

Christian Miller argues that an over emphasis on Aristotelian and Christian virtue ethics has left a large gap in the literature on other types of virtue ethics such as Buddhist or in my case, Islamic virtue ethics. I chose the women's *dawa* group not just to fill in an unexplored niche in the literature, but because Islamic virtue ethics, or what is called the *akhlaq* tradition inspired by such philosophers as Miskawayh, concentrates much more on embodiment, habit, and affect than does traditional virtue ethics. I argue that this concentration gives this kind of virtue ethics a new traction on this particular situationist problem of mood.

Often it is assumed that religion is a personal, private engagement with a transcendent God through a set of revealed books. The content of these books, it is thought, are a set of law like imperatives that one must believe in and follow. The prerequisite to being in a religion is belief in a set of propositions such as "I believe Muhammad is the last prophet of Allah" or "Jesus is God made incarnate and is part of a trinity." But what if religion is not just about cognitive belief but about embodiment, tradition and practice? What if the mundane is

inseparable from the transcendent? What if religion is not just private and personal but cannot be separated from the aesthetic /moral/political aspects of everyday life? To set up and look at how pious Muslim women who veil overcome the micro-situationist problem, I shift the way we look at three concepts related to religion. These are i) the categories of sacred and profane; ii) the role of practice in Islam and finally; iii) what religious practices *do* rather than what they mean.

i) If we want to look at the mundane, contemporary practices of Muslims we have to change how we think of tradition because in the common[35] framework, "concrete traditions are not thought of as sound and visual imagery, as language uttered and inscribed (on paper, wood, stone, or film) or recorded in electronic media. They are not thought of as ways in which the body learns to paint and see, to sing and hear, and to dance and observe; as masters who can teach pupils how to do these things well; and as practitioners who can excel in what they have been taught" (Asad 2001, 216). This is because in our understanding, religion is a separate category from the political, the economic, the aesthetic and the moral. We conceptually try to separate religion from other domains. We do this by drawing bright lines dividing what we consider the sacred, or the domain of religion, from the profane, which is not the domain of religion. This process of separation has gone on behind our conceptual backs, as it were, and now forms the definitive context from which we approach the study of religion. Talal Asad encourages us to study Islam by first dismantling the wall between the transcendent, ideal essence of a religion and the mundane, everyday ways people live out Islam. From this perspective, the person of faith is not a split subject "living, on the one hand, in a pressured, imperfect, and particularized world and, on the other hand, always linked through his or her faith

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[35] Represented by Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Clifford Geertz

to another world transcending this. Faith is inseparable from the particularities of the temporal world and the traditions that inhabit it" (Asad 2001, 214).

ii) That conscience and faith as inner cognitive belief has been emphasized should be surprising since Islam has always been concerned with the believer's body, habits and mundane activities. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, a hadith scholar in the 9th century, recounts that someone said to the Prophet Muhammad's companion Salman, "Your Prophet has taught you everything, even how to take a shit!" Salman unironically replied, "Yes, he has! He has forbidden us to face in the direction of Mecca when defecating or urinating, to cleanse ourselves after defecation or urination with the right hand… or to cleanse ourselves with a piece of dung or a bone" (Katz 2002, 1). Marion Katz argues, in her book about ritual purity in Islam, that Islamic *sharia* is a comprehensive system encompassing all aspects of life including the most apparently trivial details of the believer's private conduct which has "provoked the mirth of seventh century pagans and twentieth century Americans alike" (2002, 1). Here we should be careful not to think of *sharia* as law as we think of it in a Western context. It is, as Saba Mahmood emphasizes, "not so much a system of codified rules as it was a set of discursive practices lived in social relations, in human embodiers and interpretive articulations" (2005, 98). *Sharia* is not just a set of detailed instructions that focus on action and "what to do" but its aim is more consonant with virtue ethical goal of showing the believer *who to become*. Here *sharia* as a concept is closely related to the concept of *adab*. As Ira Lapidus explains, in his foundational article on *adab, Knowledge, Virtue, and Action,* the knowledge gleaned from *sharia* was for the sake of perfecting the art of living. "*Adab* [is] in its most general sense: correct knowledge and behavior in the total process by which a person is educated, guided, and formed into a good Muslim—*adab* [is] the foundation of the soul or personality of the human being as a whole" (Lapidus 1984, 39). If this

description reminds the reader of Foucault's care of the self from Chapter 1, this should not be a surprise. This is because there is a historical relation between the Ancient Greek and Stoic practices of the care of the self and its transmission to paradigmatic Islamic thinkers of virtue ethics such as Miskawayh. Islamic care of the self is in many ways the same, but also different from Aristotelian inspired, Western Virtue ethics on the training of the affects. *Adab* can be thought of as Foucualt's *askesis* since the way that Lapidus defines *adab's* role in the art of living is a complex achievement and generally "the product of life-long training" (Foucault 2005, 44).

iii) Finally, religious ritual is not only a symbolic, process of signification. Marcel Mauss' in his *Techniques of the Body* does not ask "What does that ritual mean?" but instead asks "What does that ritual *do*?" Mauss' essay can be read as saying that there is no such thing as a natural behaviour and that every kind of mundane action carries the imprint of learning, from feeding, to washing and repose. From this premise, Mauss argues that the body is an instrument, a natural technical object. Asad, taking Mauss' conclusion as a starting point, invites us to analyze the body as an assemblage of embodied aptitudes, not as systems of symbolic meanings (Asad 1997, 47). If we are to make sense of the rituals of these pious women, we must understand that "the importance of these practices does not reside in the meanings they signify to their practitioners, but in the work they do in constituting the individual; similarly, the body is not a medium of signification but the substance and the necessary tool through which the embodied subject is formed" (Mahmood 2005, 29).

Section 4 – Breaking and Creating New Habits through Ritual Spaces

The pious women who wear the veil understand the great difficulty of overcoming mood and desire which is why they band together into pedagogical *dawa* groups to train and teach each other skills, tips, tricks and strategies for self-regulation. When asked why they have joined the *dawa* movement specifically, Mahmood's subjects responded that they felt adrift in the unconscious uptake of the habits of modern Cairo and heading in a spiritual direction that they did not like. They talked of a "transformative force beyond their control that was corrosive of the sensibilities and habits" (Mahmood 2005, 44) of the person they envisioned themselves becoming. Gregory Trianosky in a classic paper about the problem that affect poses responsibility for character makes a great comparison about the voluntariness of changing one's affects and changing one's physicality. "To say that gullibility, sensitivity, and other traits of temperament are nonvoluntary is, of course, not to say that they can't be altered by voluntary action. Voluntary action may alter them over time in something like the way it can alter an individual's weight, musculature, or other physical qualities that influence what one can do" (Trianosky 1990, 108n5).

In order to transform themselves, these Muslim women have to change their feelings and their habits. One obstacle to the change of habits, claims James Bernard Murphy, is what he calls "habit interference." We already come to any new event with all of our previous experiences and habits and this means we not only have to learn a new task, but erase the impression on us of our old way of being. "The best-studied and most terrifying example of habit interference concerns the controls of an airplane: what pilots learn on one kind of plane often interferes with their ability to learn new cockpit controls. This interference is a major cause of airplane crashes" (Murphy 2015, 8). This confirms older, classical experiments in psychology done by John

Bergström in 1894 that demonstrated this. Bergström's subjects had already learned one way to

sort cards and found it more, not less difficult to learn a slightly different way to sort cards than a

control group that began with no knowledge of how to sort cards (Murphy 2015, 10). We should,

of course, not make too strong conclusions from these experiments since there are tasks where

the learning of one way of doing something undergirds the learning of any other of the same

type. For instance, learning one language can make it easier to learn others. But it does mean that

sometimes, to integrate a new way of being into someone, we must break old habits before

acquiring new ones.

Michael Puett, a scholar of Chinese virtue ethics, argues that the role of ritual space is to

help break old habits. Ritual spaces specifically are places where we act out counter intuitive

ways of thinking, acting and responding. And it is precisely the tension between rituals and our

lived reality that render them effective (Puett 2015, 547).

Here I concentrate on the ethnography of Petra Kuppinger, a geographer and

anthropologist, whose work on Muslim women who formed piety groups in Stuttgart, Germany

gives us insight to the habit breaking power of ritual space. The work a ritual space does on the

believer's habits is illustrated by the story Kuppinger tells of Amna, the child of a Spanish-

Pakistani family who had not been religious. The context of this incident is that Amna had only

"reverted" back to Islam three years ago and was considered a novice who "with the help of this

group, her friends, and some older women… was internalizing a proper pious subjectivity"

(Kuppinger 2015, 94).

> [At the mosque] Amna, one of the older girls, got up and said she would bring chairs
> from a classroom… One minute later she returned, all out of breath, without a chair and
> reported to her friends: 'Imagine, I ran into the classroom and there was a man in the
> room. So I quickly ran away without a chair.' The group decided that it must have either
> been one of the men doing renovation work, or somebody involved in the administration

of the children's Islamic study classes. A little later another girl went back, and as the man had left, she retrieved some chairs" (Ibid).

Without understanding the role of ritual, this story might provide a paradox to the naïve observer of this incident. Living in Germany, Amna went to public school and encountered strange men all the time there and on public transportation, why was this situation different? The mosque is a ritual space where to be alone in a room with an unrelated male is against the ethos of the space. We should not think of these women's lives a schizophrenic, hypocritical or inauthentic when they act one way in public and another in mosque. Instead we need to do as Puett and Asad suggest and see what work the mosque as ritual space does for these women's character. As a novice, a person still training herself in piety, Amna needs the sheltering space that the mosque provides in order to serve as an experimental training space for her pious practice (Kuppinger 2015, 123).

Section 5 – An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Virtue Ethics

But we should not take this account of ritual space as a separating of everyday life from ritual. As I argued in Section 3, *sharia* is a comprehensive system encompassing all aspects of life including the most apparently trivial details and ritual. Chinese philosophy gives us another kind of vocabulary on the importance of ritual in everyday life. In order to gain mastery over social situations in a robust moral community, there must be a mastery over the rituals of everydayness. If our everydayness has such a profound effect on our character, as the situationist challenge argues, then we must further explore where we spend most of our life and the power of the micropractices that sustain our shared sociality. But this heightening of the everyday means "we are rarely off the moral clock [and so] the thoughtless gesture, the ungenerous tone, the social slight—all have moral significance" (Olberding 2016, 427).

Section 5.1 – Virtue and the Possibility of Training One's Affect

I started in the first chapter by showing that affect can be scaffolded in the environment. Here I quickly want to give an example to show that it is possible to manipulate one's moods using scaffolded affect. There is a sizeable literature on academic cheating. The studies are worrying in that it looks as if a large number of students are cheating, that it has been getting worse over the years and that many of the students do not view what they are doing as serious. Miller reports that three recent studies report that the average rate of cheating among students in college was 70%, 86% and 60% respectively. Self-reported cheating has gone up from 23% in the 1940s to 84% (but only 3% of students self-report that they were caught). Finally, in one of these studies, only 5% considered cheating serious. (Miller 2014, 63)

All the experiments I talk about below involved roughly the same kind of test: Two groups were given a mathematical quiz that was timed such that it would be very hard to complete all the questions and for each correct answer they would get a small amount of money. One group, the control group, was told that an external person would come around and grade their work and then pay them. The second group was instructed to grade their own work and then put the test in a paper shredder and report their score such that there would be no consequences if they reported an incorrect score. The outcome was that those who self-reported their scores reported almost double the average score (13.2) of the control group (7.9).[36]

Social psychologists thought of ways of curbing this behaviour by engineering moods of guilt. One experiment run by Nina Mazar made a control group write down the names of ten random books and a group that wrote down the ten commandments before a test. This study

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[36] Miller makes the point that only one person in the self reporting group cheated for the maximum amount. This is interesting since if one decided to inflate one's score, as many of the participants clearly had, why would you not maximize your money? Miller argues that people cheat as much as it hits up against their self conceptions of themselves as good people. If they skim rather than take all the money, they still feel like they are good people.

showed a 50% drop in cheating by the group that wrote down the ten commandments from the control group and the group that wrote down ten random books (Miller 2014, 66). An older trick used in 1976 involved the non control group participant to be facing a mirror such that every time the person looked up, they saw themselves during a test. Here only 7% of the non control group cheated. Another social science experiment tested what many schools have tried. They instructed one group of the study to read over an honour code before doing the quiz and another group to read over and then sign that same honour code. The group that read over the honour code, only 30% cheated while more dramatically, of those in the group that signed the honour code, only one person from that group cheated. Even when the reward went up by four times the amount, the results remained the same (Miller 2014, 68).

Two things can be established from this. Changing people's mood through changing the situation is effective and secondly, this kind of engineering can be done with many different affects. But how would this work in everyday life? There are of course very simple ways each of us, both in the short term and long term, can take advantage of the affect shaping force of situations. One can in the short term avoid negative situations, such as not going to a bar if one is an alcoholic (Sarkissian 2010, 3). Going to environments that can shape one's mood in the correct way also takes advantage of the habit breaking power of the ritual space explored in the previous section. A longer-term solution against the way that moods can work insidiously, behind our backs, is to more permanently "terraform" the normative environment with others. For instance, Bryce Huebner argues that this kind of intervention into the environment, by making the world more gender and racially just, is the best, long term solution to implicit bias (2016). This second, more long-term solution, brings up a further point that must be kept in mind, that people do not simply react to external situations, but also shape situations through

variables we ourselves introduce (Sarkissian 2010, 2). This can produce a feedback loop. This looping happens as a relation between the individual and the environment. If we intervene on the environment, the environment will then change but this change will change the individual who is changing the environment who will then change how they change the environment etc.

But for this affective looping effect to begin, there needs to be a certain amount of bootstrapping from the individual. Our senses are bombarded by outside stimuli so there must be a baseline of receptivity so that there can be a separation of signal from the noise of endless stimuli. Aristotle has an interesting metaphor linking his requirement, that one must react with appropriate feeling for an action to be virtuous and the need for the acquisition of bodily pathos. He argues this affect acquisition is like getting a tan. This metaphor casts emotions as much more bodily and less cognitive than for instance Martha Nussbaum portrayed in Chapter 1. Against this cognitive account, this metaphor also expresses the passivity of affect in three ways. The first way is to point to the fact that we are reliant on something in the environment that needs to be present in order to react and acquire the affect; courage can never be acquired if we are never in the situation of danger or fear. In the same way, without the sun, without the right environment, we do would never get ruddier skin (Oele 2012, 21). The second way is that we must endure this condition for a while under the sun to acquire a tan. In the same way, we must endure a certain affect in order to be properly receptive to the affect, to feel it appropriately and therefore react to it properly (Oele 2012, 20). Going back to the complicated emotion of courage, to acquire the correct amount of fear is to neither be a coward nor foolhardily brash. In order to do this, a person might have to go through a number of battles or continue to be exposed to conditions of fear in order to adjust and fine tune one's affective reaction through experience. Finally when we have been exposed to the sun quite a bit, the sun's effect on our skin, while

temporary, stays with us for some time and we do not have control over this and must wait until enough layers of tanned skin slough off for our original skin colour to return. With enough tanning or exposure to the sun over a lifetime, the tan may never leave us. The same can be said of exposure to an affect, if I am frightened suddenly, that mood will stay with me until the adrenaline drains from my body. But also, if I am terrorized over a lifetime or early in my life when my baseline emotions are just forming, my entire character could change to be (and reasonably so) cautious.

In the previous chapter, I described a developmental account of emotion where as a child we begin by associating positive affect with satiation and negative affect with not having food or our visceral needs. When one experiences loss and this coincides with a certain gut and visceral interoception, this is what sadness is to you which you then tune when you have different kinds of loss, loss of one's pet becomes separate from the loss of your favourite childhood toy and different from the devastation of the loss of a parent. The important take away from that section for this chapter is that our affects are tuned through experience and that we can take a more active stand on our own emotions by training them. Our emotions are cognitive because they are in some ways "Bayesian". This is because our emotions give quick weights to our decision process based on how we felt previously to similar situations. If we expose ourselves and endure certain experiences mindfully, we can, like a habit, train and tune our affects. Of course, we are not completely affectively "plastic." Sometimes we have traumatic experiences which puts a permanent and in many ways warped weight in feeling certain emotions. Also, certain environmental situations are permanently out of our control.

Recall from Chapter 1, my use of Colombetti and Kreuger's (2014) work on externalizing and scaffolding affect in the material environment around us. We use the sensory-scape around

us all the time, each sense can generate certain affects: listening to music for hearing, eating comfort food for taste, putting on an old, warn out sweater for its tactile properties and we should not forget the strong connection of smell and memory. This scaffolding can be used to train the affects by creating ritual spaces in places that might not have previously held the correct affective stimulation for virtue. In the final two sections of Section 5, I will give examples from the ethnography of the women's *dawa* movement of ways this group trains their affects. First, in the next section, by describing Charles Hirschkind's description of the "Islamic soundscape" as an example of scaffolding affect through the sense of hearing throughout the urban environment so that the large parts of the city can become ritualized space. In the final section I will show how affect is like habit and is inculcated by the pious Muslim women of Mahmood's ethnography through pretending to weep at the end of prayer.

Section 5.2 – Affective Scaffolding and the Islamic Soundscape

The urban soundscape is a kind of aural background that we rarely notice but that Hirschkind claims we can attune ourselves to. As one walks through Cairo, one can hear sermons leaking out from standing taxis, open windows of passing cars, windows of houses where someone is doing the dishes, and wafting out the open and closing doors of corner stores. This is a much different soundscape than one would experience walking through downtown Montreal. This is how many Muslims integrate Islamic virtue practices into every sphere of their lives.

What we must grasp, according to Hirschkind, is *not* the content of the arguments made in the sermons. Instead, these cassette sermons "provide a sonorous environment where the nourishing, transformative power of ethical speech works to improve the conditions of one's 'heart', fortifying the moral sensibilities that, in accord with Islamic ethical traditions, incline

toward right actions… these moments of audition are understood to contribute, if in qualitatively distinct ways, to the honing of an ethically responsive sensorium: the requisite sensibilities that many of those engaging in cassette-sermon listening see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities" (Hirschkind 2006, 10). As Noah Salomon describes about his experience in the Sudan, "other urban sites as well, such as the bus, the store, and the street, become not distractions from ritual duties performed at the right time and in the right place, but new spaces where ritual can take place, so that one's day is suffused with remembrance of God and the Prophet" (Salomon 2016, 167). But for the sermon to affect the person, she must be trained in the right way to listen to these sermons, she must be attuned emotionally. Let us contrast an untrained ear with a cultivated ear.

Hirschkind met many Egyptians and foreigners who had not cultivated a pious ear, who would comment that "upon hearing the voice of a *khatib* coming from the loudspeaker of a neighborhood mosque or from a cassette recorder at a local store experienced a certain physical or emotional discomfort… 'It's scary walking by a mosque on Friday when the preacher is raging away, filling the minds of those people with wild fears about the tortures of hell… All of these bearded men crying and shouting 'Allah' - I'm always half-expecting them to jump up [out of the speaker] and come running after me" (Hirschkind 2006, 17-18). To the untrained ear this wasn't just noise, but angry noise that put them in a fearful affective mood such as when one is accosted aggressively on the street by someone menacing.[37] But after many months listening along with his subjects of study, he too came to be attuned to the sermons and "came to appreciate the unique musicality of sermon discourse, with its crescendos, andantes, and sotto voce passages, performed not only by the *khatib* but by the listener as well" (Hirschkind 2006, 13). He realized

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[37] For more on the racialization of the Islamic aural sensorium see Shenila Khoja-Moolji's *The sounds of racialized masculinities: examining the affective pedagogies of Allahu Akbar*

that this musicality was not an epiphenomenal, aesthetic gloss. We cannot separate the category

of the religious from the aesthetic. The aesthetic is important to this pious training because these

people are not just training themselves in a different way to *do* things, but in retraining

themselves to *feel* differently. We can start to see that these sermons are not about bringing

propositional arguments to sway someone toward a particular reading of the Qu'ran, but instead

a way of changing and then attuning one's affect so that one can gain the appropriate feeling.

Training oneself and cultivating a "sensitive heart" (Hirschkind 2006, 9) is a way of

transforming and tuning one's body out of bad, unconscious habits. When one hears that one can

sin unconsciously (or in the Aristotelian version, be vicious without choosing to) one might

despair for the individual. But it is with the Islamic sensorium as a tool that the pious individual

targets both conscious and unconscious viciousness just as Huebner claims changing the

normative environment would target implicit biases.

Section 5.3 – Scaffolding Affect and Habits in Others

Affective scaffolding is not just done to the material environment but also to one's

community. In Chapter 1, I went over the Aristotelian notion of friendship and that one aspect of

friendship was the reciprocal shaping of each other's character. Self-transformation into a pious

virtuoso is never done alone. Situations alone do not have a one-way arrow, only affecting our

behaviour but we influence situations just as much as they influence us. According to Hargop

Sarkissian, this fact has a normative weight. He claims that "just as we should mind how others

are partly responsible for our own behavior, so too should we be mindful of how we are partly

responsible for the behavior of others" (Sarkissian 2010, 5). If something as small as finding a

dime or smelling Cinnabon can enable and expedite helping behaviour, then surely our pleasant

or unpleasant day to day dealings with other people have an outsized affect on other lives going well. The realization that others affect our mood thrusts upon us a responsibility of reciprocity. Of making sure the situation for others is congenial to virtuous actions for the reason we would hope that others would do the same for us.

There is a famous hadith[38]: a good friend is like a perfume seller. If you hang around them long enough, even without trying, you will come out smelling good, the musk will hang around you. While a bad friend is like a blacksmith. If you hang around them long enough you might get your clothes singed or at the very least you will smell like smoke and burning from their bellows[39]. From this we can see how important it is in Islam to surround yourself with good people. They can either drag your character down or just by being around them, bootstrap your virtue. Ancient Chinese philosophy adds to our vocabulary when thinking about the influence of friends on character. A community of people with good character can whittle away at greed, envy and self-justifying illusion and so who we consider friends is critical. This is because for Xunzi, "we *mo* 靡, 'rub' against others in numerous ways each day, who subtly polish us into virtue or abrade us into vice. We absorb the words and conduct of those around us without even realizing it" (Stalnakar 2007, 167).

For both Sarkissian and Nancy Sherman, this calls for a focus on the "aesthetics of character and conduct." It is not just *what* we do but *how* we do it and how we appear to others that matters ethically. A culture's way of mundane everyday polite comportment is not just a decorative adornment to their character (Sherman 2005, 60). Sherman emphasizes through all of our collective manners and interpersonal attitudes, that pleasant looks and gestures are the very

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[38] Pedagogical stories told by Prophet Muhammad
[39] Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Hadith 314

glue that binds communities and society together (2005, 69). It is not just one grand gesture but a habit of reiterative virtuous acts that weave the fabric of community. Sarkissian highlights the interconnectedness of all our social behaviour. Even minor changes in the manifestation of our comportment such as our facial expressions, posture, tone of voice (Sarkissian 2010, 2) could lead to a form of ethical bootstrapping (Sarkissian 2010, 12) that could help ratchet everyone in that group toward joint ethical ends. Sarkissian emphasizes the profound ways we can influence each other's character and so "the gentleman is able to effect changes in others by attending to aspects of his own comportment" (2010, 8) to the point that other's would be literally transformed by a virtuoso's presence (2010, 9).

We can see this effect of virtue on those with less virtue with a story Mahmood relates about Abir who transformed herself into a pious individual and her relationship to her husband Jamal who has a vicious character. There is great tension between them: Jamal refuses to pray, drinks alcohol, loves X-rated movies, berates her ambitions in the *dawa* group and even threatens to take another wife and divorce her. Yet it is Abir's virtuosity with strategic help from her *dawa* group that wins out in the end. Abir meets Jamal's tactics with strategic grace. She "killed him with kindness", leads prayers in the house herself, and made sure she did her wifely duties before going out to do her *dawa* work so that he could not fault her. She also used her training in Islamic knowledge to critique Jamal's practice and embarrass him by taking the moral high ground. As Mahmood relates it, "all of [Abir's] strategies eventually had a cumulative effect on Jamal and, even though he never stopped pressuring Abir to abandon her studies at the *dawa* institute, the intensity with which he did so declined. He even started to pray more regularly, and to visit the mosque occasionally with her. More importantly for Abir, he stopped indulging his taste for alcohol and X-rated films at home" (Mahmood 2005, 178).

This link to becoming better at virtue applies especially to smaller groups such as the *dawa* group. Paying attention to the aesthetics of conduct and character can turn many places that might be inauspicious for the flourishing of virtue into a ritualized space much like the mosque in section 4.1. We can take the example of the person kicking the habit of alcohol but that is forced to go to a bar because of a job. This normally might be disastrous for breaking the habit of alcohol, but if the person goes with different people who go there to play darts and pool and only drink soda or milk, the space of the bar can be changed from a vicious trigger to transforming to a place where associations of bars and alcohol are weened away slowly. Agnes Callard argues that other people are especially important for the "aspirant." Aspirants are amateurs in a self-transformative process who are before the stage of knowing what they want in the self-transformation or even who they might become. Callard argues that the aspirant "reaches out to others for help in grasping what she wants. Tales of aspirational self-creation will, of course, feature the aspirant in a starring role, but they also lean heavily on a host of supporting players: teachers, mentors, (supportive!) parents, schools, advisers. Everyone relies on the care and love of the people around them, but aspirants rely on the people around them to care about and love the things they themselves are struggling to come to care about and love" (2017, 199).

There are, of course, obvious cognitive, epistemological and pedagogical advantages that support groups give to people who are learning something like fitness, weight-training, becoming a vegetarian, etc. We see this advantage among *dawa* groups from Germany to France to Egypt. Petra Kuppinger describes the routines at the meetings of the *dawa* group she studied. Both before the main, formal lesson, in discussions among the women themselves they would negotiate minute details of their daily lives such as what food items do or might include miniscule quantities of haram substances (Kuppinger 2015, 89). "No question is too simple to be

asked in this group. Questions range from grand theological questions (what is the way to paradise?), to how to pray correctly (is my prayer invalid if I picked up my child in the middle of the prayer?), to local cultural questions ("should my husband eat the non-halal meat at my mother's?"), to everyday issues (can women who do not cover their hair dye their hair?) and consumer questions (is the salami on the pizzas in Turkish restaurants really halal?)" (Kuppinger 2015, 93). Jeanette S. Jouili, an anthropologist who studied *dawa* groups in France, emphasizes that many times, the reason women joined these groups was to be able to ask questions that they had not been able to resolve on their own about applying Islam to their everyday lives (2015, 34). But soon friendships would develop because these women were all trying to transform themselves, which motivated these women not only to continue coming regularly to these groups but also helped them apply these techniques in their own everyday lives.

Beyond simply trading information, tips, tricks and methods of being virtuous in the face of mundane, everyday challenges, I want to claim that just like the Islamic soundscape, this *dawa* group also scaffolds affect. A good example is that these women would specifically select *dawa* groups whose female leaders and preachers stirred pious emotions (Jouili 2015, 42). The learning experience was expected to create emotions that would serve as the foundation on which faith was to be constructed. After beginning their journey to become more pious individuals alone, many women who had gone down the road of this religious journey told Jouili that the group was not just an added benefit, but a necessary part of piety. As one woman put it "the path to God is traveled in a group" (Jouili 2015, 44).

Finally, I want to show that becoming virtuous is also about making sure that at the very least, one's everyday mundane relations are not holding one back. Not all stories end like Abir and Jamal's, where the virtuous person brings up the less virtuous person. For an amateur, being

held down by the less virtuous can be disastrous. Think again of the person who has decided to no longer drink alcohol being forced to go to a bar. A drinking culture whose social capital is grabbing a pint at least once a week and is suspicious of those who don't drink could easily lead the person trying to quit drinking down a bender at any time because their habits and affects are very tenuous at the stage they are at. Two anecdotes help illustrate this.

Kuppinger tells the story of Susanne-Samiha, a lapsed Christian who married Enver, a semi-practicing Muslim. Susanne-Samiha converts to Islam for the sake of the marriage but over the years begins a path toward further piety. This comes to a climax in 2006 with her return from hajj[40]. She begins to don the headscarf and now feels the work she wants to do on herself can only happen with changes to aspects in her life, especially her marriage. "'I wanted to have a partner who also lived a Muslim life.' With her husband's deteriorating behavior ('he spent his life in bars, with friends or cars'), she felt they had little left in common. Triggered by one especially outrageous incident, she separated from Enver soon after. Subsequently, she wholeheartedly plunged into Islamic activities" (Kuppinger 2015, 84).

Mahmood tells another story of a meeting of the *dawa* group where a woman, still learning to be pious, asks a teacher what she should do with a husband who just will not come around to an Islamic lifestyle. Knowing the hardship that women in Egypt face separating from a husband and the social mark it leaves on women, the problems of getting custody and the economic hardships, the teacher *still* advised divorce. Her reasons are important to the point I am making. The teacher argued, "'Of course – what else can you do? Live with a sinning husband, raise your children in a sinful atmosphere – who will then grow up to be like him? How can you be obedient to God if you are living with a man like this?' She continued, 'If it was only a matter

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[40] the Muslim ritual of going to Mecca once in one's life

of him being harsh with you, or having a rough temperament, then you could have endured it. But this is something you cannot be patient about or forebear" (Mahmood 2005, 186).

Section 5.4 – Training Affect Through Prayer

In Islamic prayer, the movement of going from standing to kneeling to putting one's forehead to the ground can also become a training in affect control. Cressida Heyes makes this connection of the biological body and affect when discussing yoga. She argues, "one never knows, exactly, how one will be trans-formed by yoga. Contra the popular image of gentle, calming stretches, some poses fill me with burning rage. On an intensive teacher-training course, I experienced innumerable rounds of violent sobbing and a profound sense of grief when holding certain 'trigger' poses deeply and for a long time… It was only through a bodily practice that I could address some inexplicable, deeply rooted emotional nexus." (2007, 129) Shannon Sullivan recounts a similar experience by Michael Lee, a master yoga therapist, who during a triangle pose, a relatively simple posture that is suitable for beginners, began to weep as the muscle and tension in his hips began to stretch (2015, 29).

Prayer is a virtuous action and thus needs to be accompanied by the correct emotion for it to be done right. If we take Heyes and Sullivan's story as examples, kinesthetic bodily action can trigger emotions. But sometimes an affect fails to inhere in a person. The idea of training our affects clashes with many contemporary intuitions that one should not fake one's emotions. That to do so involves an inappropriate theatricality and that training and shaping one's emotions is a kind of self-deceit, blocking you from self-knowledge of who you authentically are and what you want. Authentic emotions come only from the inside and manifest themselves, unconstrained by

norms from the outside. But, in the virtue ethics paradigm, one works on bringing about feelings until they become part of one's second nature.

Among the *dawa* group studied by Mahmood, weeping when one's head touches the floor during prayer was sign of virtuosity (2005, 129). Some people may feel the significance of bowing in humility and submission to God such that the action may "naturally" trigger weeping, but for most, help and support were needed from the *dawa* group in order to train their feelings. The women in the *dawa* group often encouraged each other to imagine the razor thin edge of the right path which hung over pit of torment, some others describe invoking the sublime by thinking of God's immense power compared to their own insignificance (Mahmood 2005, 130). But weeping is very much a strong visceral reaction and sometimes merely trying to coax the emotion from within is not possible. Like traditional virtue ethics, the amateur is encouraged to follow the example of an excellent character, in this case, weeping was the action of Abu Bakr, a companion of the prophet Muhammad and the first Caliph. "Many of the mosque participants believed that to emulate Abu Bakr's habit of weeping during prayers was not wrong precisely because it was through this mimetic reproduction that one eventually came to acquire the moral character of the exemplar" (Mahmood 2005, 148). Especially for the amateur working on their piety, the inner feeling of crying every time one prays might not come from within and so the weeping is sometimes outwardly simulated to bootstrap the affect. This practice of pretending to cry until one becomes excellent enough to spontaneously cry is not new, but a contemporary iteration in the long history of training the affects in Islamic virtue ethics.

As Elizabeth Bucar argues, this practice of simulation goes as far back as the first Muslim virtue ethicist, Ibn Miskawayh. For him, "a 'good heart' does not necessarily need to precede physical actions as part of the cultivation of character. In this view, the idea that one might need

to 'fake it until you make it' is not ethical insincerity but, rather, a natural part of the process of character formation" (Bucar 2015, 203). The specific affect one is supposed to cultivate during prayer is *huzn* or "sorrow". *Huzn*, it must be emphasized, is one of those words that are so pregnant with meaning from the history and culture the concept comes from that the polysemy cannot be so easily translated. In the context of prayer, *huzn* is an affective tenderness, a softening of the heart, linguistically connected with *saja* or literally, physically "choking up" because of emotion and finally a linguistic connection with *kushu* or awe inspired fear. Practicing *huzn* during prayer was always a part of Islamic inculcation of *adab*. As far back as the 10th century, al-Makki advised, "verily the Qu'ran was sent down with *huzn* so when you recite it *feign huzn*" which is echoed in the 15th century by al-Suyuti's advice, "so when you recite [*salat* or Quran] weep, and if you do not weep then *feign weeping*" (Nelson 2001, 91). The pious amateur sees their progress in training when they go from simulating weeping to it becoming more "natural"; until their attunement to the affect is such that they can weep "spontaneously" (Mahmood 2005, 130). All of this affective training builds robust skills and capacities to arm these women against the influence of inappropriate moods from the outside.

Section 5.5 – Further Transformative Uses of Prayer

Both Mahmood and Hirschkind tap into Qu'ran recitation and *salat* (mandatory prayer) as paradigmatic of the training of someone's moral physiology. Prayer is often thought of as an unmediated, one to one conversation with God. Asad asks us to conceptualize *salat* as communal, a basic practice for Muslims and therefore a duty and end in itself, but also (importantly for me) a tool for self-transformation. One becomes more pious as one becomes more of a virtuoso by simply getting better at *salat*. Praying five times a day, on time and

emotionally in the right way is not natural and must be taught. Prayer is one of the most basic elements of piety, one that if you are still struggling with, it is tough to continue onward to self-transformation into an expert. But as I have shown, there are ways to train such that one becomes so accustomed to the act of prayer five times a day "that when one does not pray one feels just as uncomfortable as when one forgets to eat: at this stage, the act of prayer has attained the status of an almost *physiological need* that is fulfilled without conscious reflection" (Mahmood 2005, 139). Part of what the timings and rituals necessary to pray do is change the person who prays' relation to time and therefore to habit. Prayer completely cuts up the day differently such that the day must be planned around this new multinoded centrifugal force. This can break and make new habits in a profound and wide scale. A student of mine reflected how becoming a weightlifter as a woman changed her relation to how her day was scheduled. In order to truly dedicate herself to her new craft, she had to change her relation to food and when she ate and what she ate. The different muscles that needed to be worked also meant that she had to plan around her work out at a certain time. When she was an aspirant and amateur she would stop working out during exam time but as she transformed and took on the identity of weight lifter and formed community, she began to truly relate the notion of feeling biological pangs when she didn't work out on time one day and therefore integrated the work out even during exam time.

Susanne-Semiha, whose story we left at the point when she divorced her husband in order to pursue a more pious life, describes in her own words how radically her life changed in order to integrate prayer and the rituals that go along with it into her daily routine. She speaks as someone who before the transformation into a pious person might have mourned the disruptiveness of having to pray five times a day on her work and social life, but who now, no longer an aspirant but more masterful, finds comfort in how these new habits have inhered in her.

In addition, the five daily prayers have become very important for me; which considerably shapes my everyday life, and I plan my daily program accordingly. I schedule my lunch break of two hours in a way that I can perform the mid-day prayer in a relaxed manner… In the evening I make sure that I perform the evening prayer on time, which then partially decides my evening activities. For example, if I go out I make sure that I can pray wherever I am, and how/where I can do the ritual washing. Shopping trips or visits to the movie theater are of little interest to for me at this point. I do not miss these things. Even so to perform the washing and prayer are easy and unproblematic, I noticed that I have become more of a home body, although I spent many evenings in the mosque or at Islamic meetings (here washing and praying are unproblematic). I don't feel that my new daily schedule with the five prayers is in any way limiting. On the contrary I would miss something basic or existential if I did not search out this daily connection to my Creator (Kuppinger 2015, 84).

Section 5.6 – Prayer as Epistemological Heuristic

The final note of this Section is that in this contemporary Islamic virtue ethics, prayer also plays an epistemological role. It gives a heuristic self-knowledge, a bellwether of how one's training in piety is going. The ease of remembering and naturalness of praying or the ability to truly concentrate and weep when one presses one's head to the floor is a kind of synecdoche for the entire process of training one is undergoing. One illustration of what I mean by needing a heuristic that tells you how you are doing comes from a colleague. This colleague realized that at the end of the month when she took account of her mental health and how she was doing, she found that it was already too late to realize that she was doing poorly. She realized she needed a new way of knowing whether she was doing alright for two reasons. The first was that looking back and using that distance of time to take a step back and be more objective was deleterious of her ability to work and function. She also a worried that she might let her life become so bad because she had no way to realize she had taken a downward turn, mentally during the fact, but only in retrospect. The second reason was that during the month, introspection was not effective. She just assumed she was alright because part of the problem was her feelings were not

transparent to herself. My colleague made a discovery about herself and turned this discovery

into a heuristic in order to plan better for her mental health. She realized she was fine mentally

when she could make the effort to take her laundry and leave her house to go to the laundromat.

This was a shorthanded way and not necessarily linked to something we would assume had

something to do with mental health like eating and sleeping habits. Instead she could tell after a

few days of putting off laundry that maybe it was time to re-evaluate her mental health. Prayer in

the *dawa* group serves the same heuristic function.

Mahmood demonstrates this with an ethnographic anecdote. In response to a younger

member of the *dawa* group that was having trouble waking up for prayer and also trouble

concentrating during prayer, Mona, the teacher, asked her,

> What is it that annoys you the most in your life?' The young woman answered that her
> sister fought with her a lot, and this bothered her and made her angry most days. Mona
> replied, 'You, for example, can think of God when your sister fights with you and not
> fight back with her because He commands us to control our anger and be patient… You
> will begin to notice that if you say the morning prayer, it will also make your daily affairs
> easier, and if you don't pray it will make them hard… Performing the morning prayer
> should be like the things you can't live without: for when you don't eat… you get the
> feeling that you must do this (2005, 125).

Here, ordinary tasks in daily life are made to attach to the performance of consummate

worship. "Notably, when Mona links the ability to pray to the vigilance with which one conducts

the practical chores of daily living, all mundane activities such as getting angry with one's sister,

the things one hears and looks at, the way one speaks become a place for securing and honing

particular moral capacities" (Mahmood 2005, 126). Thus, prayer and virtue form a feedback

loop: only the eradication of worldly desires can enable truly rapt and joyful prayer, and only the

earnest cultivation of focus in prayer can help to eradicate one's worldly desires (Katz 2013, 61).

In the classical Islamic sources, Ibn Taymiya makes the link of prayer, to mundane acts by

arguing that how distracted one is bodily and how one feels emotionally during prayer is a good

indicator and diagnostic of how one is progressing on the path to virtuoso piety (Katz 2013, 65).

Marion Katz, in her systematic study of Prayer in Islam, concludes that "in the eyes of classical

scholars… ideal prayer comprises both rule-bound correctness and emotional depth. However,

even the most punctiliously accurate and spiritually profound act of *salat* does not constitute

perfect prayer unless it transforms the life of the believer" (2013, 70).

Section 6 – Can We Avoid Every Bad Situations?

In the previous section I went through the ethnography the women's *dawa* movement

from around the world to show a coherent, contemporary Islamic virtue ethic that takes on the

challenges of the micro-situationist problem by integrating worries about how mood can

unknowingly affect our behaviour. In this section I conclude by looking at a critique of

situationism from virtue ethics. I then show the part the Muslim headscarf plays in overcoming

this problem.

John Doris, author of the seminal situationist challenge to virtue ethics, *Lack of

Character* argues the lesson of situationism normatively is "by attending to the determinative

features of situations. We should try, so far as we are able, to avoid 'near occasions for sin' —

ethically dangerous circumstances. At the same time, we should seek near occasions for happier

behaviors — situations conducive to ethically desirable conduct" (Doris 2002, 147). Doris gives

the example of the character trait of fidelity. Say a colleague who has a history of flirtation with

you invites you to dinner while your spouse is out of town. Doris argues that what we've learned

from the Milgram experiment is that under the right conditions we are too confident of our

virtues and what we have learned from the mood studies is that we can be influenced by small

things. We can go back to my example in the previous section of the alcoholic who avoids

vicious friends and avoids bars. "You do not doubt that you sincerely value fidelity; you simply doubt your ability to act in conformity with this value once the candles are lit and the wine begins to flow. Relying on character once in the situation is a mistake, you agree; the way to achieve the ethically desirable result is to recognize that situational pressures may all too easily overwhelm character and avoid the dangerous situation. I don't think it wild speculation to claim that this is a better strategy than dropping by for a 'harmless' evening, secure in the knowledge of your righteousness" (ibid).

The critique from virtue ethics to this situationist solution is a practical worry. Sarkissian brings up three reasons why just simply avoiding situations is not feasible in day to day living. The first is that it is often hard to know in advance if a situation will be a good situation or bad one. Michael Brownstein gives the example that if you are quitting smoking, you may not know whether to avoid a party or not since you might not know ahead of time if people at the party smoke (2016, 225). Secondly, since what might trigger your vice in a situation can be both small and it might work behind our conscious back, there are too many variables to calculate what effect a situation will have on us. Brownstein again gives a clever example of an ex-smoker and a party, that even though there might be smokers at the party, the presence of a colleague recovering from lung cancer might in fact turn this situation of vice to a situation where one's character becomes better and one's commitment to quitting strengthens. (ibid) Finally, some situations and relationships are just unavoidable. "I may regularly grow irritable around my in-laws, but it may be impossible, given family politics and the desires of those I love, to steer clear of them for the rest of my life" (Sarkissian 2010, 5).

Section 6.1 – The Muslim Headscarf as Travelling Mood Shaper

In this section I argue that the Muslim veil itself is a portable mood enhancer and ritualized space. This overcomes the worries that one cannot just avoid vicious situations. If the situation cannot be brought to you, Muslim women bring the positive situation with them. If small mood triggers in the environment or relationship with others cause such outsized changes in behaviour, we must also remember that they can be counteracted with small and simple strategies of scaffolding affect. At the start of Section 5 I showed that rampant cheating could be curbed with some simple tactics such as reading the ten commandments, signing an honour code or just having a mirror present. In the same way, we should not take the simplicity of a cloth covering over one's head, neck and hair as not important to character training. When attuned, our senses can change our moods dramatically, think of the work the Islamic soundscape does. Think also of the reason we will wear an old comfortable sweater when we need some emotional care: it's tactile familiarity changes us. As Miller argues, the intensity of the mood needed to make a temporary change in our behaviour does not have to be that strong. These are mood triggers we are in contact with on a daily basis without giving them a second thought (Miller 2009, 151).

In their own words, women who wear the veil, whether it is a hijab or a full veil like a niqab, attach a strong affect to the covering. These women use words like piety and modesty but also strong emotions like "pride", "elation" and "ecstasy" to the feeling of wearing the veil. (Bouteldja 2011, 43) As Anna Piela relates in her ethnography of women who wear the full niqab in the UK, some said the niqab made them feel spiritually protected: "I feel more empowered. I feel far more confident. Even when I'm having a bad day… But when I walk out the door [with the niqab on], every day is a good day" (2019, 11). These women also recognize that the headscarf is for training their character, "the niqab is inspired by pious disposition *and*

helps cultivate it by creating a particular emotive state" (Piela 2019, 12). Finally, these women realize that the materiality of veiling is a large part of why it is so effective. Another woman who moved from the hijab to the niqab poetically articulates that, "the niqab is a way of coming closer to Allah. It means that every day I carry my religion with me: even though I have it in my heart, even if I have it in my head, even if I have it in my bag as I carry the Quran with me, I also carry it on my face, right up to my face because I'm looking for the face of Allah." (Bouteldja 2011, 43)

The pious women in the *dawa* movement enact modesty and piety wherever they go by wearing a veil. There are two things I argue the veil does. The first is that the veil, over time, literally turns the veiled woman's body more modest. This happens as the veil becomes more entrenched into her body schema such that taking it off in public would physiologically not feel right. The second is, that even as the veil is turning into a second skin, the woman who veils does not take this veil for granted. At those moments she realizes she is wearing a veil, the woman who veils remembers throughout her day her transformative project. She does not scaffold the environment to change herself, instead it is as though she is already always carrying around a pre-scaffolded environment to take her through places that may be inimical to her transforming her habits.

The reader might find it strange to think of clothing as becoming part of the body since, as Alia Al-Saji comments, clothing is often seen as an artificial envelope that can be removed to reveal a "natural", biological body. What this construal of the situation misses is the way in which clothing constitutes a bodily extension that cannot be removed without transforming one's bodily sense of self. "Through habituation, clothing is no longer felt as an object apart from the lived body, but comes to form an integrated part of one's body schema... such extensions

affectively and kinaesthetically transform and recast one's sense of bodily space (as well as one's body image). The limits of one's body are felt not at the skin, but at the surface and edges of the clothing one wears, redefining one's sense of 'here'" (Al-Saji 2010a, 890). With this knowledge, we must take seriously, and not assume that it is hyperbole, when we read about a Quebec woman who states when asked how she would feel if legislation forced her to take off her veil: "ce n'est pas banal... ça fait partie intégrante de moi... Si on me l'enlève, c'est comme si on m'amputait."[41]

As Jouili argues, women who veil in France put in a lot of work to imbue the tactility of the veil with the strength of affect to help them change their habits. Jouili goes on to describe the use of the veil in training: "sitting, walking, talking, or laughing in a modest fashion all became the object of conscious self-training… For hijab-wearing women, the headscarf played a significant role in this effort… *Seeing* and *feeling* themselves veiled caused them to experience themselves differently, which in turn affected the way they walked, talked, gesticulated… the hijab's material quality, with its inherent sensory effects, matters" (2015, 84-85). To deny the collaboration of the veil with the woman's agency is to misconstrue the essence of the cognitive efficacy of material culture.

So in using a veil, Muslim women strike a bargain with their secular surroundings. They will go out into a possible infelicitous public world that actively works to break the naturalizing of their habits and rhythms[42] but they will also carry with them something that will nudge their

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[41] "It is not trivial… [The veil] is an integral part of me… If I were to remove it, it would be like an amputation." http://www.lapresse.ca/le-soleil/opinions/chroniqueurs/201309/19/01-4691194-vous-etes-comme-des-religieuses.php

[42] Jouili for instance goes into detail about the struggle that Muslims face in France and Germany in praying at the right time but also when at work and school, finding ritualized spaces in which to prayer. Often they cannot find places that can lead to the appropriate feelings they want such as closets or more public areas where there are prying and curious eyes (Jouili 2014)

affects and thoughts towards their goal. They face head on, rather than avoid situationally

dangerous places and contexts. With the veil, these women can be the best version of themselves

in that situation. One does not go into battle without appropriate armour, it does not make one

less courageous but in fact not rash and fool hardy.

Finally, I argue for the pedagogical benefits of the veil. Just like the mosque is a ritual

space, a place where felicitous habit and affect are scaffolded into the environment so that one

can safely work on and experiment with one's virtues, so I argue, it is the same with the veil.

Here, one's entire life experience can be training, safer in the knowledge that with the veil on,

with one's modesty protected, whatever moods and habitual dangers she faces will not be at their

strongest because she, with a positively pious mood enhancer, does not have to worry about

"falling off the wagon" into vice. The veil is a virtue buffer.

Section 7 – A Segue to Chapter 3

In this chapter I have given concrete examples of both the meso-level of phenomena that

I introduced in Chapter 1 while also giving an overview of the women's *dawa* movement, the

group that will be the central empirical driving force behind my inquiry into autonomy. While in

these last two chapters, part of my motivation was to highlight this meso-level as different from

the structural, I am not ignoring structural effects on autonomy such as socialization. In the next

section I turn to the problem of socialization. But Chapter 2 and 3 are not completely separate.

Just like I used virtue ethics to connect the individual to the meso-level, in the next chapter I will

be connecting the meso-level with the structural by continuing to use the framework of virtue

ethics; or maybe a better way of putting it, I will be using the framework of "virtue politics".

The second and third chapter also share a similar form of argument. The problem with the

traditional virtue ethics framing of the micro-situationist problem was that character was internal

and completely separate from the external, the immediate situation. And so the situation is framed as something that interferes with character. But we see, using the concept of affordances, that the situation, in fact, is partly constitutive of one's character. In the next chapter I argue that traditional virtue ethics (when they even decide to address the structural, political level's effect on character) frames character as internal and that socialization is external and antagonistic to being the author of one's character. Just as I used the concept of "affordances" to reconnect the situation to character in the micro-situationist problem, in the next chapter, I use Merleau-Ponty's concept of "Institution" to reconnect character not only to the person's socialization, but the influence of the larger past on a person. The social conditions of possibility for a person's preferences and goals are deeply shaped not only by the history of that society but also, on a smaller scale, their early development but also, on a larger scale, the biological history of their species.

All of this has implications for the conditions of possibility for both our very freedom, but also our autonomy. Much structuralist and post-structuralist feminist work eschews the very existence of autonomy as naïve and ignorant of the structural influence of society on us. So in this next chapter, it will be important to show both that our socialization influences us in important ways without losing focus on what we've learned in the first two chapters: that with skillful work on habituation and affect, individuals do have an impact, at the meso-level, on their own agency and freedom.

Chapter 3: Out of Luck:
The Conceptual Move to Merleau-Ponty's "Institution" to Think About Socialization

One of the important problems of feminist relational autonomy is to understand descriptively how certain people's autonomy can be hampered externally by oppression. One has no control over who one is born as and very little control over who one will become and therefore if one will have to face the force of oppression during their lifetime. Secondly, one of the hard problems is that in an oppressive society, people become socialized into not only accepting but embracing their nonautonomy and oppression. One part of the descriptive puzzle that I hope to wrestle with in this chapter is building concepts that can help to accurately and descriptively show what exactly the process of being socialized is before we figure out how to separate oppressive from non-oppressive socialization.

As we saw in the last two chapters, virtue ethics has a lot of tools to help us think through self-transformation, embodiment, habit, friendship, emotion, and character. Yet despite all this, virtue ethics has had a problem of having the conceptual tools to think about the link between the systematic, sociological, political structure, and the individualized ethical part. This is especially glaring when thinking about how oppression effects one's character and projects. Rather than abandon the concept of luck, Claudia Card and Lisa Tessman show that luck is a capacious concept that can make room for the work they want to do with it. They were the first to point out that natural luck had a randomness and force that was not blameworthy but that what this misses out on is the complexity of a society structured by multiple oppressions. This kind of oppression does not suggest anything natural or random, but a pattern to people's experiences. Card and Tessman first saw that "there is a difference between luck that is systemic and luck that is not" (Tessman 2005, 14).

The task of this chapter is to first show that within the history of virtue ethics, we can find the conceptual tools to help us think through how the structural affects the individual's character, and agency. I do this by starting concretely and showing why virtue ethicists and relational autonomy theorists should be worried about the effect of socialization by looking at the famous Milgram experiment. I then look at Aristotle's views on habituation and education. This embraces the force that society, socialization and our early development has over our character and what responsibility we have over shaping our character. In looking at Hegel's concept of second nature we can see not just that socialization has a partial and causal influence over who we are and what we can do as agents, but it has a constitutive role in setting the conditions of possibility of our characters and what we can do. Keeping in mind Card and Tessman's criticism, I then turn to look at work done on character luck to see if this concept can help us think through that part of character and also of our autonomy that is shaped by things completely out of our control. Pace Card and Tessman, I give three critiques of the conceptual use of luck and conclude that luck cannot do what I think feminists want it to do normatively and descriptively and should be abandoned. In the final few parts of this chapter, I argue that a more useful concept that could replace the concept of luck in this situation is Merleau-Ponty's Bergson inspired concept of "institution".

Section 1 – Milgram, Authority, Habit and the Problem of Socialization

The Milgram experiment is considered part of the situationist attack on the virtue ethics idea of character. Though there have been robust results, my problem with it is that it does not seem to be the same *kind* of attack. The other five experiments seem to be how situational, background and unrelated things change our behaviour, casting no causal role for our character.

The Milgram experiments instead involve the role of socialization to follow authority and how that might interfere with our virtues of compassion and justice. More generally it should make us question whether we have ownership over our character or whether it was always out of our hands through forces from our past. This seems more like the problem of character luck, which is the direction that this chapter will head. Regarding the final two chapters of this dissertation, it also brings up the worry for feminist relational autonomy theorists about the influence of "bad socialization" over our autonomy. Socialization is inescapable and sets the conditions of possibility for our being autonomous, yet one of the most controversial problems in the literature is whether socialization is only causal to our autonomy or constitutive of it. A second related problem is whether we can draw a clean line between good socialization and bad socialization, that hinders women's autonomy.

Before we can decide what bad socialization is, it is worth seeing the effects of socialization, which the Milgram experiments help us understand. After socialization, just the intimation of authority can make average people do terrible things to another human. From this, we can begin to see the worries one might have about socialization's influence on the autonomy of people in these experiments and in general. I would like to focus on some of the variations of the main experiment that concentrated on the authority of the scientists who politely prompted those in the experiment to continue electrocuting people.

I begin by contrasting two of the original experiments. In Experiment 3, the person who is doing the electrocution is put in the same room as the person getting electrocuted. It was assumed that moving from behind a screen to an unmediated situation would more strongly trigger the subject's compassion. The data shows that fewer people went to the highest electrocution setting, down from 65%. Yet, a surprising number, 40% of people, still went all the

way to the end of the experiment. Contrast this with when the person of authority was taken out

of the room and instead phoned in the prompt to keep electrocuting in Experiment 7. Compliance

went down dramatically to 20%. Qualitatively, many subjects lied over the phone and gave lower

shocks, some said over the phone that they were increasing the level of shocks but were really

giving the lowest level of shock. In other replications, this stayed consistent. My conclusion is

that attempts at triggering the compassion of individuals failed in comparison to results where

there was a variation in the authority of the person doing the prompting. Doris is puzzled by

replications where the victim's feedback is made more theatrical such as pounding the wall.

These theatrics did not change the obedience, it stayed at around 65% like the original results.

Even vigorous vocal protestations of a heart condition did not change obedience levels (Doris

2002, 187n47). Yet something that *did* influence obedience, in another replication, was the

delegitimization of the prompt's authority (Doris 2002, 189n58). Nancy Snow reports that on

other replications where two experimenters gave conflicting instructions, one telling them to

continue, one telling them to stop, *all of the subjects stopped*. Finally, in a variation where they

were just following written instructions to escalate, some subjects forcibly came to the victim's

aid (Snow 2010, 113).

Section 1.1 – Virtue Ethics Attempts to Explain the Results of the Milgram Experiments

The results of the Milgram experiments seem pretty damning for the idea that the average

person has any character, let alone good character. But virtue ethics does have a reply that I think

is convincing: virtuous people are a rare group. In the case of the Milgram experiment, 35%

stopped the experiment. But this is to be expected. As I talked about in Chapter 1, in the case of

typing, most people learn and practice just enough so that they can type at a comfortable 60

words per minute. Most do not put in the extra effort and grit required to continue to get faster

and better at typing because in daily life, they do not need to. I called this the "OK plateau." I

think we can extend the skill concept of the "OK plateau" to our understanding of virtue. Most

people learn ethics from their parents, teachers, peers, culture, and society. But they do not put in

the continued effort nor do they get the moral feedback necessary to continue to "progress" in

their character virtues. To function, really all society needs is people to minimally get along; I

am arguing that people are ethically stuck on the OK plateau. One might argue that another

value that must be inculcated into the individual so that society might reproduce itself is the

willingness to obey authority.[43]

At this point in my argument, I have to bring back James Bernard Murphy's notion of

"habit interference" from the previous chapter. When put in a situation where our OK Plateau

trained compassion comes into conflict with our stronger habits of following and trusting

authority, the latter habits surely interfere with our ability to enact the virtue of compassion. One

particular Milgram subject is illustrative: Karen Dontz, a nurse used to obeying doctors' orders.

"She asks the experimenter three or four times if he thinks it is all right to continue (as a nurse

she has been taught that she may question a doctor's orders three times if she believes that they

are wrong). On being assured that it is, she humbly proceeds to obey" (Badhwar 2009, 283).

One thread of this argument I would like to highlight about the subjects of the Milgram

experiment was that none of these people came to the experiment as a blank slate. It was always

a case of habit interference because there are always already habits at work in everyone. The

central framework and worry of this chapter is that people are already influenced by a situation

not of their own choosing when they came into the experiment beyond the variable situations

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[43] Bourdieu and Althusser for example have compelling accounts of how this happens, but this is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will get to Foucault and Butler's accounts in the next chapter.

given by the experimenters. The thing that had the most influence on the person was the changing variable of authority. The subject's susceptibility to authority is a situation that goes well beyond this single trial of the Milgram experiment. It comes from our developmental experiences with authority and institutions in our society and culture. It is clear that our experiences with authority are not unique, in fact, a conclusion that can be drawn from the dramatically consistent results of 65% compliance, is that most of us have an almost anonymously consistent experience with authority such that when put into this one-time situation, it manifests the same way. We did not choose our character relation to authority, so is it just luck that we have the character we have? Can we really use the concept of luck when we are given such *consistent* results in our character? From where did our consistent reaction to authority happen? Could we trace it in the Western world to the treaty of Westphalia, or is the timescale even larger? If certain evolutionary psychologists are to be believed, our susceptibility to hierarchy and authority comes from the timescale and origins of our very species and that getting along in this way allowed us to survive. I probe these kinds of questions about the adequacy of the concepts of socialization and luck to think about our control over our character.

Section 1.2 – Aristotle and Hegel on Habituation and Second Nature

Although how much the Milgram experiment challenges virtue ethics is under dispute, even defenders of virtue ethics like Gopal Sreenivasan seem to uniformly concede that "Milgram's findings are both surprising and morally disturbing. How could [they] not" (2008, 607)? Should virtue ethicists be so universally surprised by this result considering their roots in Aristotelian philosophy? Surely it is both our society's good lessons *and* dark history of injustice that resides uneasily within us when we are socialized. As Bryce Huebner puts the problem, "our

propensity toward norm conformity and overimitation have also made us conservative organisms that are willing to work to replicate the oppressive forms of social organization that dominate our world" (2016, 73). In this quote, Huebner is diagnosing why implicit bias is so rampant but also why individualized "implicit bias training" misses the real root of the problem. What is missing is the inclusion of factors such as the unjust and oppressive institutions that surround us.

At the end of the *Ethics*, Aristotle reminds us that the science of politics is the architectonic science of virtue, the one that the ethics must be based on. As John McDowell points out, the Ethics is addressed to an audience of young men who Aristotle assumes is *already* habituated in the right way to understand and make correct use of his teachings (McDowell 2009, 47). The lessons of the Ethics are useless to those who are not already brought up correctly and therefore so much of virtue relies not on the individual's control but within the society and development of the individual. Virtue ethicists must also embrace a "virtue politics" that addresses the society that habituates the individual. It becomes hard for readers of the Ethics to avoid this conclusion especially when Aristotle argues "legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them and this is the wish of every legislator; and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one" (Aristotle NE 1103a26). Good constitutions have a *direct* link to good habits that make virtuous individuals.

For Aristotle, political science is not a *techne*, instead, it is an activity of good judgement (*phronesis*) and good judgment always involves habituation and education. In a *polis*, it falls to the laws to train our habits. One way that laws do this is specific to the regime and the second is much more general to law itself. Inculcating specific habits is crucial to the particular type of regime remaining the same regime over time. A democratic regime must habituate democratic citizens, and oligarchic regimes must habituate oligarchic citizens or else even the best laws for

that regime will not work (Aristotle NE 1310a13-18). None of these regimes would be able to collectivize the disparate aims of individuals enough if they were not completely habituated to the aims of their particular regime. More generally, the constant act of following laws trains the citizen to continue to be lawful. The *polis* can only endure if the soul can get the more appetitive part to organize itself reasonably. Good laws train the citizen to desire reason over appetite.

Contemporary virtue ethicists will begin by admitting this point, "Most people's characters are produced and sustained by a particular social situation: the timocratic, or honor-loving, character is produced and sustained by a timocratic society… What this means is that each character learns the values that guide his or her actions from a particular cultural environment" (Kamtekar 2004, 483). Yet in the same page will quickly dismiss the role of the political in the endowment of our character: "Even so any but the most carefully monitored culture (that of the ideal city) contains conflicting ideals, and so people brought up in these societies will not, in the ordinary course, have consistent guides to behavior" (Kamtekar 2004, 483). This argumentative move individualizes virtue such that we are responsible for our own character. But it does this at the price of its own Aristotelian roots. Another maneuver is to rely on Aristotle's naturalistic ethics. There is a venerable group of virtue ethicists such as Foot and Hursthouse that attempt to undermine the relativism of grounding the endowment of each individual's character by culture and society by pinning down virtue as conforming to some kind of human species essence. But even relying on nature, Aristotle warns that "because even if the external circumstances and political organization and educational systems are ideal, it still requires one to overcome many natural obstacles, and he thinks that for most people, especially most women and barbarians, those obstacles are simply too great" (Leunissen 2017, xvi). As Aristotle states himself in the *Ethics*, "it is clear that the share of nature [in humans becoming

good] is not up to us but is as a result of some divine causes present in those who are truly

fortunate" (Aristotle NE 1179b21– 23). So our lack of control over the constitution of our

character threatens to completely derail the project of virtue ethics.

Section 1.3 – Second Nature

Outside of us, we are conditioned by causal laws of physics, inside, we are pushed by

instincts, drives and emotions of our basic biology, of our animal nature, of our "first nature". It

would seem that we are completely unfree. Kant's solution is to find a law separate from the

natural, the laws of reason that we alone can enact through our rational ability. This gives us the

ability to give ourselves universal maxims to follow. Hegel agrees that Kant's solution seems to

solve the objective side of the worry of heteronomy. But because the person has no motivational

connection with this universal law, it is subjectively alien to that person. If it is alien and the

person has not affirmed that law, then to Hegel, this is just another form of heteronomy; the

person's actions, although escaping the heteronomy of nature and first nature, is ruled by the

"outside" force of a reason which is not their own.

The answer to causal determinism for Hegel is our "second nature." Our society and

culture is the literal history and manifestation of the "work" and achievements of prior

generations. We are inaugurated into the way "we" (our society) do things through

developmental contact with teachers, education, institutions, and general habituation. This

manifestation of the previous generation's work is famously called a culture's "spirit". Spirit in

this technical sense hands down to us a way of being, standards, and norms. Even though they

are not our choice, we cannot help subscribing to our "spirit" and struggling to meet the

standards that spirit sets out. The inculcation of the work of previous generations of the culture

into "correct" habits, feelings and dispositions cultivated into us unconsciously is our "second nature." It is a kind of "nature" because it is constitutive of our basic identity, unchosen and we live it unconsciously just like our first nature.

But how can this social, unchosen and unconscious inculcation not be unfree just like our first nature? Hegel argues that our second nature satisfies both the objective and subjective requirements of freedom. Objectively, the culture and spirit that has constitutively made our nature is a human production made from principles and rules that are rational to that culture. While we can never take a step outside our culture, we can at least be sure that when we take up the bestowal of the previous generation's work, we can continue to make it better. I will come back to this point shortly. The subjective requirement is satisfied because we take pleasure in what our culture tells us are the correct standards. For instance, we take pleasure in what our culture deems to be beautiful and we take a different satisfaction (if we are properly educated and acculturated) in what our culture defines as good and correct. What is good and moral is not alienated motivationally because our inclinations "naturally" dispose us to do what our culture deems good, but also we identify with it wholeheartedly. This feeds into the objective part as well, since we undertake the previous generation's standards and work to make them more coherent and better. But there must be trust that if we find our ideals incorrect, we as a group can change the work that has come down to us as a society, that we can overturn norms and standards and put new ones in their place. Hegel points to the French Revolution as an extreme example of this turnover of norms. So, while there is no standing outside our norms to absolutely ground our norms in something absolutely objective, there is a trust that we are on the way there. Hegel was particularly fond of the story of the father who asked a Pythagorean for advice on

how to raise a virtuous son, a question to which the Pythagorean replied: by making him the citizen of a state with good laws (Novakovic 2017, 49n61).

Section 1.4 – The Contemporary Empirical Cash Out of this Theory of Second Nature

Inauguration into a society and culture is a lot like our initial inauguration into a language and the gaining of linguistic competence. This capacity must be activated and built upon at an early stage of development or else it will not develop at all. "Rehabilitative learning strategies do not seem to eliminate deficits in adults, as scientists discovered when they tried to teach grammar to their feral subject" (Ciurria 2013, 10). Interpersonal deficits acquired in childhood (through social isolation, abuse, or lack of education) tend to persist into adulthood, regardless of whatever strategies one uses to offset them. Here Michelle Ciurria refers to work done by Annette Lareau that followed 88 children from different socioeconomic backgrounds for several years, including follow-up interviews 10 years later. What Lareau showed was that differential advantages were noticeable when the youths became adolescents. These disadvantages not only persist but are ratcheted up in adulthood no matter how one compensates for them (Ciurria 2013, 11).

This developmental gap forms not only when it comes to intellectual advantages, but also emotion. Michael Meaney and colleagues have documented a critical period for rat pups in the first ten days of life when proper gene expression for controlling anxiety is switched on, but which only occurs when one has a normal nurturant mother. If one lacks a nurturant mother, the gene may never be properly expressed and new situations will cause anxiety for a lifetime. While, thanks to epigenesis, this is not completely irreversible, it is clear that early-life experience has a stable and broad effect on who we are emotionally as adults. And as argued

previously, this has a strong connection to virtue because good emotional regulation has a constitutive part to play in our behaviour to situations. Darcia Narvaez argues, for instance, that virtue is manifested when we navigate our social world well and in order to coordinate our social actions well, we must be nurtured well. For example, young children who are cared for with little warmth and responsivity, even if their physical needs are met, show more depressed affect and fewer social binds than children with a nurturing caregiver (Narvaez 2015, 255).

Here all of my examples have been about deprivation, but the opposite is true as well. We can see this from the qualitative work of three studies into moral heroes. The first was assembling fifty people that had been given a national award in Canada for either heroic bravery, as in dangerous rescues, or heroic caring, as in commitment to some cause or service. Each moral hero was matched with a demographic counterpart that had not received any such recognition. One thing that stood out was early life advantages such as the presence of Helpers (role models) and Attachments (secure, nurturing relationships) (Fruh 2017, 39). Jayawickreme and Di Stefano point to Oliner's 2003 work on rescuers in genocides where one of three characteristics identified of rescuers was prior exposure to models of moral behaviour. "Rescuers perceived their parents as benevolent figures, modeling values conducive to forming close, caring attachments to other people, including diverse groups of people who might be different by virtue of status, ethnicity, or religion" (Jayawickreme and Di Stefano 2012, 168). This was further confirmed by Di Stefano's work with 31 Rwandan rescuers. "Many of those Rwandans who rescued Tutsi in 1994 had vivid recollections of their parents saving others during previous waves of violence that swept through the nation, especially in 1959. Just as violence has the potential to beget more violence, it may be that exposure to heroic behavior must similarly create the possibility for more altruistic action" (Ibid).

Section 2 – The Problem of Character/Constitutive Luck

Thomas Nagel famously defined character or constitutive luck[44] as "the kind of person you are. Where this is not just a question of what you deliberately do but of your inclinations, capacities, and temperament" (1993, 60). It is one thing to consider that luck plays a role in *what* we accomplish and quite another to consider its effect on *who* we are. Nagel then argues that the problem of luck, in general, is the lack of control we have over the situation. "It seems irrational to take or dispense credit or blame for matters over which a person has no control" (Nagel 1993, 61). We can see how much of a problem this lack of control is if we try to think of the ways our characters are formed without our input. The involuntary parts of character can be the product of upbringing, childhood experiences, social environment, peer expectations (Trianosky 1990, 104), the uneven nature of our cognitive and emotional endowment, our inconsistent moral education, and our early fears or traumas (Badhwar 2009, 267). Aristotle and other philosophers who have worried about moral luck have focussed particularly on our natural temperaments because they send us along paths of habituations that can very determinative. This is because it is hard to overcome ingrained habit that results from natural emotional dispositions. Natural temperament is whether we are passive, malleable, self-motivated, cold, and calculating or warm and generous (Jacobs 2001, 25). Qualities such as timidity and aggressiveness, or patience and anxiousness, and so forth are considered by virtue ethicists as *natural* features that give contour to one's character and agency.

The worry that we are not the ultimate source of who we are has shown up in other philosophical literatures beyond virtue ethics. Philosophers of free will and moral responsibility name this the problem of "source incompatibilism." Although philosophers such as Joel

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[44] Constitutive luck and character luck are synonymous and I will use them interchangeably

Feinberg, John Martin Fischer, and Al Mele have always worried about what the influences on our character mean for moral responsibility, Seth Shabo (2010) makes the point that there has been a new interest in source incompatibilism as a way of framing the problem of free will that goes beyond Frankfurtian internalist arguments. Those who intuitively think that there is more to free will than merely second-order desire have taken the concept of "source incompatibilism" to argue that we cannot own the actual determinants of our actions unless we own and control our causal determinants (Shabo 2010, 350n3). Another way to define this worry is that our actions are only free if it is not an alien-deterministic event where alien-deterministic events are ones where something outside the agent is the ultimate cause of the act (Shabo 2010, 368).

Before starting on constitutive luck, it is important to make distinctions between different kinds of responsibility for character. Robert Audi separates what he calls *"generative responsibility"*, which is our overall genetic responsibility of producing one's character, and *"retentional responsibility"*, which is one's responsibility once one has a character for not actively changing it. Generative responsibility is intuitively thought as mostly out of our control while retentional responsibility is where change is possible even though it is often indirect and over a long time. Generative responsibility is often dismissed, I argue detrimentally, in the Free Will literature in order to focus on retentional responsibility.

To have proper virtue, a person's education must have been good, their society must be good, their parents must be good exemplars, none of which is under our control. How off-track would a person's virtue be if they never encountered ideas that enlarge and correct their initial ethical vision? And even if they encounter experiences that could contribute to self-transformation, as my previous chapter shows, there is a great amount of work or *askesis* that must be invested. And if one is not lucky enough to have external goods, this makes it harder to

find the time and energy to transform. We could give the person of good virtue credit that they responded well to their good fortune, yet we do not know how much her response depended on good dispositions that she was born with. All of these examples are for Robert Merrihew Adams a reminder that "there is dependence on moral luck, not only in the development but also in the persistence of virtue. Human virtue once achieved is not intrinsically permanent. Moral firmness can be broken through 'brainwashing.' Personality and character can be changed by a brain tumor. The character can disappear gradually before death in Alzheimer's disease" (2009, 160). Natural temperament is such that even if the situation of two different people are the same, something akin to athletic talent allows the development of certain virtues without much effort in some while in others it never develops, even with considerable effort (Adams 2009, 162).

Bearing in mind our second nature, it is clear that we are a reflection of the community in which we are reared. From that point of view, the excellence of character is the product and goal of development initiated and largely guided by others (Broadie 1991, 91). Virtue is not an individual achievement. To paraphrase an argument Susan Hurley makes about rationality and its relation to responsibility, if character is enabled by interactions with a public ecology and responsibility depends on character, then responsibility is also enabled by interactions with a public ecology. Therefore responsibility is as much a public achievement as a private feature of individual agents or their actions (Hurley 2011, 207).

A political cash out of the problem of character luck is that virtue is generally out of the reach of many people. The nature of virtue is different from effort or moral work of self-transformation or developing a good character. Moral self-development and transformation can be a credit to someone based on where they began and what they were endowed with and what they did with their lot, how they responded to their situation. But Adams argues that at best,

virtue can be an object of admiration, aspiration, and gratitude, not of competitiveness and personal pride (2009, 166).

Beyond virtue, another issue of constitutive luck is that as agents we could be rendered essentially passive and not the authors of our lives. Our character is in the deepest sense who we are and what we trace back to when looking at action; character belongs to someone and therefore so do their actions. Yet even without all the obstacles that I illustrated above, our habits and emotions are under a different kind of, more indirect, voluntary control. We cannot simply, by an act of will become the characters we want to be. This is a worry about our passivity, the alienation of the authorship over our character.

Section 2.1 – The Aristotelian Response to the Problem of Character Luck

Aristotle's ethical work tends to focus on retentive responsibility. But we can assume from what Aristotle argues in the *Politics* at the start of Section 2 that the generative responsibility of bad characters influenced by a bad culture is the fault of the legislator of that state. The generative worry of good education and early habituation in forming the person is taken very seriously by Aristotle and he insists that "it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or in another from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather, it makes all the difference in the world" (NE 2.1, 1103b23–5). The influence of good education, good fortune and enough external goods isn't an unqualified good for a person's character. As Martha Nussbaum points out, Aristotle argues that too much good luck can be as corrupting as misfortune. "Aristotle considers, in turn, three sorts of advantages that might accrue to an agent by luck: good birth, wealth, and power. He asks of each, what [bad] effect does it have upon character? Briefly summarized, his conclusion is that good birth conduces to

ambitiousness and disdainfulness; wealth to insolence, arrogance, and a mercenary attitude towards value; power to a somewhat better group of traits - to seriousness and a sober sense of responsibility - but also to some of the same vices as wealth" (Nussbaum 2001, 339).

In the *Categories,* Aristotle holds out that, little by little a kind of positive inertia can be gained by a person no matter how bad they have been educated. There is always the possibility that "as this process goes on, it will change him completely and establish in him a contrary state, provided he is not hindered by lack of time" (13a23-31). The point is that unless a person dies, even though it will take great effort and time for progress to show, a person can change themselves through self-transformation and therefore they are responsible for their character.

Aristotle has harsh words for those who at adulthood are shown the right way to live and are offered a way out of their viciousness. Aristotle offers three metaphors. He argues that just as someone who is ill goes to a doctor yet completely refuses to listen to the doctor's advice, so is it also the fault of the person who was habituated and educated badly, but who then is shown how to live better is responsible for their viciousness (1114a15-16). As Gianluca di Muzio stresses, bad character is also like an illness in the sense that changing one's illness is not just a matter of willing it away, illness, and bad character are not easy to break (2000, 211). Aristotle highlights a second aspect of bad upbringing in adulthood by comparing the problem of being an inveterate drunkard. He argues that at this point, the addiction is too strong to completely reverse, but the person was responsible for their character because earlier they were advised not to drink but they did so anyway (1114a6). You are responsible because only a fool would not realize that each time you do something, you leave a mark of that action on your soul. If you are doing it repeatedly it is not an accident or mistake but truly a manifestation of who you are. Starting from complete voluntariness each subsequent drink becomes less voluntary, yet because of the number

of early repetitions that were under your own voluntary control, you are still responsible for your actions once the drink controls you. Thirdly, Aristotle links this to the idea of when you throw a stone, you are still responsible even when you cannot recover the stone because "it was in your power to throw it since the moving principle was in you. So, too, to the unjust and the self-indulgent man it was open at the beginning not to become men of this kind, and so they are unjust and self-indulgent voluntarily; but now that they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so" (1114a18-22). Aristotle's view is that responsibility for character comes in degrees. Like a court case, while you are not directly and fully responsible for the crime of your bad character, you should at least be charged as an accomplice. "Depending on the way you are involved in a crime, your responsibility may not be full responsibility. Responsibility admits of degree, Aristotle seems to be accepting: in case of traits you have acquired when young adult… you are without any doubt fully responsible for them; in cases of early acquired traits, or naturally ingrained ones, you are qualifiedly responsible for them. But this qualified responsibility is certainly still responsibility" (Destree 2011, 313-314).

Section 2.2 – Joel Feinberg, John Martin Fischer and Al Mele's Compatibilist Response to the Problem of Character Luck

Joel Feinberg as well as John Martin Fischer in his *The Cards that are Dealt You*, an essay that defends and elaborates Feinberg's position, make two connected arguments about the problem of the responsibility for one's character. The first argument is to acknowledge that generatively, much of our formation is out of our hands:

> No individual person selects 'autonomously' his own genetic inheritance or early upbringing. No individual person selects his country, his language, his social community and traditions. No individual invents afresh his tools, his technology, his public institutions and procedures. And yet to *be* a human being is to be a part of a community, to speak a language, to take one's place in an already functioning group way of life. We come into awareness of ourselves as part of ongoing social processes… And all indi-

viduals *are* a part of these social histories. We can no more select our historical epoch than we can select the country of our birth and our native tongue. How do these truisms affect our thinking about personal autonomy? Very clearly they place *limits* on what the constituent virtues of autonomy can be (Feinberg 1986, 46).

To think that moral responsibility for our actions requires complete generative control is to take, what Feinberg calls, authenticity to a monomaniacal and extreme way. Feinberg's deflationary definition of full moral responsibility is supposed to be an essentially *human* responsibility and not a responsibility of Gods, as self-movers. Attributing our character too much to luck deeply violates our deepest intuitions. For Fischer, part of the strength of Feinberg's argument is that the burden of proof is shown to be on those who argue that responsibility for character should be equated with generative responsibility. While there is some intuitive appeal to this position, Fischer asks, why "is it more plausible to jettison moral responsibility and cling to a very demanding notion of self-creation ('an inflated conception of autonomy') than to scale down the demands of self-creation to something more reasonable" (Fischer 2005, 110)? As an example, we have no control over the meteorite that struck earth to wipe out the dinosaurs and gave mammals the natural advantage over other species nor do we have control over whether the sun rises and sets tomorrow. And yet how could my moral responsibility hinge on whether or not I control the sun (Fischer 2005, 114)?

With the standards for responsibility for character minimized, Feinberg and Fischer argue for two reasons that we can be held responsible for our actions even though we do not have control over the initial formation of our character. The first is our ability to use rationality to step back and scrutinize ourselves and the second is that even in childhood, we have a small part in shaping ourselves.

Feinberg argues that in order to be sure that one is responsible for one's character, we must enact some kind of authenticity. Notice that we are passive to certain forces in our history

controlling us. Yet this is not a passivity that, according to Feinberg, we should be worried about. This is because with our use of rationality we can always try to make sure that other persons or forces are not the authors of our tastes, opinions, goals, ideals, and values. Feinberg insists that "we always retain the possibility of stepping back and judging where we are and where we want to be" (1986, 35). In order to do this, one needs to take one's values and goals and subject them to rational scrutiny. If I change my opinions and tastes for reasons of my own as well as an affective component, "without guilt or anxiety", then one is authentic. We can get a better grasp of this by seeing what the opposite of authentic is: "The inauthentic person… is essentially the manipulated consumer. He has no taste in music or clothes except for what is fashionable" (Feinberg 1986, 32). Feinberg concedes that the capacity for these powers of rational scrutiny depends on a good, liberal early education. The child must be raised to be autonomous. But Feinberg's point is authenticity is an achievement and there is a path toward solving the problem of constitutive luck that is reachable by many.

Without the burden of self-creation, ex nihilo, Feinberg comes up with his own more common-sense account of retentive responsibility over character. Feinberg's point is that self-shaping is not discontinuous over a lifetime; we do not at age eighteen suddenly become fully responsible for ourselves. Instead there is a process of continuous shaping. There is already some kind of character that is our own which then heredity and environment gives its "own distinctive slant" (Feinberg 1986, 34). The new self that continues to grow is always shaped by something earlier. But for Feinberg, we are retentively responsible since the immature child plays a greater role in their own responsibility. Of course this answer is very hard to delink from one's generative responsibility over character since as Feinberg admits, his answer is "how growth

proceeds when parents and other authorities raise a child with maximal regard for the autonomy of the adult he will one day be" (Feinberg 1986, 34).

In many ways Feinberg and Fischer's answer to the worry about our retentive responsibility over our character is a *theodicy* justifying our lack of control over the generative responsibility for our character. Our generative responsibility being out of our hands is only alright if they emphasize the control we do have over retaining or changing our character over time. I flesh out as well as concretize Feinberg and Fischer's argument about retention of character by looking at Al Mele's famous examples of Tony.

Unlike a throw of the dice which inherits no history of previous dice throws, Mele presses us to realize, each of our actions is not independent of previous actions; our previous actions shape the practical probabilities of our additional actions (2006, 122). Mele focuses on the crucial time when one's character is first formed as a youth. Early in our development we can influence our generative responsibility and this in turn can really influence our later retentional responsibility. It is this transitional moment that is explored with Al Mele's example of Tony.

Children's actions take place in an environment of moral training. This is a context of norms, reprimands, inducements but also expectations. Training children is not like training animals like dogs, even with these constraints the space of voluntariness isn't completely closed off (Jacobs 2001, 15). In habituating children, there must be a training of voluntariness itself. Mele argues that parents "eventually come to view their children as having some degree of moral responsibility for what they do. The word 'degree' is important here" (2006, 129). Like Feinberg, we can see that Mele does not think there is a discontinuity in moral development between child and adult. Children have the capacities to be responsible, just to a diminished degree. From ages four to eight, the degree of having this capacity increases and with its increase, so does moral

responsibility. Four-year olds have less impulse control as well as less developed capacity for anticipating and understanding the effects of their actions than do eight-year olds. When Tony was four, he was less blameworthy when he snatched his sister's toys than he is at eight years old. But this does not mean, Mele argues, that Tony isn't responsible or blameworthy at *all*. Tony's parent's reactions reflect this. Mele imagines the crucial moment when Tony is able to make a decision about whether or not to snatch his sister's toy. Tony primitively deliberates that his father is nearby and that previously when he had snatched a toy from his sister there had been unpleasant experiences of his sister being visibly upset and his father scolding him. In this case, Tony visibly feels frustration, but does not snatch the toy. Tony's father see's Tony about to reach for his sister's toy, but then doesn't and praises Tony for his good behaviour. Mele claims that "the father was not simply trying to reinforce the good behavior; he believed that Tony really deserved some credit for it" (2006, 130). And so we share and participate, even at such a naïve age, in generative responsibility over our character. Second nature is not just downloaded onto our character, these primitive moral decisions set marks in the ground where deeper tracks of good habit can form.

For Feinberg, Fischer and Mele (whom together I will now call "FFM"), this initial capacity which leads to higher and higher degrees of capacity for impulse control is sufficient to show that we have full responsibility for the retention of our character. This means, importantly, that we do not need to worry about the uncontrolled, generative, origins of our character. Robert Audi puts the matter in simple terms that I think FFM could agree with: "it is useful to consider generative and retentional responsibility separately. Normal agents are not directly responsible for producing either their beliefs or their wants. We can produce them by doing certain things, but normally we cannot produce them except through indirect and often tedious means… A

selfish person who, as a result of the selfishness, is unfair but wants to reform, can, through repeated self-discipline, become unselfish and fair. In this way one could become, to a large extent at least, morally self-made" (1991, 311).

Mele illustrates this intuition with the story of a character named Chuck that calls back to Aristotle's example of the drunkard. As a fully matured adult with an established character, Chuck is an inveterate murder. But he wasn't always so set in his evil ways. As a young adult, Chuck enjoyed torturing animals but was not passionate about this inclination and often felt guilt about his actions. "However, Chuck valued being the sort of person who does as he pleases and who unambivalently rejects conventional morality… One strand of his strategy was to perform cruel actions with increased frequency in order to harden himself… and eventually to extinguish the source of those feelings. His strategy worked" (Mele 2006, 171). Mele argues that Chuck's history and how he came about his character should pump our intuitions such that we should grant that Chuck exercised significant control in fashioning his character and therefore should be fully held responsible for his character and the actions that flow from them (2006, 172).

Feinberg makes a point that we are always already on our way with our character, that there is already a certain momentum driving us and that we need at least a rudimentary character before we can even hope to choose a new one (1986, 33). If forces external to us did not implant/habituate a character in us already we would not have the conditions of possibility for *any* character, whatsoever. Fischer goes further in elaborating this point. "After all, one must admit that there are causally enabling conditions – conditions that, as it were, 'set the stage' for our exercises of agency, and without which our agency would be different in central aspects or would not even exist – which are entirely out of our control. One might then wonder why precisely it is problematic that there are (or might be) causally sufficient conditions for our

behavior that are external and entirely out of our control" (Fischer 2005, 126). Fischer asks us to

imagine our agency as a rocket. As an astronaut piloting the shuttle, he argues, we exercise a

robust sort of control and therefore responsibility of our character. This is true even if you did

not design the rocket or the platform that is the necessary condition that enables the rocket to

take off. You are responsible for your character even though the sun's setting and rising are out

of your control, even if it is causally a necessary condition of your continuing existence (Fischer

2005, 127). Fischer calls this view 'playing out the cards that you are dealt': "We can be

accountable for playing the cards that are dealt us, even if we did not manufacture the cards,

write the rules of the game, and so forth. We can exercise precisely that sort of control of our

behavior that moral responsibility requires, without having an inflated or exalted power of self-

creation" (2005, 129).

Section 2.3 – Neil Levy's Determinist Response to the Problem of Character Luck

As suggested by the title of his book, *Hard Luck,* Neil Levy takes the position of hard

determinism when it comes to the problem of character luck. Here I go over Levy's criticisms of

the FFM compatibilism position on responsibility over character. Levy argues that if generative

responsibility is out of a person's control, they cannot bootstrap themselves back being

responsible for their character.

As compatibilists, FFM acknowledge that we do not have much generative control over

our character. Regardless of this lack of control, we still have enough retentional control over our

character to change our endowment and so we are responsible for our character. Levy argues that

the power we have over modifying our endowment is itself subject to luck (2011, 94). Taylor

Cyr puts this point well. How, Cyr questions, can an agent be responsible for adjusting her

endowment if the very toolkit used to adjust her endowment is part of her endowment? "If the agent is responsible for taking ownership of her endowment because her history includes previous modifications to her endowment, then the problem is not solved but merely moved back in time to prior uses of the toolkit with which she has been endowed" (Cyr 2017, 14). To illustrate this, Levy gives the compatibilist position on character luck a dilemma using Mele's example of Chuck, the inveterate murderer. As a youth, Chuck was definitely altering himself and inclining himself further toward murder by "leaning into" his predilections of enjoying torturing animals, but this was already settled by his generative character luck. Compatibilists like Mele and Feinberg acknowledge that one's history affects one's present decisions but counter that there is a process of deliberation that turns these background conditions into voluntary choice. Remember that Feinberg is able to leverage his deflationary view of generative control because "we always retain the possibility of stepping back and judging." But, Levy pushes back, "this pre-existing background is our endowment from constitutive luck, inflected and modified, to be sure, but inflected and modified by decisions that either express constitutive luck, or that were not settled by the endowment, *and therefore were subject to present luck*" (Levy 2011, 94). So, the first horn of the dilemma is that decisions are an expression of character, except that character was generated without control and so, for Levy, any decision is made from luck. The second horn of the dilemma is that if compatibilists want to argue that current decisions come from deliberation only, since according to Feinberg, this allows us to "step back" from our character dispositions, this deliberation is influenced by present luck. Levy gives an example that Mele has emphasized, that we do not control which considerations come to mind when we deliberate. We can add to the present luck of deliberation with help from the previous chapter about the micro-situationist problem: that we don't control how moods

influences our decisions. Therefore, Levy concludes, compatibilists are stuck trying to solve the

problem of control over retentional responsibility over character either with generative luck or

present luck.

Levy's second critique is that generative luck or luck early in one's life, whether good or

bad, snowballs. This is such that someone who had a little bad luck compared with someone with

a little good luck early in life, it is clear that neither had control over where they ended up. He

argues that compensatory luck later on in life for bad generative luck is rare but also needs to be

extraordinary. I think Levy's argument can be sharpened with supplemental argumentation and

evidence and so I will more fully elaborate Levy's second argument in the next section.

Section 2.4 – My Additional Objections to the FFM position on Character Luck

In this section I bring up two of my own objections to the FFM compatibilist position on

character luck. The first one is luck's snowballing effect, such that small differences in people's

constitutional luck often ratchet up and become very significant rather than being evened out by

later luck. I first argue that the rationality to make good decisions is itself part of one's

generative endowment. I then argue that even the most significant character trait to be able to

change oneself, "grit", is socially and unequally distributed.

As Susan Hurley declares, rationality is an ecological phenomenon and is profoundly

embedded and dependent on one's social environment (2011, 192). HLA Hart argues that the

contingent nature of our bodies, that they are vulnerable and that we need certain scarce

resources to survive deeply informs our whole moral and legal lives. Hart asks us to imagine if

"men were to become invulnerable to attack by each other, were clad perhaps like giant land

crabs with an impenetrable carapace, and could extract the food they needed from the air" (1958,

623). The norms of justice as we consider them now as humans made of meat would be inconceivable. Jennifer Morton argues that the same would happen if we lived in an environment of great abundance (2010, 567).

On the other hand, if one lives in a scenario of great scarcity, as many people do, their rationality about long term decisions change. It has been observed that those who have experienced scarcity over their lifetime often prioritize immediate goals rather than long term goals. "One way to account for the effect of scarcity is to suggest that it leads to preference reversal. If you're starving, buying food matters more than does paying off a debt or saving towards college" (Morton 2016, 8). If you grow up with the short end of the stick and are born poor and live your whole life poor, one's reasoning as a poor person becomes ingrained. In the future, even if one eventually has good fortune, it is hard to break out of and think in a long term way. We see this phenomenon all the time. 60 percent of former NBA players and 78 percent of NFL players, many who started with poor backgrounds but came into large amounts of money very quickly later in life, declare bankruptcy within five years of retirement.[45] There is evidence that people who are already financially distressed but then come into large amounts of money, such as lottery winners, do not prevent bankruptcy, but only postpone it (usually only three to five years) (Hankins et al. 2011). We can classify this objection to the FFM position as another worry that generative character luck burdens us so much that people cannot be held to have retentive responsibility. This is because they are endowed with a type of rationality that makes it hard to extricate themselves from their bad character. If one is inveterately habituated to make short term decisions and changing one's character involves a series of small but consistent

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[45] http://www.espn.com/30for30/film?page=broke

decisions aiming at a long term goal then the tools, like rationality, that generative character luck gives is just not enough of a fulcrum to give someone retentive responsibility.

Changing one's character is not just about one's cognitive circumstances but also the *askesis*, the hard work, involved in training one's habits and inclinations. As seen from the previous chapter, it is an exercise in tenacity and resilience to change habits and inclinations. Some tend to persevere in the face of these obstacles and setbacks while others are inclined to give up. In the psychological literature, one's reaction to adversity is called "grit." A classic psychology experiment dubbed "the marshmallow test" was done by Walter Mischel in 1989. Here babies had a marshmallow placed in front of them and were told that if they could wait a few minutes without eating the marshmallow, they would receive two marshmallows. Mischel found that after fifteen years, those children who had resisted taking a single marshmallow had better educational and life outcomes. This was recently replicated with ten times the number of participants (900) in 2018. The results pretty much agreed with Mischel. But this marshmallow test did not happen in a vacuum. What seemed to affect the self control of the babies in the test the most were their socio-economic conditions and if one parent had gone to college (Watts et al. 2018). Children from lower-class homes had more difficulty resisting than affluent ones, so it was affluence that really influenced self control.

Defending the compatibilist position, Daniel Dennett argues that although people begin with different generative luck, this is not unfair. Over an entire lifetime, small initial advantages are evened out in the end because people can be expected to have some fortunate luck (Levy 2011, 198). For Levy, self control is the key to whether responsibility over changing one's character is salvageable or not. Failure to develop self control at an early age is rarely compensated for by later fortune. Worse, even when good fortune happens to those unlucky early

in life, they are "unable to take advantage of chance events that might have helped them

compensate for their disadvantages" (Levy 2011, 199). To show the ratcheting effect of bad or

good luck early in life on character, Levy contrasts two people, unlucky Martha[46] and lucky

Melvin. Martha gets arrested for lashing out at a police officer because of her self-control. She is

doubly unlucky. First she has bad constitutive luck because the circumstances of her poverty

meant that she failed to acquire the self control. There is also present luck in the fact that persons

of colour or someone in poverty is more likely to face police presence, through for instance stop

and frisk programs. So, her anger is exposed and allowed to manifest more often. In jail her bad

generative luck is compounded by being in an environment where one needs to gain vices in

order to survive and as Lisa Guenther (2013) shows, prison is inimical to mental resilience.

> We can drive home the unfairness of blaming Martha for actions that flow from her lack
> of self-control by comparing her treatment to that meted out to fortunate Melvin. Melvin
> had all the advantages Martha lacked. He had a stable environment that presented him
> with a series of graded self-control tasks, enabling him to acquire ample resources of self-
> control. He also has more wealth, and therefore is tempted to engage in illegal… actions
> less often; as a consequence, his extensive reserves of self-control are rarely drawn
> down… His self-control enabled him to apply himself academically. He is now equipped
> for a well-paying, high status job. He believes that he deserves the esteem and wealth
> which now accrue to him. But he does not: these benefits come to him as a consequence
> of his earlier advantages. His benefits flow to him as a consequence of his privileged
> background (Levy 2011, 197).

Melvin is doubly lucky that he is from privilege and so is not policed as much and so is not

exposed to as many opportunities to lose self control. Or if he does get exposed to it, it's not

significant for him (Levy 2011, 198).

My argument seems to be pushing for the same hard determinist luck view that Levy put

forward, but actually I want to say one cannot help but come to Levy's conclusion about

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[46] I will be changing Martha's story a bit but Levy's argument remains the same in essence

character luck because of how luck is framed. The problem of luck, as something completely external to an internal character is framed like a situationist problem. Like my worry in the previous chapter with the micro-situationist problem, character is something that seems to already exist, fully formed and luck is an external thing that violates it. I will insist again that our character is appropriately constituted by both "outside" and "inside" and that it is false to assert that what character is, on the inside, could be descriptively explained or is normatively important without the "outside's" contribution. In my next section I present three problems with the concept of luck as it has been used since Nagel first introduced it, with the aim to move us to a different concept, Merleau-Ponty's notion of "Institution."

Section 3 – Three Criticisms of the use of the Concept "Luck"

Section 3.1 – Luck is Either Too Vague or Assumes Too Much If More Precise

It is clear that what is referred to now as luck in philosophy is a blanket term for a number of different concepts and intuitions. Nagel originally introduced the term moral luck because he was worried about the problem of our lack of control. But as Barbara Herman clarifies, "that the success of our actions is contingent on factors outside our control is too general a fact to explain anything" (1995, 147). Later philosophers such as the FFM position worried that too grand a sense of control would load the dice in favour of having no responsibility over character and action. They attempted to both deflate and redefine what exactly one needs to control in order to be responsible. Much of this line drawing involves appeals to contradictory intuitions such that it is hard to say which position is more plausible. The FFM position finds that if our idea of luck has to take the sun rising into account, then surely it is intuitively not a good enough definition of luck.

Levy argues that focusing only on control isn't what we commonly mean by luck anyway. Levy argues that we should make a more precise definition of luck. This means that we have a less vague term and can side step the worry of the great number of things totally out of our control but also we can have a more intuitive definition of luck. Levy incorporates the idea of the subjective significance of an event to us into his definition of luck. He calls this "chanciness" and defines it modally: an event is chancy if it occurs in the actual world but fails to occur in a large enough proportion of possible worlds nearby (Levy 2011, 19). This allows him to say that the sun rising every day is not luck for us, while winning the lottery is.

At this point in the literature on luck, there seems to be two very different definitions of luck, one that focuses on control and one that focuses on the modal element of luck. Perceptive of this drift away from Nagel's original worry, Mark B. Anderson doubles down, that this precision and move toward what we normally think of as luck is a distraction from the important question that was raised by Nagel (2019, 26). Anderson concludes that there just needs to be a different word other than luck for what Nagel was getting at because of its importance. I agree with this strategy of conceptual engineering when it comes to luck. The framework of questions inevitably shape their answers and it seems to me that the framework of the question we are asking about character formation is wrong. If we consider luck as control, I think that Levy's arguments seem decisive: we are drowning in a sea of luck and cannot be responsible for our character. But this answer doesn't tell us anything interesting.

Another worry about the modal definition of luck is that what it gains in precision, it loses in having to make assumptions about the underlying character that is unchanged through near possible worlds. I argue, inspired by Susan Hurley's critique of Luck Egalitarianism, that it

strains plausibility that it is the same person through these different possible worlds such that we cannot know whether the original person is lucky or not.

Hurley correctly, I think, points out that for the modal definition to be useful, there needs to be an agent whose identity must remain constant across different possible luck. Good or bad luck is luck for *someone* (Hurley 2003, 125). Without this constant identity we do not have good luck or bad for one person, merely possibilities in which different entities exist and different things happen to those different entities. Levy treats this worry very briefly and relies on the fact that rigid designators refer to the same agent across all possible worlds. He concludes that "the events that fix the reference of names in the actual world will fix it across all possible worlds" (2011, 30). Yet I think that just because the *name* of an identity survives all possible worlds, I'm not sure that "personal identity" does. It assumes that there is an *essence* of someone that exists before their dispositions and habits and beliefs exist and that luck is what changes this original essence. I think this brings us to an impasse in trying to use rigid designators in the philosophical problem of constitutive luck. If we just define a person's identity as rigid throughout possible worlds, then it begs the question. If we just take on Levy's idea of identity surviving all possible worlds, we get a sort of "thin" conception of constitutive luck. Levy I think tries to push this kind of constitutive luck by defining being constitutively lucky as something that varies "across a relevant reference group, with the relevant reference group being fixed by the context" (Levy 2011, 33). So Levy claims that a person who lives in the West has a context where the average capacity of a human being can be fairly high thanks to better nutrition etc. and so it is bad luck if an infant is born with an IQ of 85.

But narrowing what luck can be in this way I think should force us to ask, what even is the *problem* over the worry about constitutive luck if the significance of luck is so weak a

person's identity survives through all possible worlds? The original motive behind the worry of constitutive luck is a problem because we are genuinely worried who we would be, *in essence*, if we vary the context. Would we have been collaborators if we were born during the Nazi era? Descriptively, saying that "context" as another thing we have to hold rigid is also very vague. What is the scope of context that we have to hold across possible worlds? If the scope is too narrow we are again left with a thin problem of constitutional luck, that is not very interesting and not what most people mean by character luck. Are situations of scarcity, properly to be called "luck" anyway?[47] Another way to think about this is through Levy's own arguments. Let us look at Levy's clause that for an event to be lucky, it has to be significant for them. Combine this with his argument against the FFM position that early, generative luck ratchets up in significance throughout a lifetime makes the idea that there is constant identity despite different generative luck in possible worlds less plausible. Take Levy's Martha and Melvin, by his *own* argument, they are two completely different people *only* because of luck during development.

Hurley is convincing that this modal position is incoherent. "This is what we sense when we puzzle: 'But who or what is it that could have had different constitutions or essential properties?' For there to be a lottery, there must be identity constant across possibilities. But if the possibilities are different identities, this is impossible. Identity cannot be constant across different possible identities. There can be no pre-entity whose good or bad luck it is to have one or another identity or set of essential properties or constitution in the strong sense. There can be no protoself or possible self or bare self who might-have-existed-as-you" (Hurley 2003, 128).

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[47] I will address the worry that the word "luck" tends to reify social and political problems as natural in the next section.

Section 3.2 – Luck Tends to Naturalize and Reify Events

How much out of our control does an event have to be for it to be considered "lucky?" What if two people drive drunk, what is the significance that one had the bad luck to hit a child? These are the types of questions usually asked in the literature on luck. What about situations involving collective control over a decision? Together everyone has full control, yet each person's contribution is miniscule. Political control in a democracy means that blame could conceivably distributed across the demos for political decisions. Are the results of legislation and other fully human made political decisions "luck"?

The conventional intuitions around luck seem to be that luck is a kind of inexorable natural, external force that changes things for an individual. But political choices do not seem to be of the same kind and calling these things luck seems to put natural and social/political influenced events as the same thing. This reifies luck.

For Levy, no one is to blame for Martha's bad luck. Generative bad luck is just an undifferentiated starting point that is determinative for Martha's overall life. But for the FFM position, the normative outcome hides a defence of the status quo, no matter how bad it is. Maybe worse, they blame the victim for their own bad character. Martha's short-term rationality and lack of self-control, tools to change her character, are taken from her by poverty. As Aristotle claimed earlier in the chapter, ifthe poverty was the result of bad or structurally unjust policy, it seems the perpetrators of the bad policy should be blamed and not Martha. FFM's deflation of the amount of control needed in order to be retentionally responsible for one's character, Dennett's claim that bad luck early in life is evened out by good fortune later in life and Audi's conviction that with enough self-discipline character can be changed makes it that we *ought to expect* those in marginal socio-economic positions to be fully responsible for their

character. When we see vice and higher crime among economically precarious people, it is their fault since it was up to them to change their character for the better. It puts the entire onus on the person and makes invisible our complicity in their bad character.

Claudia Card argues that the social positionality of the philosophers who most famously began the conversation about luck (Nagel, Williams and Nussbaum) screened them from recognizing that bad generative luck is usually from social disadvantage and oppression (1996, 4). And so their conception of responsibility is fixated on what Card calls "backward-looking" responsibility. "Williams and Nagel tend to look down and back, from relatively privileged standpoints and toward the past, focusing on such things as praise, blame, regret, punishment, and reward" (Card 1996, 23). This kind of responsibility involves a harsh owning up to having been the relevant cause of something and taking credit and blame for it. "Justice in punishments and rewards invokes this credit sense. But retributive justice is only a small part of morality" (Card 1996, 29). Both Card and Tessman realize that in older work on moral luck, especially constitutive luck, luck tends to be naturalized. In response to this, Card creates a separate category of luck called the "unnatural lottery" while Tessman calls it "systemic luck" in order to flag its source from social systems of oppression. Tessman identifies and pushes back on the luck literature's tendency to naturalize luck, "there is nothing about this luck that is natural, accidental, or idiosyncratic, in that one can point to its systemic source in, for instance, capitalism" (Tessman 2005, 13). While I have been inspired and influenced by these two philosophers' feminist take on virtue ethics, I do not think their critique of luck goes far enough. Their conceptual engineering of the term is a reparative turn to try to supplement the term and then use it to show how to do "non-ideal" political philosophical work in virtue ethics. Yet I

think we can do conceptually better, not just by shifting luck, but instead abandoning it altogether for another concept: institution.

Descriptively this reification and naturalization of social luck is a problem because it ignores the conditions that made possible the "lucky" event. The worry that philosophers of luck have about the past is the one about general free will, that our universe is physically determined from the big bang and so we are not responsible for our character. But this naturalizes the entire past, gone are the social conditions and historical contingencies that formed the possibilities for significant lucky events such as poverty, race, IQ etc. Luck's problems with the past go hand in hand with its tendency to naturalize. I give two examples to finish this section.

Taylor Cyr gives the example of being trapped in Los Angeles traffic as his example of how to define luck:

> If I am driving in Los Angeles and there is light traffic, this counts as lucky for me since the following three conditions are met: (1) I lack control over whether there is light traffic in Los Angeles, (2) the amount of traffic is significant for me (since I am driving in Los Angeles), and (3) that there is light traffic in Los Angeles fails to occur in a large proportion of nearby worlds (2017, 5).

This kind of example makes traffic seem like an event of nature rather than a collective action problem or a problem that could be solved with the right kind of political or democratic will. It is each a choice of every person on that road to get in their car, they could have carpooled, taken public transportation, or a bicycle. But over and above that, this description of luck naturalizes because it substitutes contingent political history with an appeal to possible worlds. Part of the reason that there is always traffic jams in Los Angeles is the history that set up these conditions, the emphasis on accommodating cars.[48] Particularly the South of the U.S.

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[48] https://dianerehm.org/shows/2016-03-31/transportation-secretary-anthony-foxx-on-transportation-opportunity-and-the-legacy-of-the-u-s-highway-system

concentrated its infrastructure on highways rather than on public transportation or railways like in Europe. This also made it particularly prohibitive to survive Los Angeles without a car. This history gets turned into a simple shorthand that there are few possible worlds where a large number of people choose not to drive their car to work. Here, disability studies has much to teach us about the environment. A table does not start the day by asking itself at what height it should stand. And yet neither is the table nature. It does not arrive in the world by a chaotic process devoid of intention. Its height is the result of the intentions of its human designers, which anticipate particular kind of human embodiment that are not universal (Engman and Cranford 2016, 41).

My second example is one where Anders Schinkel tries to defend moral luck from being reduced to a species of epistemic luck by looking at how Scobie's character from Graham Greene's novel, *The Heart of the Matter*, is influenced by his situation. Major Henry Scobie is stuck as a police officer in West-Africa where "everything about the climate (in both a literal and a figurative sense) is conducive to corruption" (Schinkel 2009, 270). Up until then he had integrity but when he is passed up for a promotion to a less corrupt (for white people's character I imagine) South Africa, his wife feels such shame that she departs to South Africa. Schinkel describes this as situational bad luck since, "had Scobie been promoted in the first instance, Louise would not have wanted to go to South Africa, Scobie would not have needed to borrow money from Yusef, and so on. But things did happen this way, and Scobie did find himself in an environment soaked with corruption, in a climate that in most people not born in it does not bring out the best, and he was confronted with possibilities (trials, tests, temptations) that contributed to the crumbling of his moral integrity" (Schinkel 2009, 274). All that the concept of luck tells us here is that the situation, whether corrupting to his character or not, was beyond his control. With

just luck, we can minimally agree with Schinkel's conclusion that "luck sometimes plays a role, not just in what we get to know about someone, but also or especially in who someone is or becomes" (2009, 273). What is reified and glossed easily over is the colonial history that goes into shaping the corrupting situation that Scobie was placed in. His initial moral integrity and good character is not earned, since he got it by just being a white man who was born into a middle class Catholic upbringing in England. So, it might actually seem like justice that this almost uncompensatable good fortune of being born who he was is leveled by having to live in a corrupt country that the good fortunes of his initial good situation are based on. Had history gone differently, had England not colonized certain countries, Scobie would not be asked to police these people, their country could have kept its wealth and not have been subjugated and maybe the society would not be corrupt. Meanwhile, England's wealth and power might not have been so great and Scobie might have been brought up in worse conditions. But luck does not give us access to any of these counterfactual conditions and so important historico-cultural conditions that set the horizon for our character becomes erased as an undifferentiated past.

Section 3.3 – Luck Doesn't Inherit Its Own History

Our endowments, our generative character luck is portrayed as just a single, undifferentiated inheritance. But this occludes the different contingent threads of history that came together to form our generative responsibility, the conditions of possibility for who we are. Take as a short example, Foucault's Genealogical work. Foucault calls this kind of work "a history of the present." Whether his methodology or conclusions are correct or not, we can see two ways of viewing history's influence on our current selves.

Generative luck is portrayed as a pure and undifferentiated past that is epiphenomenal to current conditions. Our histories are a gradualist line where good and bad fortune just appear, randomly. Foucault's[49] histories and genealogies highlight the fact that some points in history are more important than others. History has a kind of gestault, that when viewed from the present brings to the fore some parts of history over others. An analogy borrowed from evolutionary theory could be the idea of "punctuated equilibria". Against the idea that evolution proceeds gradually and at the same rate over time, Stephen J. Gould described a picture of punctuated changes in species followed by a equilibriated stasis where not much change happens. If those "punctuated" times are affected by even a little bit of luck, this would have far reaching consequences for our present conditions while in times of stasis, luck would not change much. We can see the difference this makes in the different claims of Daniel Dennett and Neil Levy in part 3.4. Dennett views the history of the individual as gradual and even, with good and bad luck just stochastically showing up over time such that if look at the "ledger" of good and bad luck, the number of good fortune and bad fortune is roughly even and cancels each other out. Meanwhile, Levy stresses, I think correctly, with the examples of bad luck Martha and good luck Marvin that even small misfortunes early in someone's development cause strong ripples moving forward that almost no good fortune can compensate.

Another thing that a general view of luck occludes is the "concentration" of contingency at different times in history. I think we can differentiate a period of history that is important from a period in history that is more susceptible to contingency or that the political or social conditions of possibility invited more and different futures.[50] William James in his *The Will to*

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[49] But also many Continental thinkers who have inherited Hegel's focus on history

[50] A room that is filled with oxygen makes for the conditions that only a mere spark lights up. A historical example might be World War 1. The conditions for war seemed inexorable with the aggression pacts signed and the

Believe talks about live or dead options. When talking about religion in 1890 America if one were to give the dilemma "either be a theosophist or a Mohammaden" neither would be a plausible choice because the first case, theosophy had been exposed as an esoteric fraud that it seems a dead option but also converting to Islam was not in the social imaginary. Whereas if presented with the dilemma, "either become a Christian or an agnostic" then one might say both were live options. We can say that different times in history presented us with many more live options than others. Foucault illustrates this in his book *Discipline and Punishment.* Foucault contrasts a time before prisons when punishments were public and spectacular. At that moment, the forms that punishment might have taken involved more live options. Meanwhile in our present time, the material and social conditions of prisons shaped by our past have so taken root in our social imaginary that we have a genuinely hard time imagining not having prisons as the only method of punishment. Prison here is the only live option left among the ghosts of dead options left behind.[51]

The more general point of these two examples is that the past conditions the present and our character in a way that makes the umbrella term "luck" very imprecise. There is a more or less chance of certain things happening or situations that condition people's character in certain ways and just saying it's all luck prevents us from making better inquiries into what it means to have the freedom to shape our own characters. If we look at James' idea of live and dead options and Morton's ideas about it being normatively rational to have different rationalities if you born in scarcity or abundance we can see how some characters are just not open to some people. If

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tensions between different empires such that *any* chance bad event, not just the assassination of Prince Ferdinand, could have began a massive worldwide war.

[51] Rewriting this in the summer of 2020, after the protests from the murder of George Floyd by a police officer, looking beyond policing and prisons has become a live option again in the social imaginary.

one's conditions are of poverty, not only is it not rational to save up to pay off one's debts, but the option might not even be a live one, even if one comes into a lot of money.

The different roles that the past can play in present luck and character luck is particularly neglected and this neglect can be shown in the paradigmatic examples of luck in the literature. If we go back to the story that begins Section 3.2 of two different people, both who drink and drive and one who hits a little girl who chases after a ball into the street. My argument in this chapter is, to just call the entire situation (other than the decision to drink) luck ignores the conditions of possibility of such situations arising. What if the norms of the society the driver was in were different, what if it was very socially stigmatizing to get behind the wheel after drinking, what if the government legislated more police ride checks for drunk driving? What if capitalism were different such that parent did not have work such that they could keep an eye on their child? To use a blanket term like luck makes the situation more easily analyzable, and sometimes to make a theoretically general point, we must be reductive. But I think we lose important insight into what character really is when we ignore these conditions of possibility.

We have been working with Nagel's classical, broad definition of luck as chance or lack of control, but the more precise, modal definition of luck has problems with history as well. Neil Levy argues that in these situations the condition of possibility questions I've asked are separate from the lucky event. The lucky event does not inherit the luck of its circumstances. Levy argues that absurd conclusions result from this thinking because the different luck of different conditions seems endless: "I am lucky to be alive at all (the event of the union of just the right egg and sperm fails to occur in a wide class of nearby worlds, is significant for me, and beyond my control), but my typing these words does not inherit that luck" (Levy 2011, 23). If luck inherits its conditions of possibility, then every action I do is lucky because it was conditioned by

the luck of the sperm and egg and so luck as a concept becomes meaningless. But my argument already is that we should abandon luck. While inheriting luck like this might seem silly, so does, it seems to me, completely wiping out the history that sets up the conditions of possibility of how Levy arrived at his keyboard writing philosophy. Given where he was born, who his parents were, how he was influenced at development, these all set up the chanciness of Levy ending up writing on a keyboard. The chance of me as a human in this society at this time typing on a keyboard is not infinitesimal, thanks to the conditions that made it possible, it's not very chancy at all. So surely the event of typing on the keyboard inherits *something* of the history of different contingencies that made it possible. There simply would not be a history of the present to uncover for Foucault if we treated our current situation like philosophers who use luck to think about moral responsibility do. Luck as a concept wipes out history altogether and so is not a good concept to understand character. This is because character is tightly connected to duration since it is only over time, by changing habits and doing better actions repeatedly that we can change character. And we can only see if character can be changed if we understand how that character came to be like it is in the first place.

It is worth going back to a point I briefly covered from Feinberg and Fischer. Feinberg argues, I think convincingly, that things out of our control do not necessarily only hold the valence of constraining us. Some things out of the agent's control in fact are *constitutive* of agency. As Fischer puts it at the end of section 3.2, "one must admit that there are causally enabling conditions – conditions that, as it were, 'set the stage' for our exercises of agency, and without which our agency would be different in central aspects or would not even exist" (Fischer 2005, 126). Fischer's point is that we should concentrate on "playing out the cards we are dealt" and that is where we should focus inquiries about luck's influence on character. Fischer's

invocation in making a comparison to a rocket tells us a lot about the concept of luck. Luck myopically focuses on the pilot of the rocket but this is because it seems that, as a conceptual tool, using luck to inquire into the actual rocket itself, is pointless. If we want luck to be *useful*, it needs to be able to analyse not only retentional responsibility, but generative too. We need to be able to take stock of the platform and the rocket's influence on the pilot, but luck cannot do this for us. Because how well this rocket was engineered, when it was made, by whom, how much was invested in it tells us a *lot* about the capacities of the pilot. In order to conduct this inquiry, we need a different concept besides luck. In the next part of this chapter, I present what I think is a better concept for thinking about character: Merleau-Ponty's concept of Institution.

Section 4 – Institution

From this part onward, what will now be the driving force of this chapter is to present Merleau-Ponty's Bergsonian concept of "Institution" in a way that fills in the holes I created with my criticism of luck. The failings of the concept of character luck I hope will make a good stalking-horse to present my positive account of how institution can help us think about what we *really* might want to know about generative responsibility. Part of this positive project includes trying, in the lingo of Fischer's metaphor, of putting the rocket and the pilot together: connecting generative and retentive responsibility. These last parts of the chapter also have a prospective point for the last two chapters on relational autonomy. I hope the concept of institution can aid in thinking beyond the concept of socialization as purely a constraint. Institution helps us think about what conditions of possibility need to be set up relationally, socially, organically and importantly, diachronically for feminist autonomy.

Explaining the concept of Institution is no easy task because it is a complicated concept. Presenting every fact of the concept of Institution goes beyond the scope of this chapter. I will concentrate on bringing out that "institution" views history as "problem solving" rather than teleologically like Hegelian dialectics and what Bergson means about time's "retrospective illusion." I will then turn back to Part 3.3 and my critique that luck does not inherit its own lucky past. I show positively that institution empirically sets up the conditions of possibility for future events by taking into account the differentiated weight of the past. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I will go back to Part 3.2 and my critique that luck reifies events as natural. I show that institution goes beyond just the concept of "socialization", that it can embrace overcoming the bio/cultural conceptual bifurcation. Importantly based on my critique in 3.2, institution does this without naturalizing or reifying our biological conditions of possibility.

Section 4.1 – Problem Solving

In evolutionary biology, there is a metaphor used to help explain how organisms seem so suited to their environment. This is the metaphor of the environment posing a "problem" or "question" that puts a certain kind of selection pressure on an organism. The organism, in turn, must come up with a "solution" that adapts to this questioning selection pressure or the species will die off.[52] This problem and solution model can help us think about institution. Merleau-Ponty in his lectures on Institution defines it as a "past which creates a question, puts it in reserve, makes a situation that is indefinitely open" (IP 22). This question posed by the past is answered by instituting a new dimension or conditions of possibility different in kind than the

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[52] In Chapter 5 I will question this asymmetric action of the environment always being active and the organism always passively adapting to this active pressure with the concept of "niche construction" but for now this is a good metaphor to begin thinking about the concept of "institution".

past. Importantly for the organism, the environment's selective pressure does not sufficiently determine a particular solution of adaptation. There are multiple solutions or ways to exploit opportunities created by any environmental questioning. Thus, identical species inhabiting identical environments often generate very different solutions (Beatty 2008, 198). We can see this from the figure below. Below are the varied "solutions" of antelope horns that arose to the selection pressure or problem of defending itself both from predators and other male antelopes.
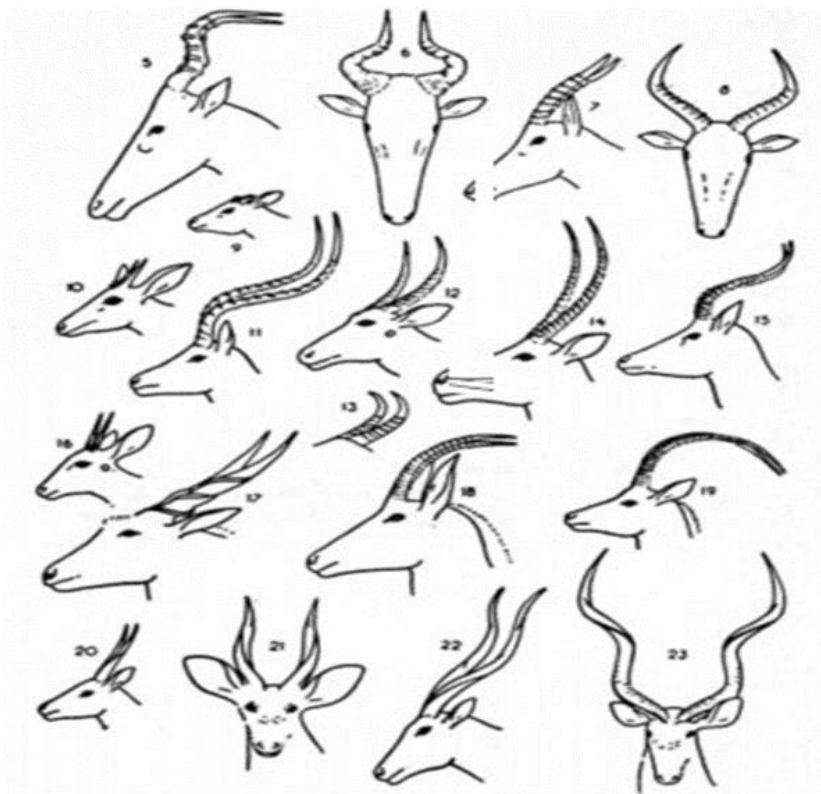
John Beatty argues that these variations, along with many other examples, show the radical contingency of evolution. Problems underdetermine a concrete solution. If this wasn't true, we would have a convergence on one kind of horn. Instead Beatty argues that if we replayed the evolution of these antelopes again and again, we would never get a convergence on horn shapes but instead get very different horns through each replay. Just as the environment vastly underdetermines the adapted solution by the organism, for the concept of institution, the

"past did not, in fact, fully contain its own answer; [institution as] the answer [to the question posed to it by the past] exceeds it, transforms the very terms with which it functioned, and thus could never have been predicted or foreseen from that past" (Maclaren 2017b, 56-57).

But this radical contingency of solutions or horn shapes should not be taken for randomness. Just as a question provides a conceptual "negative space", a kind of resistance to just *any* solution, so too does the past shape events and the concrete dimensions that can be instituted. "The newness of creation is in some sense constrained by the problem it is trying to solve, yet we could also say that it is *constituted* by the way the problem is posed, 'life creates both the solutions and the terms of the problem in the course of its evolution'" (Al-Saji 2010b, 157). Merleau-Ponty explains that a new instituting problem "haunts" (IP 24) the old solution. The solution is latent and is brought to light (Maclaren 2017b, 57) by the event of instituting which gives a new kind of order and gives for the first time a sense of the past leading up to it (Maclaren 2017a, 611). So one characteristic of institution is the double aspect that "it is itself and beyond itself, restriction and openness" (IP 12) a dynamic of contingency that makes sense to us retrospectively by the shape that the past has given it.

A more general example given by Merleau-Ponty is the instituting of a new style in the history of painting by a painter. Here he shows a three part "subterranean logic" of institution. First the artist is trained in a practice of art of the past institutions. Secondly the painter then works toward a different style and this different style announces the styles of those who will follow him. But at the same time, thirdly, while influenced by this painter, those that follow will be unpredictably different from this painter. As Merleau-Ponty sums up, "everything hangs together, and yet it would not be possible to say where it is going" (IP 78). Let us take the more concrete example of the Renaissance sense of perspective in art. If you look at the Persian

miniature "Nighttime in a Palace" by Mir Sayyid Ali you can see the entire palace, both inside and outside. Everything inside the palace as well as all the bodies and faces are completely revealed to the viewer. If this scene was painted with perspective, walls would obscure details of the inside of the palace. By taking a point of view from somewhere, depth is given but the perfection of the miniaturists omnivision, as if from the perspective of God, is ruined (Pamuk 1998). But in the present, we are *already* familiar with the perspective of the viewer included in paintings. Our eyes are trained by perspective, so looking at the miniature now, habituated with the institution of perspective, one sees the rendering of the full palace as just parts of building being stacked on each other and the omnivision showing off full bodies and full faces despite not standing facing the viewer is seen as a strange disfiguration of the bodies in the painting. Retrospectively one sees perspective as "the solution to a problem that had long been germinating and asking for resolution: it seems to be the telos towards which other art was heading. Yet this necessity and this telos appear only retrospectively: pre-Renaissance painters did not have clearly in mind the problem of how to represent three-dimensional space seen from one perspective; that is to say, they did not know the telos and simply lack the means. The problems they struggled with were articulated in different terms, and their continuity with the Renaissance problem of perspective is manifest only once this Renaissance perspective is instituted" (Maclaren 2017b, 57).

Importantly, as I will explain later, the concept of institution does not just apply to culture but can go beyond the human. Bergson in his *Creative Evolution* looks at plants and animals as two contingent and diverging solutions, equally fitting, to the same "problem" of what to do with the energy of the sun (CE 158). One divergent solution responds to the fact that sunlight is plentiful, yet getting it directly is a costly process that does not yield that much energy. The plant

kingdom solves this problem of the costliness of harvesting energy from the sun directly with its immobility (CE 146) and photosynthesis. Animals on the other hand approached this problem differently. Our kingdom took a more high risk, high reward route of consuming other life that had already harvested the energy from the sun, yielding higher amounts of energy. But the cost of this large amount of energy came at the price of the need to increase mobility to find more organisms to consume which then called for the need for more mobility from carnivores.

Merleau-Ponty explicitly describes his work on institution as "a revision of Hegelianism" (IP 79) and the metaphor of problem solving is a part of this effort. So, it is worth it before going to the next section to highlight differences between dialectics and "problem solving." In both dialectics and problem solving, making sense of what came after and how the past fits together only makes sense in retrospect. This is the meaning of Hegel's famous remarks in the preface of his *Philosophy of Right* that "philosophy… does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready… The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering". For Hegel, the past has differentiated nodes of significance. These nodes are the collection of a series of philosophical principles shown to be failures by testing these principles against lived experience. The essence of History is the spiraling series of our learning from each of those failures, attempting the opposite, failing again and then attempting to do the opposite and then overcoming both those failures using what we learned from both these failures. This is the dialectic.

But might failing and doing the opposite then overcoming be seen as problems that are getting solved? No, the way that looking back on this past and the teleology given by Hegel's method is much different than institution. The view we get of the dialectic is from the view of the absolute, when every failure is overcome. This absolute arranges the past elegantly as a

theodicy. All that failure is completely redeemed in the end because of the absolute. The past is arranged completely rationally. Failure is always accompanied by learning and overcoming that failure which completely sheds those things that lead to failure until this final overcoming known as the absolute. Through the experience of failing, as it is happening, we might consider this as an immanent journey, but because of the importance of the theodicy of the absolute, there becomes a strong, transcendent teleology involved in Hegel's method.

Merleau-Ponty describes institution as "neither chance nor entelechy," (IP 22) institution is contingent but not random. Looking at my example of the Renaissance art style, Merleau-Ponty argues that the "Renaissance perspective in turn as not being the true telos, but the particular case of a more general investigation which continues" (IP 41). There is no absolute end to art styles from which to look back from. The teleology is weaker still, from where we are now, we can never say that this was where the art style was headed, even in retrospect even when the solution to the problem is so elegant, it is still investigative rather than final.

My example of biological evolution is the best metaphor for the paths that problem solving take in contrast to Hegelian dialectics. For Hegel, *every* failure and overcoming was necessary to reach the absolute stage, everything learned in the past is expressed and made explicit in the final form, nothing is wasted, nothing is vestigial. That is the point of the absolutely redeeming power of Hegel's teleological theodicy. It is a *transcendent* teleology. Institution, on the other hand, like evolution, is an *immanent* teleology. There is no absolute, final, perfect form of any organism to then use to look back and order all the adaptations in a perfectly rational and completely necessary history. In the dialectical perspective on history, we can think of each failure and overcoming constantly pushing forward in a genuinely concrete direction toward the absolute teleology. Even negations are considered determinative and

productive. Meanwhile the analogy of problems and solutions is of sudden changes in direction ("virage") (Al-Saji 2007, 194). Looking back from the present, the past, rather than a straight line directly leading to a goal, it takes a more "zigzag, and winding" (Al-Saji 2012, 352) direction to the present. From the view of Hegel's absolute, this is unnecessary and wasteful movement.

Also, while organisms adapt elegantly to their environment, selection pressure is not perfectly refining. Just as for a student, getting an "A" is not necessary to pass a course, it is sufficient merely to get above an "F", so too animals do not have to be adaptively perfect, they merely need to survive until they have procreated. This means there is a great number of variations that are neither selected for nor selected against. Instead, they are just variation and they accumulate as long as they are not too detrimental. As animals evolve, these variations are conserved and remain vestigial, like our tailbones inherited from our simian past. There is a lot of variation that may never get used, may never even be expressed. These past variations are preserved and sometimes are used by the evolving organism as a solution to an environmental problem. But more often than not, these preserved variations are invisible, they might have been used in a possible solution, but they were not. This vast reserve of variation that is preserved is both real and possibly useless since there is *no teleological guarantee*, like in the Hegelian dialectic, that any variation might be used as an adaptive solution posed by the environment. There is a vast forgotten reserve of unrealized solutions of "what could have beens" to any problem. Our forgetting of what could have been gives the illusion that the solution was inevitable and the only solution to that problem. We easily forget the contingency of the past. I tackle this "retrospective illusion" in the next section.

Section 4.2 – The Retrospective Illusion

One of the inherent problems when looking at the past is that once we know where things are headed, it looks like it was always headed that way. The solution to the problem that the past brings up takes on an inevitability that gives "an emaciated representation of the past" (Al-Saji 2010b, 158). As Kym Maclaren explains, instituting makes the solution clearer, making everything fall into place but in the same move this obfuscates the indeterminacy that led up to it. This is because the solution seems so obvious that we cannot recall how it feels not to know and still be searching, as if we had the relevant terms in hand all along (2017a, 612).

One example of this is the assumption of an inherent teleology of development. It can seem that organisms are innately programmed to mature in a step-wise fashion, especially at infancy. Even before the lectures on institution, Merleau-Ponty argued that "everything is also contingent in man in the sense that this human way of existing is not guaranteed to each human child through some essence acquired at birth, in the sense that it must be continuously renewed in him through the accidents of the objective body" (PP 174). Even in animals, things can go very wrong if, for example, a goose does not imprint on geese, they can be raised by chickens (IP 17). Esther Thelen and Linda Smith make a similar argument in the context of infants taking their first steps. Looking back in a grand sweep, development can seem rule-driven, but if one turns up the magnification of the microscope to look at important details of institution during infancy, what looks orchestrated turns out to have no essence (Thelen and Smith 1994, xvi). In fact, it is experience with the world that drives development rather than any innate plan. If the development of walking were innate, we would have an impossible task explaining how the body anticipates the movement needed for novel situations not previously encountered (Thelen and Smith 1994, 9). In our transactions with the world there is a lot of room for randomness and

contingency which is why development itself has to be plastic, responsive, and adaptive to constantly changing conditions. Yet through the power of the retrospective illusion, scientists assumed there was an abstract, innate device, the Central Pattern Generator (CPG), driving the teleological plan of the infant's development toward walking. These contingencies of development that Thelen and Smith point out are forgotten because looking back, development toward a baby's first steps looks so smooth (1994, Ch 1 and 2).

Section 5 – Institution Sets Up the Empirical Conditions of Possibility for what Proceeds It

In Section 3.3, Neil Levy makes a *reductio* argument that luck cannot inherit its past luck because the fact that the right sperm and egg connected should not affect the luck of whether or not he is typing words on his computer. This section is the positive argument that fills in the conceptual space left after my critique of Levy's position on inheriting luck. If luck is a concept where it cannot inherit the luck from the past, then luck as a concept is poorer for it not being able to do that. Instead, I argue that institution is a richer concept and more useful because of institution's inheriting all previous instituting. While both luck and institution give us a conceptual tool to think about the role that contingency has in shaping our lives, luck's relation to the past and how the past changes what *kind* of contingency could effect someone is non-existent. To Nagel's definition of luck there is no difference between random luck and contingency shaped by the past. Thinking of nearby worlds does not help in this task either. The weight of the past on our present is not an equally applied force and it is only with institutions that we can see this.

When something is instituted, a new dimension, different in kind from what preceded it is set up. Because it is different in kind from its past, an institution also sets up the conditions of

possibility for everything that comes after, beginning with the next institution. In terms that we learned from the previous section, an institution is both an answer to an instituting question but also shapes the question that the next institution will answer. What these conditions of possibilities are cannot be predicted and can only be known in retrospect. What this means is that rather than setting up the *a priori* conditions for all further instituting, institutions set up the *empirical* conditions of possibility for everything that comes after. It is empirical in the sense of being contingent in the way that infant development is contingent in the previous section. The only way we know how an infant develops is not something inherent to the infant, but only through the actual experience of the infant interacting with their milieu. A lot can change once we don't just assume a teleology but follow development immanently. In the same way, institution has to be lived through, immanently for one to eventually find out not only what the "question" posed was but also the solution to that question.

What the idea of "condition of possibility" conveys here is also the conversion of contingency into necessity. Once there is an instituting it is valvic, there is a kind of irreversibility such that even if one works toward reversing that instituting, this reversal has to take that institution into account. Once it is out there in the world, it cannot be taken back as if it had never happened. Merleau-Ponty argues, wherever there is institution, "there is an open register, history" (IP 10). We can better understand what this means by referring to this quote's Bergsonian allusion. Bergson states in *Creative Evolution* that "wherever anything lives [wherever there is duration], there is open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed" (20). This irreversible new dimension is set up even if everyone forgets it is there, this is the reality of time as duration.

Although institution sets up something different in kind than the past, the retrospective illusion is such that this difference and newness begins to be taken for granted even as it sets up the conditions of our present. Stephen J. Gould points out that our basic biological human constraints came about contingently yet they are now so natural to us that we do not even consider them constraints. "Some constraints are so integral to our being that we rarely even recognize them, for we never imagine that life might proceed in another way. Consider our narrow range of average adult size and the consequences of living in the gravitational world of large organisms, not the world of surface forces inhabited by insects. Or the fact that we are born helpless (many animals are not), that we mature slowly, that we must sleep for a large part of the day, that we do not photosynthesize, that we can digest both meat and plants, that we age and die… These biological boundaries are so evident that they have never engendered controversy" (1996, 358). These institutions, although remote in our past, (before maybe even our species!) still set up the conditions of possibility for what we do now. In the next section I elaborate on institution changing contingency into necessity, its irreversibility and a biological thought experiment about replaying the tape of life.

Section 5.1 – Contingency, Necessity, and Irreversibility

Merleau-Ponty explains that institution is a double movement, it "is the transformation which preserves… and surpasses" (IP 23). It gains a dynamic anchor in order to make possible new acquisitions. Robert Vallier describes this movement through the metaphor of sedimentation (2005, 287). Yet, I think this gives a wrongheaded image of institution as being made up of the same "stuff" as previous time, just more so and that the past is deposited evenly and gradually. In fact, institution is able to act as a valve because it is a difference in kind to what came before.

What might help illustrate this is the development of an organism. Merleau-Ponty sees the irreversibility of duration itself in organisms, the way they continue to accumulate time through gradual aging but also change in kind, irreversibly, through the different stages of life (IP 17). This irreversibility of institution also gives duration its immanent teleology. As Thelen and Smith describe it, the sweep of development of an organism is directional. "The changes, both qualitative and quantitative, are not reversible. Once a new structure emerges… or a behavior performed, the organism does not revert back to earlier forms. Certain functions may decline in old age or with disease, but the developmental process does not become undone; the organism does not look like an immature form" (Thelen and Smith 1994, xiv).

But we can never forget that this directional movement is immanent. As we follow along with the duration, where the next irreversibly anchored instituting will happen is completely contingent. Merleau-Ponty describes the development of an individual and of humanity as a whole, "Man is an historical idea, not a natural species. In other words, there is no unconditioned possession in human existence, and yet neither is there any fortuitous attribute. Human existence will lead us to revisit our usual notion of necessity and of contingency, because *human existence is the change of contingency into necessity through the act of taking up*" (PP 174). This is the heart of what is meant by institution as an empirical condition of possibility. What once came about without teleology but contingency conditioned by the past is transformed into necessity as a solution to a question when we look back upon that institution. Necessity here means that nothing after it can happen without reckoning with previous institution. This contingency that still is driven by the weight of the past can be illustrated well through examples from evolutionary biology.

Over a long, epochal amount of time, evolutionary change can be quite dramatic and unpredictable. Yet the change that is possible is still conditioned by the weight of its past institution and tendencies. "Random changes in organisms are nevertheless changes in the neighborhood of the pre-existent state. A mutation in green peas or in fruit flies results in the alteration of the development of green peas or fruit flies. The flies will not produce vines that climb trellises, nor will the peas fly around and lay eggs" (Lewontin and Levins 2007, 30). What is more interesting is that at a point in the remote past, flies and green peas actually shared institutions and tendencies, but the expression of this institution must also reckon with the new and different organic institutions established after the animal and plant kingdom diverged. The example Bergson gives of the power of the weight of the past but also the irreversibility of recent institution is the Venus flytrap. Plants, according to Bergson, solved the problem of energy from the sun with immobility and photosynthesis while animals solved the problem by eating other organisms but needed mobility in order to do this. But the flytrap, against its plant-like character of immobility and photosynthesis, eats bugs and moves (CE 119-121). In that sense it seems like it is breaking character and becoming more animalistic. Yet, in order to eat bugs, we can be sure the flytrap could not have possibly grown legs and moved around like an animal. It does not share that character tendency with the animal kingdom. Instead it has its own plant-like way of doing this. It lets the fly do most of the moving by luring it toward its "jaws" which look just like a receptive, harmless plant. Its only motion is to snap shut. Then a secretion from its roots that its ancestors used to get nutrients from the soil has been repurposed to eat organisms. In evolution, just as in maturation, duration is real. Duration is valvic and irreversible. A plant cannot just shed its tendency for immobility since it has grown over millions of years to have rigid cell walls and cannot instantly have the more mobile type of wall-less cells that animals do. And even if plants

could be mobile, its immobile past would continue to haunt its future responses to the environment.

The Venus flytrap is also an example of the creativity of evolution. Even as an immanent process that can only use the matter at hand and that is constrained by all the institution of the past, a plant can reach into its shared past and exploit an opportunity of consuming energy from a mobile organism. I look more at the creativity that institution can draw upon from previous institutions in the next part.

Section 6 – The Creativity of Institution as an Immanent Process

The "creativity" of institution can yet again be best understood through the example of evolution. Evolution and institution have a combination of two "techniques" in order to set up a new dimension that is different in kind yet contingent and unpredictable. The first is the vast reserve of the latent, passive immemorial past of non-actualized solutions to previous problems. The second is the "tinkering" that is evolution's "method" of taking unused physical variation or structures initially used for another evolutionary function and repurposing it for the current "problem." We can get a clearer focus on this concept of "creativity" of evolution if we contrast it with the gene and adaptation-centric, reductive determinism of the "modern synthesis" view of evolution that is currently dominant in biology.

Section 6.1 – "The Snowball": The Weight of the Past

The difference between Immanent teleology and the Modern synthesis version of biology is the difference between what Beatty and Carrera call the "two roads diverged in a yellow wood/ And sorry I could not travel both" vs. the "all roads lead to Rome" (2011, 474) views of

evolutionary time. The latter is ahistorical and time does not matter. We can liken it to a marble released in a bowl. The marble will inevitably end up at the bottom of the bowl. Its present position does not depend on where it was released in the bowl and so it does not carry a trace of its past. The physics of the situation leads inexorably from any starting point inside the lip to the same position at the bottom (Ibid). This is the adaptation driven, modern synthesis version of evolution. To see how this marble analogy applies to biology, we can look at a map of all the adaptive possibilities vs. fitness of an organism. If we have the same organisms and we hold them within the same environment, according to the reductive model, due to the perfecting power of adaptive and fitness pressures, the adaptations should march up the fitness landscape to rest, like the marble, at the peak of this landscape. Basically, all the organisms should evolve into the exact same, optimally fit organism. This model of evolution would not be able to explain why there were so many varieties of horns for the antelope in Figure 1 because only the most efficient horn should have survived. Here history does *not* matter.

The other vision of evolution has a very different metaphor. In the opening of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson gives the image of a snowball for his idea of the power of duration and the weight of the past. This is not "the accumulation of events in a disorganized mass but… a past in continual movement, immanently reconfigured through its own duration. This past is force and tendency, where every 'addition' is a shift in direction or inflection of the relational whole" (Al-Saji 2018, 344). Yet also, "this past remains incomplete: because it is haunted by the memory of tendencies, diverged from but not actualized— traces of what might have been" (Al-Saji 2020, 102). This haunting by tendencies of the past is the vast reserve that can be tapped for creative solutions to questions posed by the past. But like a snowball, this past is not ethereal, it has a weight and when rolling there is a momentum and energy that wells up in the present, driving

and steering things yet not in fixed ways (Morris and Maclaren 2015, 8). The future remains

contingent. Yet how can the past steer and drive while still remaining contingent and open? We

can see this more clearly, and in opposition to the modern synthesis ahistorical account, in a

thought experiment about replaying the tape of evolutionary life.

Section 6.2 – Replaying the Tape of Life

      Because the march up the fitness plane is ahistorical, just like the marble, if we hold the

external situation exactly the same, we should *always* end up in the same place at the top of the

peak, no matter how many times this happens. But Stephen J. Gould argued that this reductive

story might not be true. Gould held that if we replayed the tape of life over and over again, we

would notice very different results each time. Also, these differences would not just be random

but would be driven by that species and organism's *endogenous* past. Gould was opposed to the

modern synthesis approach that the organism was determined exogenously, by pure adaptation to

its environment. In short, Gould basically believed that the past mattered, that it drove and

steered the present but that it did not drive it in a fixed way, like institution. Sadly, Gould did not

live long enough to see the actual demonstration of his thought experiment. Only a few years

after his death in 2008, Richard Lenski would finish his twenty year "Long Term Evolution

Experiment" (LTEE) on E. coli bacteria that would show how right Gould's thought experiment

was.[53]

      The first experiment was to take 12 identical replicas of E. coli and grow them in the

same exact environment with citrate for 45 000 generations over twenty years. It was easy to see

that all 12 of the E. coli after that many generations were completely different. This showed that

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[53] I take the following descriptions and interpretation of the LTEE from (Beatty and Carrera 2011) and (Desjardin 2016)

evolution was contingent or random and that replaying the tape of life would yield different results. The second, more interesting experiment was to see if the differences in the replays of life were due to randomness or contingency, to see if it was only chance or if and how endogenous history mattered to evolution.

Lenski froze lineages of each of the 12 E. coli every 500 generations so that the same lineage itself could be replayed again and again from different stages of its own evolution. E. coli normally has a hard time growing in citrate environments because it cannot metabolize it. But at about 31 000 generations, one of the 12 lineages began to metabolize the citrate in the environment, giving it a huge fitness boost. We might even call this an institution within the past of E. coli. An experiment was set up with this lineage. Multiple samples of deep history, of very old lineages before 10 000 generations were replayed and compared to multiple samples of newer history, relatively new lineages that were replayed. If the frequency of the ability to metabolize citrate was found to occur a similar number of times for both old and new lineages, this meant that the evolution of this ability was just due to random chance. But what happened was that the new lineages were able to get the capacity to metabolize citrate way more often than the old lineages. This showed that endogenous history, the establishing of an institution was what was driving the direction of evolution. The researchers were able to narrow the contingent change in the lineage to around 20 000 generations. The researchers found that this result was robust after replicating this experiment with 3 other lineages that gained the capacity to metabolize citrate.

In evolutionary biology, I argue that this establishes and concretely makes sense of the idea of the weight of the past pushing further institution, yet still having it be contingent. But how does this relate to the metaphor of "creativity" that I began this section with? I argue that

this experiment establishes the first condition of creativity that I mentioned, the reserve of tendencies and institutions that can be drawn upon by the organism and species. Once established, this can be drawn upon like a kind of "organic memory" much later on.

Take the example of convergent evolution. In the ahistorical, modern synthesis version of evolution, the fact that, for instance, the eye shows up again and again, independently in such different species as molluscs, octopi, birds and mammals is explained by the idea that the possibility space of morphological structures that solve the environmental problem of light is actually very small. Evolutionary convergence "may simply indicate that there are a limited number of ways, mechanical or physiological, to accomplish objectives… One also assumes that the octopus eye resembles the vertebrate eye because there are not many ways to make a camera-like apparatus" (Pearson 2002, 92). But this explanation has been shown to be wrong by the LTEE. The explanation for the convergence of many organisms, from the humble mollusc to the sophisticated eye of the mammal, to form an eye should actually come from some institution from deep within all of these creatures' past. We find, remarkable as this might sound, that this is in fact, true! "Cephalopods and vertebrates evolved their camera eyes independently, as their common ancestor, which lived somewhere between 600 and 1000 Ma [million years] ago, had little nervous system to speak of… Although separated for nearly one billion years, cephalopods and vertebrates have retained from their common ancestor a certain developmental homologue called 'Pax-6,' which is crucial for the development of the eye in each group… As it turns out, Pax-6 can be *substituted* inter-phylum without any negative effect on eye morphogenesis. It can be swapped between vertebrates and cephalopods, and between both of these groups and the compound-eyed arthropods, without disrupting normal eye development" (Powell 2011, 366-367). Even though structure, morphology and in the case of arthropods, the function of

compound eyes are very different, they actually originate from the "organic memory" of a single tendency from their primitive past.

We can get a better handle on the past as a reserve of unactualized tendencies if we think of the forward movement of evolution analogous to a single consciousness with a memory. When Bergson suggests that the eye that vertebrates and molluscs share derives from a shared organic memory, what could this mean? What Bergson is suggesting is that just as a teen and an adult share the same childhood memories and therefore have a similar character, so too do vertebrates and molluscs. They both appeal to the same organic instituting of what made the eye possible in the past because of the fact of a singular origin of species. For a mollusc, this possibility became actualized quickly in evolutionary terms while this possibility remained latent in vertebrates' organic memory for half a billion years. But what we have to remember is that life is different from a single consciousness. All of life's actualizations of organisms with different actual variations should be compared to the unactualized possibility and variation that had to be abandoned by a single consciousness. At a certain point, if I had chosen to go to the University of Toronto instead of McGill, my life, my character and my tendencies would have been different. Muhammad in Toronto is an unactualizable past since that moment is gone. But this is not true for evolution. From the perspective of evolution, because it has a multiplicity of lives to work with, all possibilities can become real. It is just that many of these possibilities become dead end species that die off. But imagine if both my possibilities became real and we were able to see both Muhammad's lives. We are able to see both how an eye made early in evolution, instantiated in the mollusc, and an eye made from different parts and made later look like in the vertebrate. Here both possibilities became actualized. Looking at both lives, we would certainly see similar actions and decisions since both Muhammads would share and were shaped by many

of the same memories. A long time ago in the organic past, the kingdom of animals split in such

a way that some animals responded to a certain problem with greater immobility while others

answered the same problem divergently with more mobility. In the same way with the two

Muhammads, it makes sense that however both these two branches of animal evolved, they still

had access to the same character that they shared for so many years of evolution. And so, we

should not be surprised that both molluscs and vertebrae solutions to the problem of perception

and light are similar yet uniquely different.

Now that the idea of the deep reserve of organic memory has been established, I explain

the second, but interrelated, method that evolution exploits to be "creative". Evolution is an

immanent tinkerer rather than a creator of artifacts. Artifacts have their purpose before being

fabricated. But as an immanent process, evolution cannot fabricate just any and all solutions to

problems posed by the environment, it only has the functional organs and organized matter

around at the time to work with. But this does not limit evolution to just forever recombining

different permutations. Evolution is opportunistic. "Living organisms are historical structures:

literally creations of history. They represent, not a perfect product of engineering, but a

patchwork of odd sets pieced together when and where opportunities arose. For the opportunism

of natural selection is not simply a matter of indifference to the structure and operation of its

products. It reflects the very nature of a historical process full of contingency" (Jacob 1977,

1166).

One of the more creative and opportunistic ways that evolution works is through what

Gould called the process of "exaptation." This word should be thought of in contrast to

"adaptation". Exaptation is when an unused variance not shaped by natural selection, or a

function shaped by natural selection for a particular purpose, is co-opted for a new use (Gould

2002, 1233). Gould argues that exaptations, unlike adaptations, are creative and unpredictably contingent. How could we know from a former vestigial form or a former function, what function it would now serve in this completely new and never before encountered context? Concretely, feathers used to appear on the forearms of small running animals and were used for thermoregulation. How could we know from that that they had the potential to be used for flight (Gould 2002, 1231)? Coming back to our famous example of the eye, Gould argues, "prior to the evolution of eyes, who would have predicted that the optical transparency of several enzymes and proteins might one day become relevant to their suitability for cooptation as lens crystallins" (Gould 2002, 1259). One cannot help but think of section 5.2 and the retrospective illusion when thinking of these two examples of exaptation. While it seems obvious in hindsight to solve the problem of light with the exact types of eyes we have, this was an immanent and creatively tinkered solution from a number of useless enzymes and proteins. To conclude this section, even though they are immanent and durative, the creativity and unpredictability of institutions comes from the idea of it tinkering and co-opting but also from institution's ability to tap into the rhythms of a deep, latent organic memory, "the immemorial past".

Section 6.3 – Time as Multiplicities and Different in Kind

As mentioned in Section 3.3, the problem with Dennett's view that the past is just a series of events, some good luck some bad, is not just that bad luck early in life is uncompensatable but that he treats the past as undifferentiated. Implicitly, much of the work done since Section 4, in thinking about the past through the concept of institution, has been an argument against this view. But in this section, I explicitly argue that with the concept of institution, we can get a better sense of how the past is both multiplicitous and differentiated not just in degree, but in

kind. While luck does not tell us anything about the past and therefore cannot give us direction to change circumstances of bad systemic luck, I argue that the conceptual tool of institution can help us with this. At the very least by admitting that there was a past to the present circumstances and that it conditioned the possibilities of this present.

In the previous section, I concentrated on the theme of the weight of the past, using Bergson's metaphor of a snowball. But where this metaphor runs out of similarity with the instituted past is that snowballs are made up of the same substance. In the previous section we explored the unpredictability, contingency and creativity of institutions. The past, while malleable and ductile still varies in texture, densities and granularities (Al-Saji 2018, 343), there is only a perceived continuity and flow but this relies on structured discontinuities and differentiations (Al-Saji 2020, 100). This is why the past does not have a univocity but instead is a tangle of tendencies pulling in different directions (Al-Saji 2018, 344). This and the power of its endogenous creativity means that outgrowths that lead from institution to institution is by successive waves and detours (IP 24) that zigzag (Al-Saji 2012, 352). The waves are irreducible and there is a sense of incommensurability (Al-Saji 2010b, 159) between them because they are different in kind.

In the picture of the past that luck presents, the past is just a succession of events where everything that happens is "history". As Martin Heidegger (infamously) argues, when history is defined "as a sequence of occurrences that sinks away, then even the succession of the revolutions of the propeller on an aircraft is history" (Heidegger 2009, 73). So, what is the quality of an event that redesigns the field of meaning according to Bergson and Merleau-Ponty? "Is any ordinary happening a possible institutionary event? What counts as such? A tsunami? The Oscars?... Merleau-Ponty argues that it would be excessive to classify every non-natural

event… as an institution… But for Merleau-Ponty, events like the industrial revolution are what he calls 'matrix-events' [IP 12] which fundamentally reorganize the field of meaning" (Vallier 2005, 293). Some instants stand out as formative and structure the dimensions of their own significance from within (Beith 2018, 49). Merleau-Ponty talks about institution *condensing* time (IP 24). In as much as our own personal developmental past can have institutions, Bergson also talks about significant nodes within memory and our developmental past. Our characters are not just the homogeneous summation of every decision and action we have ever made. We cannot, as Bergson illustrates wonderfully, just treat our past like a bag that we just plunge our hands into blindly to retrieve memories (MM 171). Parts of our lives become more important while other parts stand in the background. These important parts of our lives colour every decision we make and give us certain tendencies. Bergson refers to these clusters of expanded memories as "shining points" (MM 171) that gravitate associated memories toward them. For example, sometimes when there is trauma, these become forced shining points which alter our character greatly because they seem to dominate and charge other memories in a completely new way.

Section 7 – Institution Crosses the Bio/Cultural Boundary without Reifying Nature

In Section 3.2 I gave examples about being stuck in traffic and about the bad character luck of a white officer in colonial Africa. I argued, inspired by Card and Tessman, that how the luck came about mattered and that calling something that had a structural and political history that could have been different is not the same kind of luck as pure chance and randomness nor like a pure act of nature. As we have seen with Hurricane Katrina, even *natural* disasters have a social and political component. One problem with luck is that it collapses and therefore reifies social and political moments with natural ones.

Within each present, there are any number of institutions of varying time dilations converging. With such different time scales, institutions cross the conceptual boundary of the natural and the cultural. Importantly for the task ahead in the final chapter, more so than just looking at socialization, with Institution we can analyze the conditions of possibility for someone's autonomy and take a multilayered look at the different timescales involved. We can look at how the developmental timescale interacts with the social timescale interacts with the biological timescale, as the weight of the past presses on shaping the context for what can be done by the individual. The past here as pressing on the present while not fixing it is important. This is because, just as it allows for immanent creativity for evolution, so too does this mean, for the last chapter, that I am not forced to analyze autonomy through a purely structural view. Systemic oppression is not completely determinative of whether someone is autonomous or not. There is possibility and room for the creative actions of individuals to intervene on their own situations. Just because the empirical conditions of possibility might be oppressive to a person does not mean that this set up is sufficient to call anybody nonautonomous.

In *Creative Evolution,* Bergson further elaborates that the past we carry and that manifests in our every act is much larger than our own personal history. Our own tendencies to act reverberate with the vast organismic past that hangs over us (CE 8). Our actions cannot be calculated mathematically from each moment to the next. This is because "the present moment of a living body does not find its explanation in the moment immediately before, that *all* the past of the organism must be added to that moment, its heredity, in fact the whole of a very long history" (CE 24). If we take a step back to look at our larger evolutionary picture, this makes sense. Unlike plants, our animal bodies *tend* toward motion in order to gain energy for living our lives. We *tend* to manipulate objects and build using inert matter rather than just use our own

organic gifts to cope with the environment. As Gould pointed out, we have all these biological constraints that we just take for granted. All of these are just as much part of our character as is our pessimistic reactions to situations. There are many layers, different in kind, that press upon us, from the biological layer, the prenatal past, the childhood stage of development, and our entire skillset and technique in our habit-body (Al-Saji 2008, 44).

Looking at our own habit-body on its own instituted timescale is important and also a good way to demonstrate how we can put institution to work as a concept. Let us examine the skill and ability to do what is called the full "Asian squat". The squat is a triple flexion movement. You've got bending at the hips, knees, and ankle, so you have to fold everything up underneath you.[54] Marcel Mauss and Carrie Noland, based on Mauss' work, analyze this in a way that can help us see how institution conceptually cuts across bio/cultural lines but does not reify squatting as merely natural. In his famous *Techniques of the Body*, Mauss states that the body is a human's first and most natural instrument, both a technical object and means (Mauss 1973, 75). But this technical object only gains its technique through an apprenticeship in its culture. While of course individual style, or what he calls the psychological contribution, to skill and technique provide a variation in how different people do things, it is also the work of the collective. Another difference is the physiology or biological component of an individual. Everything we do "is conditioned by the three elements indissolubly mixed together" (Mauss 1973, 74). So, for instance Mauss argues that it is reifying to call even something as simple as the way we walk, sleep, swim or hold our children as merely natural. "To sum up, there is perhaps no 'natural way' for the adult. A fortiori when other technical facts intervene: to take ourselves, the fact that we wear shoes to walk transforms the positions of our feet: we feel it sure

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[54] https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2018/03/can-you-do-the-asian-squat/555716/

enough when we walk without them" (Mauss 1973, 74). Notice here how in our culture, it is culturally important to wear shoes, which then affects our physiology and biology, which is our stride and the way we walk. Mauss concludes that, "we are everywhere faced with physio-psycho-sociological assemblages of series of actions. These actions are more or less habitual and more or less ancient in the life of the individual and the history of the society" (Mauss 1973, 85).

We see this triple assemblage of different layers of our past in the squat. Mauss stresses that the full squat is a natural technique that most children are gifted with: a natural chair. But this changes whether one gets an Asian or Western socialization (Mauss 1973, 77). Importantly what Mauss means by natural technique is that if a culture does not set up normative obstacles for the infant, the "default" is to retain the ability and skill to do a full squat. Our culture views being close to the ground as bad and so it encourages children to sit in chairs. Over time this becomes almost irreversible and one cannot again fully squat without great effort and practice. This is because there is a physiological change which shortens the hamstrings and produces pain in the ankles and sacrum if a full squat is tried (Noland 2009, 26-27). The social has physiological consequences, the cultural shapes the material of the body and is thus a psycho-physio(bio)-sociological assemblage.

To conclude, here we have the biological timescale: the species institution of raising and walking on hind legs and squatting on just one's hind legs rather than on all fours in order to use the opposable thumbs to eat. We have the sociological and the developmental timescale interacting with that and atrophying that particular skill because of the Western cultural importance of being elevated over the ground in chairs. The biological, social and developmental set up the conditions of possibility for our body techniques and of our actions, but they are not fixed or determined. There is a contingent, not random, chance to change the habit-body through

repeated free actions. Say an Asian child, born and raised in the West goes back as an adult to live in Asia and trains and practices the squat. The individual here changes the cultural pressure to be above the ground in a chair and reverses the physiological and developmental obstacles to squatting. In this way, squatting, often thought of as just a physiological or natural ability can be analyzed differently using the different timescales of institution.

Part of the descriptive power that the concept of Institution gives us over the concept of luck is that our socialization is not automatically antagonistic to our character and autonomy just because the past of our formation was out of our control. The normative criteria for autonomy then is not automatically how much control we can wrest from what we have been endowed. Instead, the past is constitutive of the condition of possibility for *any* kind of autonomy in the first place. It is the medium of the expression of our autonomy. Yet even if descriptively we describe socialization as a medium, in the Foucaultian language of the introductory chapter, the "ethical substance," there is still two normative arguments to be made against the veil as a practice. The first comes from a Foucaultian source, Judith Butler, and the second from liberal critics of multiculturalism's effect on women.

Butler might argue against the practice of the veil in the way she would argue against *any* practice that reinforces feminine norms. This is because we suffer a kind of ontological domination from our inauguration into majority norms. These norms consign us automatically to fixed categories that are then coercively enforced such as the categories of forced heterosexuality and genders. Piety and veiling in general are the kind of practices that reinforce the norm of femininity and so like all norms that reinforce femininity, must be resisted.

The second kind of argument might acknowledge that there are a variety of forms of life and cultures that lead to a variety of socializations, but that there are socializations that are better

than others based on the normative criteria of allowing women to attain gender justice. This kind of argument explicitly acknowledges that we already know what gender justice looks like in order to separate those forms of life that are antagonist to socializing toward feminist goals and those that are conducive toward these goals. A second implicit argument is that Western forms of life are those that socialize women to a kind of autonomy such that they can choose gender justice and that other forms of life put cultural obstacles to women choosing feminist goals and preferences.

It is these two kinds of arguments that I turn to in the next chapter.

<u>Chapter 4: From Resistance to Creativity: Rethinking Feminist Futures</u>

There seem to be two types of tropes or narratives in popular representation of Muslim women who veil. The first is the story of opposition, where the young woman fights with tradition to heroically unveil in the last scene of the movie, usually with the help of her male, white saviour love interest.[55] The second narrative that catches the media's eye is one of subversion of what the hijab represents: the "cool" hijabi. Women in hijabs skateboarding in the movie *Hala* or *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* or the work of Tesnim Sayar who combines her hijab with plaid triangles to make a fashionable "mohawk". This signals to the audience that while tradition and patriarchy force this nascent feminist to cover her hair, nothing can stop her from showing her punk soul! Feminism has always been normatively focused on resistance. What has made Saba Mahmood both famous and infamous within feminist circles is her worry that in focusing our empirical analysis solely on actions we perceive to be resisting majority, patriarchal or oppressive norms, we as theorists occlude other ways of being. In this chapter I critique a central difficulty I find with Mahmood's account of her veiled ethnographic subjects, that these women do not change Islamic norms and that these norms are fixed. But I do this to further build on her account but also to defend her arguments against the problem of romanticizing resistance.

In the first section I look at Judith Butler's work on citation and iteration. She claims that every iteration of an action has the potential for failure and that every citation of a norm misses its mark. I argue that this account fails because it assumes each iteration is a discrete event which does not make sense if we consider embodied action. In the next section I give Mahmood's

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[55] See this for the critique of the movie *Hala* https://www.teenvogue.com/story/hala-movie-review and this for the TV show *Elite* https://metro.co.uk/2019/09/13/tv-needs-to-stop-empowering-muslim-women-by-removing-their-hijabs-10723969/

account of iteration and citation. Mahmood corrects Butlers theoretical blind spots by arguing that iteration is a durative learning process that works towards inhabiting a norm that is fixed by a tradition, in this case, Islam. I end this section by looking at Mahmood's story of Abir and show how trying to argue that norms are fixed undermines her own argument about Abir.

Mahmood claims Abir's story is about following traditional norms, yet it is easy to see how people have interpreted this story as one about opposition to a tradition or subverting and undermining norms. From section three to six I dispute Mahmood's assertion that these veiled women inhabit a norm yet the norm stays fixed. I argue that it is inherent to becoming an expert that the expert necessarily changes norms yet still inhabits it. In section five I use Wittgenstein to show how one can both inhabit a norm yet still change the practice. After that, in section six, I try to show what mastery over social rituals would look like. In the next section I use what we've learned from sections three to six to revisit Abir's story to show how she endogenously changes practices *through* the inhabitation of the norm. I conclude in sections eight and nine that the normative payoff to my account is an answer to feminist critiques of Mahmood and other post-colonial feminist work that it is not progressive and justifies an unjust status quo. My account allows for connecting with other accounts of non-Western forms of gender justice.

Section 1 – Judith Butler's Account of Performativity

Section 1.1 – Performativity as Iteration and Citation

In this section I explain the two defining concepts that encompass Judith Butler's theory of performativity: iteration and citationality. I stick to her work from the early 1990s[56] rather than jumping around throughout her oeuvre. Performativity is understood not as one act or even

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[56] This will involve her book *Bodies That Matter*, references to *Gender Trouble* and an essay from around that time.

a single theatrical sequence of actions, but more like rituals, performed over and over again. This is how we come to know what it means to be a female in our culture and come to define gender. There are two parts to the ritualization of norms like gender. The first is the continual repetition of the performance and the second, in every repetition, to perform the ritual correctly. The former Butler calls "iteration" and the latter "citation." She takes these two terms from Derrida's elaboration and reworking of JL Austin's theory of speech acts.

The importance of iteration is that an act gains its intelligibility as a stable norm by being done over time. Butler argues that this temporal dimension of iteration also creates the conditions of possibility for a stable subject. Iteration always refers to a citation, or a correct norm of how an act should be performed. Reciprocally, citation is importantly always an iteration of itself, even when it is the first occasion. Frank B. Farrell explains using Derrida's use of citation that even on the 'original' occasion, the citation is inserted into an intertextual network (1988, 56). It is never the subject alone that can define her performance. The stability of the norm and of the subject is then linked to others *recognizing* the intelligibility of what you are doing and that you are doing it correctly.

What does performing a ritual correctly here mean? It means to the standard of the intelligibility of a culture. If it is not recognized as correct by others in the culture, it doesn't count as an act and the person begins losing intelligibility. Butler goes as far as to claim that we must attribute action to the "the reiterative power of discourse" (Butler 2011, xii) that both produces the action but also regulates and constrains it. These iterations always travel beyond the control of my intentions (Farrell 1988, 54). Here Butler's move beyond just individual actions and intention opens up the conceptual space to showcase how we are shaped to our core through power. This regulation and constraint is the power of others. If your performance rises to the

threshold of intelligibility, the performance, over time, begins to fix categories and stabilize as what is counted as "proper".

Butler's performative theory gives an account of the genesis of the subject. We *are* our repeated actions, we are what we do. There is no subject before citational reiteration. For Butler, what we do is defined and constrained by our society through recognition and the threat of unintelligibility. In the next section, we explore how society is reproduced through enforcement of citations and the threat of existential, constitutive dissolution.

Section 1.2 – Desubjectification and the Inherent Failure of Norms

Butler emphasizes that our performative genesis isn't a construction we can control but instead we are constitutively *materialized* in our bodies through the recognition of our society of the intelligibility of our actions (Butler 2011, xix). We can think of the example of intersexed individuals. Through medical decisions constituted and shaped by the force of sexual and gender binaries, the intersexed were unintelligible as such and were surgically reconstructed as women.[57] This is a kind of ontological theory of recognition. I am constituted as a man and as heterosexual through repetition of a recognizable masculinity (whatever that happens to mean in my time and context). This materialization is both a constituting force but also a constraining force not just to my agency but to my very being. Butler plays with the French word *assujetissement* which has a polysemy of both becoming a subject or *subjectification* but also *subjection* or being subjugated. For Butler, this foreclosure of agency has its source in the same kind of power that allows for any kind of action to be intelligible (Butler 2011, xxiii). This kind

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[57] Here the ideology of the gender binary is further influenced by a heterosexual ideology since most doctors assumed that being a man with a small penis would destroy that individual's life and so the default action for the intersexed was as women (Fausto-Sterling 2000)

of constitutive power works through normalization of one way of being but also a naturalization that effaces the process of normalization.

This kind of immanent power of subjectification/subjection has a necessary correlate of creating a boundary of desubjectification. The power that materializes does so by making an "inside" of intelligibility, but in making an inside circle of intelligibility it constitutively makes an "outside" of unintelligibility. The penalty for not conforming is not just punishment, but the threat of dematerialization. The stark choice is to either "only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (Butler 2011, x) or be abjected to "the domain of unlivability" (Butler 2011, xxx). As Noela Davis describes the situation, "the price we pay for our subjectivity is to live as coerced beings with violence at the core of our selves" (2012, 886). For Butler this also presents a paradox. What contours the conditions of possibility of "*resisting*" these constraints are themselves "enabled, if not produced, by such norms" (Butler 2011, xxiii). So, the important descriptive and normative question for Butler is that now that she has framed power in this way, how does social change happen? How do people within communities resist a power that is immanent to their being able to do anything at all?

Because of the way Butler sets up the concept of power, collective action must be done *within* the medium of power and not in opposition to it. Instead, the focus must be on "resistance." Resistance, for Butler, is tactical exploitation of inherent failures within the concepts of iteration and citation. The failure inherent in iteration is that the existence of those acts are not foundational upon anything pre-existing them, they are defined only by the acts themselves. They inevitably need upkeep over time, each iteration risk failure. This failure can come in many forms. An act can escape and exceed citation, reiterations might also not represent wholly its citation nor be fixed by the repetitive labour of the norm (Butler 2011, xix). Butler

gives the example of drag to illustrate this. Part of the subversive potential of drag is that it purposely and exaggeratively parodies femininity. It undermines the hard work[58] that women go through to code as properly feminine. But iterations disconnect from intention and drag's reliance on *social* intelligibility hinders the efficacy of its subversion. At the initial point of the subversive action, it may be misrecognized not as subversion. Or there might be a failure in the long-term subversive efficacy because social actions always get hegemonically recaptured and resignified. We can see this in a way that Butler could not have predicted in the early 1990s, the normalization of drag through the popularity of the TV show, *RuPaul's Drag Race.*

A second failure is the failure inherent to a citation constituted exclusively through the reiteration of actions. By "working the weakness in the norm" (Butler 2011, 181) the reiteration fails to live up to a particular citation and this failure undermines the norm because it reveals the norm to really be just a pure product of reiteration. Revealed as groundless, the ritual is completely denaturalized, opening up space for others who recognize this groundlessness to do otherwise than that norm. Again, going back to the example of drag, Butler elucidates that "drag… implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original… what they imitate is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect" (Butler 1993, 313). Again, even when this kind of subversion is effective, as with the previous example, it may not work over time. "As *Paris Is Burning*[59] made clear, drag is not unproblematically subversive… there is no guarantee

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[58] One only has to view a video from the rise of the make-up tutorial superstars on youtube to see how much hard work and technique goes into looking feminine.

[59] A documentary about the voguing scene in the 80's in New York that concluded with the violent murder of one of the participants and the consumerization of voguing by Madonna.

that exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality will lead to its subversion" (Butler 2011,

176).

Section 1.3 – Two Critiques of Butler

Having explicated Butler's framing of the problem of subjectification/subjection, I want

to emphasize the significance here of the concept of immanence in the framing of the problem

and the hope for resistance. Butler's account importantly does not rely, as many accounts do, on

something pre-discursive to ground agency (Lloyd 2013, 58). Butler attempts to escape the traps

of atomistic conceptions of individual freedom but also the idea of the determining force of

structural norms. Instead of seeing subjugating norms as something to be completely eliminated

in order to liberate the subject, Butler sees these contaminated norms as the material itself of

social transformation (Lloyd 2013, 60). I briefly sketch two critiques that will be important in

differentiating my own position from Mahmood's and Butler's.

My first critique of Butler's theory of performativity is of her framing of subjectification

as also subjection. Why is constitution conflated as constraint, instead of as the conditions of

possibility for something in the first place? For Butler, it is not just that norms have to be cited,

but that they are *forcibly* cited (Lloyd 2013, 63). For Vicki Kirby, this representation of

constitutive power as prohibition gives it the feel of "repression" and of Butler personifying

power with a kind of normatively negative intentionality (2007, 46). Butler makes a clear move

away from the concept of productive power that Foucault set out in his *History of Sexuality Vol.

1*[60]. Butler explicitly argues that, "I take issue with Foucault's account of the repressive

hypothesis as merely an instance of juridical power, and argue that such an account does not

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[60] See Chapter 1 Section ? for an explanation of Foucault's concept of productive power

address the ways in which 'repression' operates as a modality of productive power" (Butler

2011, xxix). Butler's work also draws from psychoanalysis[61] in order to better flesh out why we

desire our own subjugation. She makes reference to Althusser's concept of "interpellation"

frequently. For instance, she argues that doctors and parents create the continuing conditions for

the gender binary through the move from calling a fetus "it" to her. "And in that naming, the girl

is 'girled,' brought into the domain of language and kinship through the *interpellation* of gender.

But… that founding *interpellation* is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various

intervals of time to reenforce or contest this naturalized effect" (Butler 2011, xvii). Yet as Davis

argues, the normatively negative force and compulsion that Butler brings to her use of

interpellation is not something essential to Althusser's text (2012, 884-85). Instead, Butler's

personified power extracts submission as the price of the bestowal of subjectivity (Davis 2012,

889). This is not just a scholarly critique of how Butler departs from Foucault and Althusser. The

consequences are that it becomes hard to square her claims that her conception of performativity

is immanent and productive. In Foucault and Althusser's work we don't have to question

whether their conception of power is both immanent and constitutive. This is because they are

consistent that power doesn't inherently have a normative valence, it is the medium of becoming

a subject.

My second critique is that while "contingency" is an important concept baked into

Butler's theory of performativity, the failures of citation and iteration that make up the hope of

resistance come across as random and underdetermined. This is a critique both of the descriptive

power of and the normative usefulness of her methodology. Her account of temporality leaves it

unclear how an agent transforms. Norms are performed and reperformed but there does not seem

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[61] A method that Foucault strongly opposed

to be a *durative* dimension, the connective tissue between each iteration. This is because in relying on iteration and citation, Butler's account is grounded in linguistics and representation rather than the embodied dimensions of action. Even her concept of materialization relies on representation and intelligibility rather than how an actual body transforms over time, say for instance, pedagogically[62]. This leaves us with a description of iteration as a series of "discrete moments" (Clare 2009, 57). Butler's iterations can be seen as a discontinuous function over time rather than a more continuous process that we might associate with an account of *bodily* reiteration. In Butler's account we *only* get moments of subjectivity and agency in the "mysterious moments" of iteration which then disappear until the next iteration (Clare 2009, 59). What happens between performances and how are performances linked? I argue that these shortcomings are handled more adequately by Saba Mahmood's account of the bodily becoming of the subject and agency in the next section.

Section 2 – Mahmood's Account of Performativity

Section 2.1 – Preliminary Remarks on the Worries of Mahmood's Representation of the *Dawa* Movement

The way that Saba Mahmood writes about her anthropological subjects, the *dawa* movement, gives the impression to readers that she is being prescriptive that their strand of Islam is a truer way of practicing Islam. Her way of describing this movement is to label them as "orthodox". A first point to be made is that orthodoxy is a technical term Mahmood has inherited from Talal Asad. As Zareena Grewal argues, Asad himself has been seen by his critics as using the word orthodox as prescriptive and as an endorsement. Instead, Asad uses the term orthodox in a Foucauldian manner to describe the power relation of those who are called orthodox and

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[62] One example of a more durative account of bodily action is Iris Marion Young's "Throwing Like a Girl".

those who are not (2016). As an analytic tool, it can be illuminating to see how claims of

authority move beyond theoretical theological argument to the real world. How through

contingent histories, it is important to see who has had the power to regulate correct practices

and condemn and exclude incorrect ones. But Mahmood never talks about this background to the

term orthodoxy in her book, *The Politics of Piety*. And often she uses orthodoxy the technical

term interchangeably with the common use of orthodoxy.

But there is a second way that Mahmood does tend to endorse and see as normative the

Salafi women of her *dawa* movement. Part of her theoretical commitments are to Asad's work on

the conceptual divide between the Western world that valorizes the secular and the "irrational",

Islamic religious. In trying to articulate how the *dawa* women she studies problematize the

hierarchy of secular over religious, Mahmood has a tendency to conflate this single strand of

Islam with the whole of Islam; a capacious, complex and often contradictory term. Mahmood

frequently engages in a kind of "counter-essentialism" in order to push back on the narrative of

the secular as progressive and religious as regressive. "Mahmood's stance indicates that she has

engaged in essentialism in her efforts to confront the essentialism frequently ingrained in

ethnographic projects pertaining to Muslim women (Wong 2019, 11)".

Mahmood also explicitly turns to Foucault's late work on Ancient Greek ethics for the

same reason that he did, in order to try to think outside the framework of modernity. She often

critiques the Protestantization of religion and shows how contemporary Muslim practices borrow

from the pre-Modern, Aristotelian Islamic tradition. But the way that Mahmood presents this in

her polemic, she often frames the *dawa* movement, because they take premodern practices, as a

more authentic, essential Islam than the more bourgeois and Westernized Muslim women in

Egypt who often disagree with the Salafi *dawa* women. As Wei Mei Wong puts it, Mahmood

participates in the "essentialism of the binary of the Rest against the West (2019, 12)". Foucault used history to get a sense of a social imaginary that thought outside modern juridical thinking by literally being chronologically before the modern social imaginary. But using ethnography in contemporary Egypt to think outside the dominant juridical framework of Islamic practice isn't so clean cut. Not every "authentic" Muslim has a premodern worldview. While it is important to show how *some* Muslim women think of veiling not as a duty, in the modern deontological sense of obligation, importantly, many women *do* think of it exactly in this way.[63] It is worth going briefly into the history of trying to conceptualize Islam as a religion to show exactly why this modern view of veiling is not any less authentic than the way veiling is presented by Mahmood.

Having Salafism stand in as an authentic Islam is just not descriptively correct historically or conceptually. Any single version standing in for a "true" practice of Islam would not be either[64]. One of the oldest and most intractable problems in the study of Islam has been to find a definition for what is "Islamic". As Dale Eickelman explains, "The main challenge for the study of Islam is to describe how its universalistic or abstract principles have been realized in various social and historical contexts without representing Islam as a seam-less essence on the one hand or as a plastic congeries of beliefs and practices on the other (1982, 1)." The late Shahab Ahmed in his book *What is Islam* shows that a range of antinomies can coherently exist within Islam. Islam can be both coherently nomological as well as antinomian (2016, 19), both coherently immanent (almost pantheistic) and transcendent (Ahmed 2016, 26), and that wine drinking and homoerotic love can be both forbidden by *sharia* but also the essence of the excellence of piety (Ahmed 2016, 32).

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[63] I want to thank Andrew March for pointing this out to me.

[64] Many Islamic scholars, including Shahab Ahmed who I will discuss below, tend to counter the narrative of Salafism as authentic by essentializing Sufism as authentic, which is wrong as well.

As a final point to end this section, it is also important not to just accept all the critiques of Mahmood at face value. Some critics worry her work is too much about perfection and expertise in piety and not enough on the "everyday", more mundane aspect of Muslims' lives. But in a defence of anthropologists that take inspiration from Talal Asad,[65] Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando point out, it is strange to think that piety might not be part of this everyday aspect of Muslims' lives. Samuli Schielke for instance wants to contest the "problematic tendency to privilege the aim of ethical perfection" (2009, 38) that Mahmood and others have focussed on. He instead concentrates on how Muslims' ethical lives are marked by fracture, failure, inconsistency and incoherence (Fadil and Fernando 2015, 68). There is also a normative claim here that this focus on the everyday is actually a more accurate representation of Muslims. Using de Certeau's concept of mundane tactical resistance, these anthropologists show that it is in these non-religiously governed spaces that creativity can blossom. This kind of resistance opens up a site of transgression and individuality where Muslims can negotiate and contest the stringent requirements that religion subjects them to (Fadil and Fernando 2015, 69). For Fadil and Fernando, these moves do not tell how Muslims negotiate their commitment to religious norms with their transgressions of these norms. How do they explain this discrepancy? Fadil and Fernando argue that, for instance, Schielke's work is only able to highlight these everyday transgressions by being silent on or rejecting the explanations of the people that they study (2015, 72).

More insidious are claims that these Salafi women might be more of a theoretical construct used to defend a philosophical point. The claim seems to be that the ethnographic representation of the "real" everyday Muslim makes the pious Salafi women of the *dawa* movement an

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[65] These would include Mahmood, Hirschkind, Fadil, Fernando and many others.

extraordinary or impossible figure (Fadil and Fernando 2015,74). As I will be suggesting in this chapter, there is a tendency for feminists to concentrate only on those sensibilities and values that correspond with a kind of secular-humanist tradition. The normative aspect of religion is seen as a separate category from the individual such that when the person is transgressing these norms, they are representing themselves but when they are following these norms it is not their real self but the disciplinary power of orthodoxy or tradition animating them. When our conceptual tools only detect those who resist norms as individuals, those women who inhabit Islamic norms become erased from the category of the "real, everyday" Muslim. Beyond my critique, Fadil and Fernando point to the prescriptive tendency of many in the academy to defend Islam to a Western audience. They do this by valorizing more liberal forms of Islam or Sufism as the real essence or spirit of Islam and not the dangerous, extreme and fundamentalist Salafi groups.

I argue that we must make sure to emphasize the inessential and truly plural nature of Islamic practice and that Mahmood's *dawa* movement is only one legitimate stream of practice among others. Yet we also must also avoid the danger of erasing these *dawa* women. In doing this erasure, we miss the important lessons we can learn from their different worldview and form of life just because we may not agree with their fundamentalism. Mahmood was not fabricating ethnography in order to make a philosophical point. In the 16 years since Mahmood's groundbreaking work, there have been at least nine other ethnographies that I have consulted that have born out Mahmood's observations of the *dawa* movement in Egypt[66]. These ethnographies have not just originated from Egypt, but from all over Europe and the U.S. Fadil and Fernando

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[66] Although not all of these ethnographies have been referenced in this dissertation, beyond Mahmood, it is worth acknowledging the different authors' works I have consulted and the regions where they studied women in the *dawa* movement: Naima Bouteldja's work on niqab wearers in France, Mayanthi Fernando in France, Jeannette S. Jouili in France and Germany, Petra Kuppinger in Germany, Leila Ahmed in Egypt and the U.S., Anna Piela in the UK, Eva Brems' edited book on women who wear the niqab throughout Europe (2014), Annelies Moors in the Netherlands and finally, Nadia Fadil in Belgium.

conclude their defence of Mahmood's work with something that I emphasized in the first chapter of this dissertation. This conclusion is that the proper starting place for any ethnography is committing to a critical de-familiarization. This is done by making legible and viable the imaginaries, hopes, and aspirations that guide the everyday conduct of people considered odd, exceptional, or extraordinary, without simply rendering them as similar to "us". That commitment has long been the lynchpin of the discipline of anthropology (Fadil and Fernando 2015, 83). What these women show us, as I have tried to argue in Chapter 2, is a contemporary Muslim group that lives in the contemporary world, that understand the Western form of life of contemporary Egypt, France, Germany and Quebec, but that strives to live and combine this with a way of life that is foreign to many in the West, one inspired by Aristotle and the history of Muslims inspired by the *aklaq* (character) tradition. A form of life focused on one's character, rather than utility or deontology.

Section 2.2 – The Romance of Resistance

Mahmood begins by diagnosing what Lila Abu-Lughod calls the "romance of resistance" found in feminist work. Mahmood finds two sources of this romance. The first is the positing of a fully formed, free subject outside of discourse that needs rescuing from being disfigured by custom, tradition, social coercion and patriarchy (Mahmood 2005, 11). The second source is what Mahmood calls the liberal feminist imposition of "a teleology of progressive politics on the analytics of power" (Mahmood 2005, 9). We can see this methodological "imposition" especially when an explicitly feminist agency is difficult to locate in female ethnographic subjects. When a Third World group of women is studied, Mahmood argues, there becomes a tendency to look for moments of resistance even when the women being studied may not describe it that way. The social analyst will look for moments of disruption that "are located either in the interstices of a

woman's consciousness (often read as a nascent feminist consciousness), or in the objective

effects of women's actions, however unintended these may be…Thus the humanist desire for

autonomy and self-expression constitutes the substrate, the slumbering ember that can spark to

flame in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit" (Mahmood 2005, 8). This

flattens the analysis and forecloses in advance questions about the workings of power that

Mahmood is most interested in. Mahmood expresses two kinds of questions in particular that get

erased by this kind of imposition: "[i] How do we conceive of individual freedom in a context

where the distinction between the subject's own desires and socially prescribed performances

cannot be easily presumed, and [ii] where submission to certain forms of (external) authority is a

condition for achieving the subject's potentiality" (Mahmood 2005, 31)?

What needs to be emphasized before we go to Mahmood's own critique of Butler is how

much Mahmood's own outlook and framework of performativity explicitly builds on Butler's.

Both owe a debt to Foucault's turn to "productive power". Mahmood argues that "Butler forces

us to rethink this external-internal opposition by arguing that social norms are the necessary

ground through which the subject is realized and comes to enact her agency" (Mahmood 2005,

189). Butler and Mahmood's focus on agency is neither ahistorical, individual, based on free-will

nor is it completely determined by history and social structure. Both look at the performance and

rituals of everyday life that are reiterated continuously. Finally, both talk about norms that agents

are always attempting to correctly connect with in their iterative performances.

Yet even while Butler's framework of agency is not formed outside power, according to

Mahmood, Butler retains this romance of resistance (2005, 14). Mahmood also worries about

Butler's "agonistic framework" of agency where norms are destined to a binary fate of either

supressing agency or being subverted by agency (Mahmood 2005, 22). Here, Butler is framed as

naturalizing the normativity of resistance (Mahmood 2005, 15) a damning indictment of a theorist who is famous for denaturalizing our different attachments to the subject.

Section 2.3 – Bodies that Matter?

Another thing that occludes Butler and other feminists from having a more capacious view on norms is the concentration on the *meanings* of practices rather than what work these practices *do*. Often the focus of theorists who study the veil is on the message conveyed by the person who veils in the public sphere when she puts on her veil. Does the veil hold a political meaning when worn, a proselytizing meaning, a fashionable meaning or a religious meaning? What gets lost in the emphasis on the signification of the practice is how the veil is used as a tool to shape the self.[67] Mahmood's famous example is of the pianist who submits herself to the regimen of practice and apprenticeship in order to gain a greater capacity as a piano player. There is no becoming a virtuoso piano player without thoroughly being disciplined in and inhabiting the dominant norms of style and technique of piano playing (Mahmood 2005, 29). This loss of agency to gain greater capacity for agency only makes sense if we attend to what these norms *do* for the embodied agent's *know-how* rather than what is signified. Iteration in this paradigm is about habitually getting better at a fixed standard.

This goes back to themes from Chapter 1 about embodiment, habit, automatic action, know-how and what the point of hours of practice are for. Like the argument between the Intellectualists and the Enactivists, the status of language and the body becomes a major break between Butler and Mahmood's views. As I argued at the end of Section 1, Butler's theory of performativity relies on Derrida's linguistic model. The temporality of the iterations is

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[67] I have illustrated this in detail in Chapter Two

discontinuous because it focuses exclusively on the moment of each individual performance as

its "unit of measurement" rather than the whole of the iterations as a single unit of durative,

embodied repetition. When we think about what is learned by the body, the know-how, during

practice and performance, this way of looking at iterations becomes absurd. To know the

relationship of a junior tennis player to the more proficient tennis player they *become*, one does

not just look at each and every stroke the player takes individually and discontinuously. Instead,

a fuller analysis would surely take into account technique, amount of practice, taking up of

coaching advice and achievement during actual performance over a larger time period.

In rejecting the framing of the body's materiality and corporeality as only analyzable in

the model of language (Mahmood 2005, 198), Mahmood connects her work on embodiment to a

long line of theorists who take a much more realist and enactive view of the body in action.

Mahmood explicitly cites her theoretic lineage: Spinoza, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze,

as well as more contemporary new materialists such as William Connolly, Elizabeth Grosz,

Brian Massumi and of course Talal Asad (2005, 203). She argues that all these thinkers worry

that thinking of action as only signification does not address how to "develop a vocabulary for

thinking conceptually about forms of corporeality that, while efficacious in behavior, do not lend

themselves easily to representation, elucidation, and a logic of signs and symbols" (Mahmood

2005, 166).

Section 2.4 – Mahmood's Account of Iteration and Citation

In this section I both reconstruct but also philosophically build on and flesh out

Mahmood's account of iteration and citation in contrast to Butler. From Section 1, Butler argued

that norms are only held up by iterations that are always threatening subversion at every

repetition and that every action threatened the citation of the norm itself. With these in mind, we can look at what Mahmood argues happens when the Muslim women she studied attempted to cite a norm of piety through iterative practice and performance.

Mahmood is able to make these claims because of her reframing of the question of embodied practice not as something you mean, but what it enables you to do. It is a durative, pedagogical becoming. Mahmood argues that in both cases of iteration and citation, failure to properly cite does not subvert or undermine norms, but instead reinforces and consolidates the norms. When you look at the whole process of becoming a pious person, rather than see each iteration as a discontinuous event, failure can be given a different framework such as "a novice on the way to citing the norm properly". Iteration here does not necessarily take on the connotation of going beyond one's intentions, instead the failure is read as a lack of embodied and affective technique and know-how or of having the know-how yet being out of practice. Failure does not expose the gaping maw of the inadequacy of the norm that should, according to Butler, motivate the person to abandon the practice. Instead, with the proper pedagogical technique, it motivates the novice pious woman to question her own know-how, not the norm itself. Mahmood's positive account concentrates on the slow sedimentation of the norm through practice. As a durative embodied becoming, she can lean heavily on the concept of habit. Iteration begins to lay the foundations of its own grounding in a cumulative way over time. Through repetition, each attempt builds on each previous attempt, as a whole, in a cumulative way (Mahmood 2005, 164).

As a novice, one is most vulnerable to Butler's account of subversion, because of the novice's lack of technique and possible frustration with this lack, but also with the novice's lack of know-how knowledge of the *ends* themselves. Take an example of crying at the end of prayer

explored in Chapter 2. While the novice may have seen very pious women do it, without the self-transformation into an expert pious person, she will not understand the first person, bodily knowledge of what it means to be pious and will most likely blame the norm itself. But what Butler's account leaves out is what happens to the subject as their iterations become closer to citing the norm properly. Through gaining know-how and more capacities in being pious, the woman in the *dawa* movement epistemically begins to trust in their own technique. Further gains in technique are like epistemic signposts set on a path toward the norm: as one hits these landmarks, she gains more trust in herself *and* the process. So, the picture we have is of the norm as a fixed final landmark and the pious woman's relation to it as working through a learning curve from novice to master. Once she becomes a virtuoso, the pious expert becomes part of this fixed norm and pace Butler, reinforces it through her perfect performance.

Butler and Mahmood's conceptual metaphors also diverge, based, I claim, on the disagreement on their view of embodied action. The way Butler describes a norm, it is a razor thin tightrope that one cites exactly or one falls. But this is impossible because of extrinsic forces that push the signification of one's iteration beyond one's intention. Meanwhile Mahmood's norms are much more capacious, like a structure you build around you through action. Sedimentation as a metaphor is such that as you become a virtuoso of piety, you can "inhabit" a norm. (Mahmood 2005, 168) From the Butlerian perspective, because the norm subjugates me as it forms my subjectivity and therefore agency, I become more submissive to the active influence of the norm toward a "deplorable passivity and docility". (Mahmood 2005, 15) Mahmood's framing is different, she argues that self-transformation allows one to *actively* inhabit the norm. This dwelling builds a capacity that one would lack without the work on the self with the norm as a standard. When playing the piano, one must curve one's fingers properly and try to imitate

the standards of technique. This may seem passive, but once one becomes an expert at piano, this seeming slavish docility to standards set by others will be the medium through which one can play very beautifully. We should also not forget part of my conclusion to Chapter 2: that these women not only conform to norms of piety consciously, but work to make this conformity automatic. I concluded that chapter by making the claim that this work not only did not make these women mechanical automatons with less and less ethical sense, but instead that this was a sign of authorship and conviction in their actions.

Section 2.5 – Interpreting the Story of Abir

Mahmood's anecdote about one of her ethnographic subjects in the *dawa* movement, Abir, is a good stalking horse to contrast Butler and other feminists who look for resistance in practices, with Mahmood's account of inhabiting a norm. Because the interpretation of this narrative is so contested, I think it is worth quoting in full.

Abir was an Egyptian woman not raised as religious whose husband is a lawyer who works two jobs to make ends meet. Over the last few years, Abir joined the *dawa* movement and has since taken a keen interest in her own piety. By going to mosque lessons, reading the Quran and being increasingly diligent in her religious practices she decided to don the headscarf and then over a few months, donned the full niqab.

> In addition, she stopped socializing with Jamal [her husband]'s male friends and colleagues, refusing to help him entertain them at home. Abir's transformation was astonishing to her entire family, but it was most disturbing to her husband, Jamal. Jamal was not particularly religious, - even though he considered himself a Muslim - if an errant one. He seldom performed any of his religious obligations and, much to Abir's consternation, sometimes drank alcohol and indulged his taste for X-rated films. Given his desire for upward mobility - which required him to appear (what Abir called) "civilized and urbane" in front of his friends and colleagues - Jamal was increasingly uncomfortable with the orthodox Islamic sociability his wife seemed to be cultivating at an alarming rate, the full face and body veil (niqab) being its most "backward" sign. He

was worried, and let Abir know in no uncertain terms that he wanted a more worldly and stylish wife who could facilitate his entry and acceptance into a class higher than his own. Things became far more tense between them when Abir enrolled in a two year program at a non-governmental institute of *dawa* so she could train to become a daiya [teacher/preacher]. She had been attending the local mosque lessons, and felt that she would make a more effective teacher than the local daiyat if she had the proper training. Jamal did not take her seriously at first, thinking that she would soon grow tired of the study this program required, coupled with the long commute and daily child care and housework. But Abir proved to be resolute and tenacious: she knew that if she was lax in her duties toward the house, her children, or Jamal, she did not stand a chance. So she was especially diligent in taking care of all household responsibilities on the days she attended the *dawa* institute, and even took her son with her so that Jamal would not have to watch him when he returned from work. Jamal tried several tactics to dissuade Abir. He learned quickly that his sarcastic remarks about her social "backwardness" did not get him very far: Abir would retort by pointing out how shortsighted he was to privilege his desire for worldly rewards over those in the Hereafter. She would also ridicule his desire to appear "civilized and urbane," calling it a blind emulation of Western values. Consequently, Jamal changed his tactic and started to use religious arguments to criticize Abir, pointing out that she was disobeying Islamic standards of proper wifely conduct when she disobeyed the wishes and commands of her husband. He would also occasionally threaten to take a second wife, as part of his rights as a Muslim man, if she did not change her ways. On one occasion, when he had just finished making this threat in front of her family and myself, Abir responded by saying, "You keep insisting on this right God has given you [to marry another woman]. Why don't you first take care of His rights over you?" It was clear to everyone that she was talking about Jamal's laxity in the performance of prayers, particularly since just an hour before, Abir had asked him, as the man of the household, to lead the evening prayer - a call he had ignored while continuing to watch television. Abir had eventually led the prayers herself for the women present in the house. Jamal was silenced by Abir's retort, but he did not refrain from continuing to harass her. At one point, after a particularly harsh argument between the two of them, I asked Abir, when we were alone, if she would consider giving up her *dawa* studies due to Jamal's opposition. She answered resolutely, "No! Even if he took an absolute stand on the issue, I would not give up *dawa*." In response to Jamal's increasing pressure, Abir adjusted her own behavior. Much to her family's surprise, she became uncharacteristically gentle with Jamal, while using other means of persuasion with him. In particularly tense moments, she would at times cajole or humor him, and at times embarrass him by taking the higher moral ground (as in the scene just described). She also started to pray regularly for Jamal to his face, pointedly asking for God's pardon and blessings, not only in this life but in the Hereafter. The phrase "*rabbinna yihdik, ya rabh*!" (May our Lord show you the straight path, O Lord!) became a refrain in her interactions with Jamal. Sometimes she would play tape recorded sermons at full volume in the house, especially on Fridays when he was home, that focused on scenes of death, tortures in hell, and the day of final reckoning with God. Thus, in order to make Jamal feel vulnerable, Abir invoked destiny and death (reminding him of the Hereafter when he would face God), urging him to accord these their due by being more religiously observant. All of these strategies eventually had a cumulative effect on Jamal and, even

though he never stopped pressuring Abir to abandon her studies at the *dawa* institute, the intensity with which he did so declined. He even started to pray more regularly, and to visit the mosque occasionally with her. More importantly for Abir, he stopped indulging his taste for alcohol and X-rated films at home. (Mahmood 2005, 176-178)

Mahmood argues that it would be easy to read this anecdote through the lens of subordination and resistance. She concedes both that Abir's enrolment in the *dawa* institute and this being against her husband's wishes would not be condoned by the majority of Muslim jurists (2005, 178). It can be argued that Abir's continuation of piety work is an expression of her desire to resist the control of her husband or expressed in the Butlerian immanent framework, "Abir's use of religious arguments may be understood as a simultaneous reiteration and resignification of religious norms, whereby patriarchal religious practices and arguments are assigned new meanings and valences" (Mahmood 2005, 179).

But for Mahmood, this misses out on how Abir can do what she does because she has inhabited pious norms. First, by inhabiting these norms well, Abir is able to cajole, persuade and redirect her husband's actions because she is able to communicate in an Islamic mode which does not just allow *any* way of resisting and is a collaborative achievement (Mahmood 2005, 178). Which is to say, rather than undermining the religious norms she is iterating and citing, the way she resists her husband in fact reinforces these norms. Secondly, Abir is not trying to escape her husband's control but wanted to be controlled in a different way (Mahmood 2005, 179). It erodes a particular kind of patriarchy, but only to align herself with another kind of patriarchy.

Section 3 – Taking Expertise in Piety Seriously

Section 3.1 – Resistance Revisited

In this section I take seriously Mahmood's claim that these women are virtuosos or experts in piety so that I can present a better account of how Abir changes traditional norms yet

can still be said to "inhabit the norm." While I stay within the spirit of Mahmood's argument, my plan is to conceptually go beyond her work. I argue that Mahmood, herself, does not take seriously enough expertise and so ignores how much experts *change* practices while still staying within the norm. Mahmood complains about the reduction of conceptual space if we just concentrate on oppositional resistance, like liberal feminism, or subversion of norms, like Butler, yet Mahmood either stays neutral or seems almost explicitly conservative in exploring this conceptual space and thinking about changes in practice. If Butler's framework is about unstable iterations that try to hit unstable and randomly moving target of citation of the norm, then Mahmood's is of a durative becoming and *the absolute fixity of the norm* such that a person can inhabit a norm. It is the issue of this fixity of the norm that I will be questioning and if there is a possibility of inhabiting a moving norm.

Allison Weir tries to take seriously critiques of freedom and feminism from Mahmood, Muslim feminists and other Third World feminists. Weir attempts to rethink the concept of freedom and casts it as much more immanent and relational and yet she claims that feminism should still be a normative project of critique. Weir objects to Mahmood's account and that the story of Abir is obviously a story of resistance. She wonders why Mahmood is so reluctant to use the words "resistance" and "practice of freedom" even though Foucault, whose work Mahmood bases her work on, often frames his work this way (Weir 2013, 126). Weir argues that part of Abir's work isn't just on herself but is a renegotiation of her relationships, both to God and her husband, and this relational work is a work of critique and resistance. Weir contends that the way to overcome Mahmood's critique is to look at this as "the freedom of solidarity [which] deconstructs the liberal dualism between autonomy and dependency, bringing us back to a conception of freedom of belonging, and a recognition of interdependence" (Weir 2013, 145). I

will come back to the topic of the veiling women, freedom and autonomy in my last two chapters. But for now I want to concentrate on Weir's framing of Abir's story as one of resistance.

Weir points out that the pietist movement is foundationally and constitutively based on a critique of secularism and their very presence in taking up space at the mosque and teaching each other is a resistance to the tradition of male dominance of that space (Weir 2013, 142). While Mahmood describes the situation as not breaking norms but merely inhabiting other norms, Weir maintains that

> surely the term "resistance" does in fact express Abir's actions. Mahmood seems to be suggesting that the term "resistance" is appropriate only when one resists any convention or authority, on principle. To be clear, Abir is not resisting convention for its own sake, nor is she resisting authority in order to uphold her own ends. She is resisting her husband's authority because she is committed to a particular end: the end of the realization of piety, and of the fulfillment of her obligations toward God. Thus, she is exercising critical judgment to evaluate norms and to judge which take precedence. The end she is upholding is not her own but God's, and she is resisting whatever thwarts that end. But this is resistance, and it is resistance to domination. For Abir, domination or oppression is understood not as the thwarting of her own ends, but as the thwarting of God's ends. (2013, 144)

Weir makes Mahmood's account unsatisfactory. Mahmood cannot claim that this story has been read wrong culturally, it certainly does seem that Abir is prioritizing her piety over her husband's Islamically approved authority. Disobeying this authority might in fact hurt the work she has been doing on herself to attain piety. Yet Mahmood makes it seem as if Abir has been able to reconcile this dilemma. While Mahmood warns her readers not to use Butlerian language to describe Abir's situation, the norm, which Mahmood portrays as *fixed* has certainly *changed*. Indeed, as Weir frames it, the norm has been renegotiated. Would it be farfetched to say in Butlerian language that the norm has been undermined or subverted in some way so that Abir could disobey her husband and continue to wear the niqab and train to become a teacher at the mosque?

Before I move to the next section, I want to flag a terminological point I will make in the framing of resistance by Butler and Weir. For Weir, resistance is oppositional. In order for the piety movement to occupy the mosque and teach, their actions *must* be *opposing* traditional patriarchy. For Abir to continue her training in piety the way she judges it should be followed, her actions *must oppose* patriarchal authority. Notice that this is a different framing than Butler. Butler's undermining and subversion does not build toward another norm. It is normatively directionless. A norm is resisted, but that resistance is not *supposed* to strengthen another norm. For Butler this would just mean being captured by and complicit in another potentially oppressive project. When non-Butlerian/non-Foucauldian feminists use the word "resistance", they use it the way Weir does, oppositionally. There are two kinds of resistance in feminist philosophy. One I will call Oppositional resistance, enunciated by Weir, and a second one articulated by Butler that I will call Subverting resistance.

Section 3.2 – Expertise

In order to motivate that we should take Mahmood's claim that these women are trying to become experts in piety seriously, I go over some of what she says about piety's relation to expertise. I think taking this claim literally will help us give a better account of Abir's story.

Mahmood reports that the mosque movement was started because these women felt that secular, everyday life in Egypt was having a detrimental effect on their work on themselves to attain piety. In response, these women began to band together in pedagogical training groups (Mahmood 2005, 56). As illustrated, these group brought women together to cultivate their bodily aptitudes, habits and desires in order to ground these in feminine Islamic principles. "The mosque lessons provide a *training* in the requisite strategies and *skills* to enable such a manner of

conduct, and the lives of the most devoted participants are organized around gradually learning and *perfecting* these *skills*" (Mahmood 2005, 45). I use italics here to highlight the use of words like training, skills and other words associated with expertise. But what are they training for? This might be the point where the reader's conception of an expertise in something might get strained. The answer is that the training is for a performance. But this performance is not like a once-a-week sporting event or even a singular theatrical performance. This performance is the ongoing, durational performance of piety in these women's everyday life. All the training and practice is supposed to give the person the skills and capacity of "making prescribed behavior natural to one's disposition, and one's virtuosity [lies] in being able to spontaneously enact its most conventional aspects in a ritual context as much as in ordinary life" (Mahmood 2005, 131).

Mahmood argues that like "any kind of *skilled practice*" (Mahmood 2005, 54), becoming pious has ways that one can judge one's performance. In the case of becoming an expert at piety, one has to cultivate the affects of sincerity, humility and virtuous fear. This is how their expertise are measured and marked (Mahmood 2005, 123). As shown in Chapter Two, these emotions had an epistemic, heuristic function to give feedback to the women as to how they were doing in training. As Mahmood puts it, emphasizing one emotion in particular, "for many Muslims, the ability to fear God is considered to be one of the critical registers by which one monitors and assesses the progress of the moral self toward virtuosity, and the absence of fear is regarded as the marker of an inadequately formed self (Mahmood 2005, 141)."

I argue that Mahmood gives a rich picture of what Etienne Wenger and Jean Laves call a "Community of Practice." As Wenger and Laves argue about apprenticeship groups, it

> leads to an understanding that mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which the master is part… A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrin-

sic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning" (Wenger and Lave 1991, 94).

Wenger emphasizes that the group learning of a practice is different than just master to apprentice. The women in the *dawa* groups are aware of their interdependence. It is not just a practice, but a community. They as a group exchange information, make sense of situations they each encounter together, share new tips, tricks and new ideas but also importantly, keep each other company (Wenger 1999, 47). As I emphasized in Chapter Two, this has a great effect on self-transformation of one's character.

But Mahmood's ethnographic work is also a narrative of the hard road of training from novice to teacher of piety. But as this road reaches mastery, my and Mahmood's agreement comes to an end. Recall that for Mahmood, mastery is remaining within and inhabiting a fixed norm. I argue instead that the virtuoso pushes the norm while still inhabiting the norm. The expert is the leading edge of the norm and the norm moves with continual pursuit of the expert towards greater and greater skill. But the expert does not leave the norm behind, instead the expert becomes the norm and the norm in turn is not betrayed. Indeed, the master might describe what is happening to the norm as a manifestation of a greater fidelity to the essence and spirit of the norm.

Let me start this argument against Mahmood by going back to Mahmood's famous picture of the novice piano player yielding herself to the disciplinary norms of playing. The first thing to notice is that as a practice, the norms themselves were not written by divine command outside of the practice. Instead, the norms of how to play the piano were established from the experiences and teaching of many generations of masters establishing the right way of playing.

A second thing to notice is that the good posture and beautiful curved fingers taught to a person just learning piano is not necessarily what virtuosos do. Famously, Theolonius Monk, in order to get the percussive sound he wanted and to minimize his movements as an expert does, but also simply because of his gained stylistic idiosyncrasies, played with flat hands, sometimes with splayed fingers. This is very much the opposite of the novice who is pliably taught the norms of playing. The expert, after inhabiting the norm, gains maximal agency and in order to improve, norms must be pushed.

Much of the work on expertise I use here is the research done by Anders K. Ericsson over forty years as an "expert on experts." To demonstrate just how much experts push the norms of their fields, let us start simply by looking at sports and other examples where the changing of objective norms can be easily tracked numerically. Here what the pushing of norms means changes in teaching or practicing or techniques that allow athletes to surpass previous standards set by other athletes. In this way, the adaptability of the body can be demonstrated before we move on to more complicated examples such as being an expert in piety.

The limits of what the body can do are surprising. Let us look at something as unassuming as pushups. A fit male can do 40-50 and we would be impressed with someone's strength if they could do 100 pushups. What might one guess the world record for nonstop pushups might be? 500? 1000? In one hour, the record is 2200 while in 1980, Minoru Yoshida of Japan did 10 507 pushups nonstop (breaking the previous record of 7 500). As Ericsson explains, after that, Guinness World Records stopped recording it in that manner and instead allowed for most pushups in 24 hours. Charles Servizio more than quadrupled Yoshida by doing 46 000 in 21 hours (Ericsson 2017, 23). Even the limits of our mental capacities can be surprising. In 1973, David Richard Spencer memorized more digits of pi than any person before him at 511. Not

more than five years later after a quick flourish of records were broken, David Sanker had memorized 10 000 digits. After only thirty years, in 2015, the title holder remains Raj veer Meena who memorized an incredible 70 000 digits of pi and took 24 hours and 4 minutes to recite them (Ericsson 2017, 24).

But as I have tried to argue, with reference to "communities of practice", these kinds of skills are rarely contained by a lone genius. What was previously seen as an unbeatable feat has certain learnable techniques and methods of practice. Once these ways are taken up by the community, these previous "avant-garde" norms become standard baselines. It can be easily forgotten that what we now do normally was at one point considered pushing the norm. We have seen this with pushups and number memorization, but we can expand expertise to more complicated standards of virtuosity. Ericsson gives the example of Alfred Cortot in the 1930s who was one of the best-known classical musicians in the world whose recordings of Chopin were considered the definitive interpretation. Today teachers offer up his performance as one example of how not to play Chopin because of the sloppiness and missed notes. Merely professional pianists are expected to perform his work with more elan and technical skill than Cortot did. "Indeed, Anthony Tommasini, the music critic at the New York Times, once commented that musical ability has increased so much since Cortot's time that Cortot would probably not be admitted to Juilliard now" (Ericsson 2017, 24).[68]

While some athletic feats specifically involve something given to the athlete by luck like height for a basketball player,this is not sufficient. Correct practice with the right technique is always a necessity. With some feats by experts, it is all due to learning within a community of

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[68] Ericsson gives many other fascinating examples. After near disaster for one diver in 1908, the double somersault was considered too dangerous to do and was recommended to be banned from the sport. Whereas now "the double somersault is an entry-level dive, with ten-year-olds nailing it in competitions, and by high school the best divers are doing four and a half somersaults" (Ericsson 2017, 23).

fellow experts, improving technique and just the grit of thousands of hours of practice. Take the case of Bob J. Fisher. He was an unremarkable man who is a soil-conservation technician. He played basketball in high school and went no further. He was even a failed high school basketball coach. Yet within several years, he had broken 14 different Guinness World Records for free throws. Some of these records are astonishing including, 33 free throws in 30 seconds, 448 in ten minutes and 2 371 free throws in one hour. The last of these obliterated the previous record of 1900. Fisher had what is described as a "loose fraternity of shooting gurus and record holders" as his community of practice that shared techniques and skills with each other. Fisher also worked and perfected his own unique techniques and finally, Fisher woke up every day at 6:30 am and just practiced for three hours[69] using Ericsson's own "deliberate practice" method (Ericsson 2017, 25).[70]

As I have noted in an article, self-transformation cannot be mapped out ahead of time.[71] In the same way as the pious novice has no idea what they will become, neither does the master know the outcome of continued work on the self and the norms. As we have seen in the previous section, experts can push standards far indeed, yet what compels the expert to continue to push these standards and is there some necessity to it? Why can't the expert find the norm, inhabit it and leave the norm as is in the way Mahmood describes it?

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[69] https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/kansas-man-knows-free-throws-has-14-guinness-records-to-show/
[70] There are other stories just like this. One of the best documented is in Joshua Foer's book *Moonwalking with Einstein.* Foer, a journalist, decided to quit everything he was doing and just concentrate on becoming an expert, competitive memorizer. He worked with a community of practice of other memory experts as well as a coach, used Ericsson's deliberative practice methods, refined his techniques and treated memorizing as a fulltime job. In just a year and a half, Foer had become the 2006 USA memory champion, breaking the US record in speed card memorization.
[71] See (Velji 2015)

Section 4 – The Engine Driving Experts to Push Norms

In this section I give two explanations of why experts are driven to push norms, just by being experts at something. The first reason is external, which is that life has a way in all its complicated, particularity of outstripping generalized norms. The second reason is endogenous. Experts, in order to not be out of practice and regress, not only need to continue what they are doing, but always need to be uncomfortable and in a state of disequilibrium. This pushes them to continue to push the boundaries of norms.

Section 4.1 – New Situations

Enacting the virtue of piety with its different habituated actions and complicated affective registers runs into the problem of the everyday outstripping any preplanned and exact procedures on what to do. At that point, the pious woman must improvise, while always keeping to the fidelity of the norm as best she can. The newness of different situations and the minute and complicated particularity of each situation within everyday life drives the virtuoso to push the boundaries of norms.

Virtuosos only have their training and previous experiences of applying and infusing the norm into their everyday activities. So, when the unexpected happens, these women must find new ways, yet these must be in keeping with their experiences and their training. In one framing, one can mourn the Platonic ideal of piety brought down low to earth and sullied in being improvised in everyday situations. But there is another way of reading this and that is to marvel at the virtuosity shown in particular situations. As Martha Nussbaum argues in defence of particularism, general rules can be criticized for their lack of concreteness and flexibility. She brings up Aristotle's "image of an architect who measures a complex column with a flexible strip

of metal, contrasting this suppleness to the crude procedures of one who approaches the same column with a straight edge [of general rules and preconceived norms]. This deliberative art appropriately combines activity with passivity, fidelity to its own nature with responsiveness to the world" (Nussbaum 1986, 80).

To paraphrase Nussbaum, the improvisation and judgment of the pious woman better represent and respond to the nuance and fine shading of the matter at hand in a way that principles set up in advance have a hard time doing (1986, 301). Indeed, this was exactly the *point* of all the practice and training with the *dawa* group! A set of rules set up in advance can only encompass what has been seen before, but it is the virtuoso who confronts the "new" gracefully. It is not just the newness but the indefiniteness and indeterminacy of the practical, non-ideal world we encounter. This means taking into account all of the complex requirements of a concrete situation and all of its contextual features. (Nussbaum 1986, 303)

Section 4.2 – Experts Must be on the Edge of Comfort or they will Regress

Experts practice differently than the rest of us. Take the example of typing. When people first learn to use a keyboard, they improve very quickly. They move from sloppy single finger pecking to careful two-handed typing, until eventually the fingers move so effortlessly across the keys that the whole process becomes unconscious and the fingers seem to take on a mind of their own. At this point, most people's typing skills stop progressing. They reach a plateau. We have always been told that practice makes perfect. Many people sit behind a keyboard for at least several hours a day, in essence, practicing their typing. Why do they not just keep getting better and better? Ericsson argues that with more experience, individuals' behaviours adapt to the demands of performance and become increasingly automatized (2006, 694). Jonathan Foer calls

this the "OK plateau." (2011, 163) This is the point at which you decide you are OK with how good you are at something, turn on autopilot, and stop improving. We all reach OK plateaus in most things we do. As Ericsson argues, "people often misunderstand this because they assume that the continued driving or tennis playing… is a form of practice and that if they keep doing it they are bound to get better at it" (2017, 28).

But this is not so. Continuing to do something when you reach a comfortable plateau does not make you better at it. Maybe you are good enough to play tennis competitively against friends, but your backhand needs work and sometimes better opponents take advantage of this. But practicing the backhand is emotionally exhausting work and takes away from your enjoyment of the game. So, you are complacent and none of the games you play makes you any better even if you have logged ten thousand hours. Ericsson compared the practice habits of different people in a German music school. Students whose teacher said they were destined to become piano teachers, their practice was more familiar and involved playing music for fun. Whereas the students who were on track to make the symphony as professionals practiced more, but also focussed on the tedious and frustrating job of working at goals that were just out of their reach and also on their weaknesses.

My main claim here is that to become an expert, even in piety, you must push yourself past your comfort zone continually. I made this claim earlier against the strong anti-intellectualist about automatic action in Chapter 1. The strong anti-intellectualist does not take seriously how much planning, monitoring and deliberation goes into practice, especially for an expert. Also, they underestimate how tightly practice is conceptually linked with the actual performance, "when it counts." Deliberate practice never ceases, especially for an elite skilled performer (Toner, Montero et al. 2014, 1133). The expert is continually trying to get better. The mantra of

"use it or lose it" is especially relevant to the expert because of the sheer amount of practice

needed merely for the *upkeep* of elite performance. As Ericsson puts it, the body desires

homeostasis. What the expert does is push that homeostasis and the body responds by making

that push easier and easier.

> But there is a catch: once the compensatory changes have occurred—new muscle fibers have grown and become more efficient, new capillaries have grown, and so on—the body can handle the physical activity that had previously stressed it. It is comfortable again. The changes stop. So to keep the changes happening, you have to keep upping the ante: run farther, run faster, run uphill. If you don't keep pushing and pushing and pushing some more, the body will settle into homeostasis, albeit at a different level than before, and you will stop improving (Ericsson 2017, 55).

> Ericsson goes further. If these experts do not continue pushing, they not only plateau but

get worse. He demonstrates empirically that teachers and doctors who have been working for

twenty years are likely to be worse than those who have only been doing it for five years. This is

because their automated abilities deteriorate in the absence of deliberate efforts to improve

(Ericsson 2017, 30). This is an endogenous mechanism.

We can see this effect on the virtue of piety in one anecdote from Jeanette S. Jouili's

work on the French and German women's *dawa* movement. A student in Cologne, Sevim, who

had undertaken many years of work on herself to become pious got a new job a few years after

graduation. There was more work and the hours disrupted her ability to meet with the *dawa*

group but also to do the basics of piety such as prayers. Jouili relates, "over tea and cake [Sevim]

discussed quite frankly her own struggles to maintain her former degree of piety, stating with

regret: 'Right now I am stagnating, unfortunately. When you work a lot, you don't have the time

to study. Often I find I prefer reading a regular novel rather than the *sira*[72]… No, you have to be

continuously in movement; otherwise, your Islam is gone'" (2015, 40). The women in the *dawa*

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[72] A book of Hadiths, or biographic stories from Prophet Muhammad's life that Muslims study to see how he handled different situations.

group *need* to constantly push themselves, not just to improve in piety, but just to remain where they are piety-wise. We can now understand Abir's insistence that she should continue her *dawa* work even against her husband's authority since stopping advancing her piety would have endangered the entire process of becoming pious.

Section 5 – "Going on in the Same Way"

In arguing that virtuosos are compelled to push norms, a further important question comes up. How do we know that the expert is inhabiting a norm or breaking and resisting a norm? While I have argued that the particularity of life outstrips the coverage of general rules, how far from what has gone before or what is written as a law or rule can an expert diverge from until they are no longer inhabiting a norm? What criteria guarantee and allow someone who is not an expert to know that the expert is going on in the same way with the norm as before. There surely must be some fidelity to the norm of patriarchal authority, in the case of Abir, for it to be a continuation of that norm and not a break from that tradition. For Weir it is obvious that Abir is no longer inhabiting that norm. Can piety still be the same norm as before with such a deviation from obeying her husband? What about in cases when people disagree that someone has followed the norm?

To get traction on this question, I look to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein asks, under "what kind of circumstances, do we say 'Now I know how to go on'" (PI §154) when learning a practice? This of course is a philosophically hard question and I won't be able to satisfyingly and conclusively answer it in one subsection. I show one plausible answer from Wittgenstein in a way that makes sense of my claim that Abir both pushs the norm of patriarchal authority while at the same time inhabiting the norm of piety.

As John McDowell explains, what Wittgenstein is doing in the *Philosophical Investigations* is attempting to steer a way through a Scylla and Charybdis (McDowell 1998, 242). The Scylla is that meaning is always interpretation which leads to a regression because every interpretation needs a further interpretation. The Charybdis is that a novice or an outsider to a certain practice, in this case continuing on with the set of (n+2), should just follow a rule and that this would guarantee the outcome: a kind of objectivity like following rigid rails that extend until infinity. If we just set ourselves on these rails, they will guide us to the correct answer every time.

In his famous "rule following" sections, Wittgenstein argues that without first learning techniques and mastering a practice, rules do not guide at all and that there are an infinite number of ways that a novice could "go on" with the practice that would be wrong to those of us who know and have mastered the idea of (n+2). There is a certain "mustness" or normativity that is generated by being trained into a practice that someone outside the practice does not get. Running the bases sequentially is a rule that baseball players just do without thinking. Whereas a novice to all the arcane rules of baseball might ask that if someone can steal a base, why couldn't someone just run from 1st to 3rd base?

This is a very brief overview of a much more complicated argument by Wittgenstein. Here I am not interested in the argument against the objective rigid rails but instead I am interested in avoiding the consequences of embracing the Scylla. If rules, norms and traditions are always in need of interpretation, what resistance is there in a practice such that the expert practitioner couldn't just do *anything* and say "well this is just how I interpret that norm!" If there isn't objectivity to rules such that how I go on with a norm or tradition isn't fixed in advance, is just about anything a legitimate way of "going on in the same way"?

In the *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein gives the example of a student who has been taught by rote the basic pattern of (n+2). They add 2 to the series all the way up until 1000 and then suddenly, and to us at least, without reason starts writing 1004, 1008 and so on. "We say to him, 'Look what you're doing!' – He doesn't understand. We say, 'You should have added two: look how you began the series!' – He answers, 'Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I had to do it.' ––– Or suppose he pointed to the series and said, 'But I did go on in the same way'" (PI §185). Just like running the bases in baseball sequentially, to us it seems inconceivable that the student could have written the correct and repetitive answer 500 times and then suddenly started doing it wrong the 501st time. But the point of having the person who gets it wrong be a *student*, an apprentice to the practice of math, is to show the contrast between us, trained in a practice, and him, an untrained novice. We are completely socialized and trained not only to do math correctly, but to regard what goes next in (n+2) as blindingly obvious. From the novice's point of view, outside of the practice, nothing is obvious. Wittgenstein remarks that the only way to make a novice understand why the next step *compels* him to write 1002 instead of 1004 is just through being trained into the practice.[73] The work that the term "blindingly obvious" does here is to remind us that having 1002, 1004, 1006 follow 1000 is as compelling to us as a force of nature (Wittgenstein RFM I §113). This mastery of the practice gives a hard "must" (Wittgenstein RFM I §122) to the practice of putting the correct answer after 1000. There is no "must" for the novice. Just as an outsider to traditional Sunni Islam might ask if they can just average things out and pray 3 times on one day then 7 on another to make up 10 in 2 days. They do not understand the blindingly obvious must of "5 times each day" for prayer. When you are

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[73] "If someone is not master of a language, I may bring him to a mastery of it by training. Someone who is master of it, I may remind of the kind of training… To what extent can the function of a rule be described? Someone who is master of none, I can only train" (Wittgenstein RFM VI §31).

within a practice, certain things become practically (as opposed to morally) compulsory[74]. These women in the *dawa* group are not only within the practice but are working their way to mastery of the norms of the practice. It is not a "free for all", but the only guarantee is the training, there is no other objective fall back.

The best we can do is be assured that the judgment of an expert's action is grounded in what R. Jay Wallace calls "connoisseurship." Expertise is exactly the best way to ground this kind of particularist judgment. Expertise "is precisely the ability to appreciate heterogeneous, case-specific reasons for choice or preference by means of informed judgment or perception rather than the application of general principles or procedures. Thus a connoisseur… is able to make discriminations which have normative force, between better and worse wines. But… there is no such procedure or set of principles which explains what makes for a good wine, in all cases" (Wallace 1991, 488). The judgment of how to go on in the same way gains its warrant from the know-how of the expert. This know-how, itself, sets the final standard for deciding normative questions as far as what action should be taken up to continue the tradition of piety. Again, there is no independent set of rules or procedures which could be applied by anyone to determine what is the best next move in a new situation. Just as "a good wine simply is a wine that connoisseurs agree in finding case-specific reasons to approve of. This echoes Aristotle's own tendency to characterize virtuous actions by reference to the ideal of the virtuous agent, as those actions that the *phronimos* would choose, performed as the *phronimos* would perform them" (Wallace 1991, 489). The fundamental epistemological standard is a certain kind of *person*: a virtuous, experienced, and practically wise person, who constitutes a "living norm."

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[74] "If the calculation has been done right, then this must be the result. Must this always be the result, in that case? Of course. By being educated in a technique, we are also educated to have a way of looking at the matter which is just as firmly rooted as that technique" (Wittgenstein RFM III §35)

A norm that was lived a certain way is taught to a novice who then also gains mastery. But this new master will most certainly come across a new situation that their master never encountered. At that important moment, all that the new master can rely on is their know-how and training. As Stanley Cavell argues, "we learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts" (1979, 52). Cavell here takes the example of mastering a language and how there is almost an infinite way of saying things once one does have mastery over language. Cavell gets to the heart of what I am trying to argue in this section: that change to a tradition should not necessarily be linked to someone resisting or trying to subvert that tradition. That in fact, because of an expert's elevated know-how, change can even be seen as *more in line* with the essence of a tradition. Cavell argues, hyperbolically, "the internal tyranny of convention is that only a slave of it can know how it may be changed for the better… Only masters of a game, perfect slaves to that project, are in a position to establish conventions which better serve its essence. This is why deep revolutionary changes can result from attempts to conserve a project, to take it back to its idea, keep it in touch with its history" (1979, 121).

This is a different vision of changing norms. One not breaking with a tradition, but of perfecting mastery over one. When experts train over many years and become skilled and sensitize their habits, habits can be pushed to new heights of creativity. Habit does not have to be interrupted to be creative because creativity can be *grounded on the perfection of routine through training*. Instead of an inadequate tool for which creativity must intercede, habit can become an actual foundation for creative action (Dalton 2004, 609). But of course, this change can not be arbitrary. The hard "must" of not intentionally picking up a puck with their hands and throwing it in the net does not preclude the expert hockey player from picking up the puck with their stick,

lacrosse style, and stuffing it in the net artfully. Cavell shows this to us, masters of English, with the use of the word "feed". As novices we learn to feed the kitty or lion or swan. As experts we project the word feed into new contexts such as "feeding the meter", "feed in the film" and "feed his pride" and we understand it and are not troubled by it (Cavell 1979, 181). This can seem arbitrary; we can feed almost anything can't we? Yet the projection of a word into new contexts, what is invited by the context, really is deeply controlled from the viewpoint of masters of a language. "You can 'feed peanuts to a monkey' and 'feed pennies to a meter', but you cannot feed a monkey by stuffing pennies in its mouth, and if you mash peanuts into a coin slot you won't *be* feeding the meter" (Cavell 1979, 183). It is only through initiation and mastery of our form of life that give those words the point and shape they have in our lives (Cavell 1979, 184). But as Linda Zerilli cautions, "we should resist the thought that yet another regulative mechanism is in play here, determining in advance of any actual speaking in actual contexts what will count as a legitimate projection of a word and of our own willingness to count this projection in this context. To say, as Cavell does, that the 'variation' in the projection of words is not 'arbitrary' is not to say that it is somehow controlled by something" (2017, 23) "objective" and outside the practice itself.

What training into a practice provides each member of a community of practice is the same "bedrock." A connective tissue of underlying sameness in judgment that allows any member of that group to confront and project the essence of the tradition into new contexts. But the training into the practice is all there is. This is why Wittgenstein calls it "bedrock", there is nothing below, no objective insurance that the new projection *really* is a continuation of the same. The training bootstraps the novice into what Charles Taylor calls the "thick descriptions" that the people within the practice share, their "routes of interest and feeling, modes of response,

senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying" (Cavell 1979, 52). John McDowell elaborates about what is scary to many "modern" philosophers about a lack of "objectivity" underwriting projections into a new context. He calls it a kind of "vertigo." This vertigo is that without warrant from a point outside the practice or that is deductively explicable from a rule, the only thing that guarantees the correctness of an expert's action is merely a coincidental convergence of subjectivities (Zerilli 2017, 24).

Part of Wittgenstein's work in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* is to show that even the hard normative mustness of rules of inference in *logic* only manifests when one is trained into and masters the *practice* of logic. As McDowell puts it, "the misconception of the deductive paradigm [is] the idea that deductive explicability characterizes an exercise of reason in which it is, as it were, automatically compelling, without dependence on our partially shared 'whirl of organism'" (1998, 63).

The essence and ritualistic traditions of Islam are contained in the *sharia*. *Sharia* is often translated as "law", but for those in the *dawa* movement, it is not quite like the positivistic Western legal tradition. *Sharia* more represents a virtue ethics tradition. As we will see as we go deeper into this chapter, virtuosos of piety internalize, embody and become living norms of the *sharia*. Some have argued that the *sharia* is radically indeterminate but Aria Nakissa and others have argued that this is on purpose because the *sharia* is a set of rituals and advice that relies heavily on its communities of practice to make these "laws" particular to the problems they face

(Nakissa 2014, 94). Thinking of *sharia* this way makes it very amenable as a representation of a Wittgensteinian practice that I have tried to illustrate in this section. For instance, Talal Asad argues that the only way into learning the *sharia* is from its practitioners and being brought up, socialized and trained into a particular Islamic practice. "A knowledge of legal rules will not suffice… the authoritative character of the law can be recognized, and its rules properly applied, only after a process of personal discipline that depends on *al-sunna al-diniyya al-sahiha* – 'the true religious tradition'" (Asad 2003, 249). The training is the true bedrock of justification here. Nakissa further shows this in his ethnographic work at Al-Azhar University in Egypt where people are formally trained in *sharia*.[75] The traditional way of learning is not by reading the *sharia*, but orally and in person with a *shaykh*. It also must be an apprenticeship and students are *discouraged* from learning by themselves (Nakissa 2014, 102). Two justificatory maxims are given by Nakissa: "Whosoever takes his book as his shaykh errs more often than he is correct" and "Whoever takes knowledge from a shaykh orally. He is prevented from deviance and misguidance. And whoever takes knowledge from pages. In the eyes of the people of knowledge, it is as if his knowledge does not exist" (2014, 102).

Section 6 – Mastery and Internal Change of a Practice

It would be a mistake to characterize the freedom to change practices within Islamic practice that the *dawa* movement has as the freedom Hobbes calls "the silence of the law". What Hobbes means by this is to contrast this silence with laws that have been so well codified and enforced that there is very little "wiggle room" to practice anything other than what is written

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[75] While the Al-Azhar as an institution and the *Dawa* movement, who are both in Egypt, disagree on many theological points, in this case, they share the Aristotelian tradition of the *phronimos*, the expert, as the final arbiter of applying norms to particular situations.

down. But there are situations where what has been codified is vague, general or underdetermined. This is where the law is "silent" and so really anything goes, the anyone has maximal freedom to fill in the gaps as they please until something more specific is codified.

I argue that this is *not* what is going on when a woman in the *dawa* group, a person who has become a living norm, changes a practice. As I have argued in the last section, what a master allows herself to do while remaining inhabiting a norm is not infinitely plastic. Mastery of a practice is a different way of seeing the constraint of tradition. This turns the idea of law as a written generality applied to the particular on its head. Instead, actions are done by masters within a practice and over time they are written down. Law here is an empirical record of judgments. So the reason that it should be hard to stray from a "core" practice is *not* that it has been specified better or is less vaguely, but because it records, in a sort of Bayesian way, the accrual of judgments of other living norms of how one should react to a social practice.

While this leaves *all* practices, even "core" ones, accessible to change, it does not mean anything goes. As Nakissa relates when he was studying *sharia*, he would encounter particular situations that would call for a ruling from an expert in *sharia* and he would assume an "obvious" answer based on what seemed like very clear and detailed textual guidance. But when Nakissa would ask a master of *sharia* with virtuoso character what ruling they would make in that particular situation, he found he was unable to predict that expert's rulings correctly. This was because the actual ruling would be based on that person's expert judgement rather than just the written law. The expert saw more clearly than Nakissa how practices and law had to change to fit the particularity of the situation (Nakissa 2014, 108). Even in situations where the law speaks clearly and is not silent, virtuosity gives the *shaykh* the ability to change practice because they conform more perfectly with the true essence of the Islamic tradition.

Karyn Lai, independently of Mahmood's work, compares the stages of mastery to learning the piano. Lai compares Confucius' famous "[as a Master of the practice,] I could follow my heart's desires without transgressing norms" to the master pianist who "does not view the behavioral requirements embodied in *li* [rituals] as constraints on his behavior. *Li* are no longer cumbersome and restrictive. But they are indispensable because *they create the conditions for appropriate expressions of the self*" (2006, 76). [My italics]

Training into a practice usually involves the relationship between master and apprentice. Internalizing and therefore inhabiting a norm in the virtue ethics paradigm means *embodying* it, having it manifest as one's own "style."[76] As Sarkissian frames the ideal of the relation of codified ritual to the masters of ritual, he emphasizes "that full participation in a ritually-constituted community requires the personalization of prevailing customs, institutions, and values. What makes ritual profoundly different from [Western positivist] law or rules is this process of making the tradition one's own" (2014, 102). The apprentice cannot help but take in these norms with a subjective aspect from their teacher's distinctive style. The apprentice then adds something of their own way of doing things. This is just how traditions grow and snowball. And when a person who is an expert, has completely internalized and inhabited a tradition, then the constraints are like the constraints of playing piano well in that it is the only way to manifest one's virtuosity. Rather than seeing it as a burden, it is instead the reliance on one's training as the building blocks of doing anything well. It is, as Lai argues, the conditions of possibility of individual expression of the essence of the norm. "A performance", whether of the piano or of ritual, Lai argues, "is an event through which the musician expresses and reveals herself. She demonstrates not only her technical capabilities regarding the musical instrument, but also, and

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[76] I use the word "style" here in the more technical, Merleau-Pontian way I used it in Chapter 1.

more importantly, she expresses the depth of her feelings and knowledge about the musical work. It is not through technical excellence alone, but through her expression of self in her technical excellence, that she engages with her audience… the accomplished musician can only express herself through performance" (2006, 76). Rather than anonymizing or effacing the individual as the ethnographers of "the everyday" at the start of the chapter implied in their polemic against Mahmood, rituals and norms actually allow the expert as a subject *to manifest their individuality*.

When a person internalizes good dispositions and the virtues of Prophet Muhammad, one also internalizes the sensibilities underlying the *sharia* (Nakissa 2014, 105). Talal Asad argues that one does not just learn *sharia*'s injunctions, they must become an authoritative part of oneself. The *sharia* must become part of the virtuoso's "moral and physical formation", ceasing to be mere "rules" (Asad 2003, 249). Judging what is correct by internalizing the essence of the *sharia* is a kind of know-how in Islam, like riding a bike

Section 7 – Reanalyzing the Story of Abir

Since the initial presentation and discussion of Abir in Section 2.5, I have been building a case through a series of arguments about a different way of understanding Abir's story than Weir does. This case is that that even though she stands up to her husband in continuing her training in the virtue of piety, she engages neither in oppositional resistance nor undermines or subverts the norm of piety. I have done this by leaning heavily on the idea that the women in the *dawa* movement studied by Mahmood can literally become experts in Islamic virtues such as piety. In this section I will try to more conclusively put together what we've learned since Section 2.5.

Section 7.1: Abir's Virtuosity

We have learned that there are stages to becoming a virtuoso and if we look carefully at Abir's story we can see the signs of Abir working her way toward mastery. Abir began almost without religiosity but when Mahmood first met her, she was becoming very diligent in her prayers and fasting at Ramadan. With further work on herself she began to wear the hijab and then the full niqab and had stopped socializing with her husband's male friends and colleagues. We can see all of these as signs of her movement from a novice learning to internalize the spirit of the norms of Islamic feminine virtues, especially piety. Having reached a certain stage with the *dawa* group, she felt she should move on to be *a teacher* because she thinks she has the aptitude to be a better *dawa* teacher than the one at her local mosque. When we join her in the present with the trouble with her husband, she is already in the middle of training to be a *daiya* or teacher. These are signs of her approaching mastery. Like other experts, she feels the need to continually push herself in training for virtue to the edge of her current abilities. We learned that this is also necessary otherwise her virtue would regress.

As a *daiya* we are able to now see how Abir reacts to new and challenging contexts with the creativity specific to someone who feels called to the vocation of a teacher/preacher. Her husband, Jamal, becomes the antagonistic context that pushes her to fall back on her training and act creatively and with virtuosity, while still inhabiting the norm of Islamic virtue and piety. Mahmood describes Abir's unflappability and grace in reaction to every hostile strategy by Jamal. There is a kind of effortlessness about what she does that is a sign of her mastery. She continues unperturbed in her routine and habitual way, we are never told that Jamal represents a crisis, yet her responses are very creative.

Let us look at the two strategies that Jamal attempts in order to dissuade his wife from continuing her training to be a *daiya.* His first tactic is to try to bring her back into his world of social climbing and secularity by sarcastically "negging" her about her social backwardness. As Mahmood reports, this does not get him very far. This is because, rather than react, she sees this as a teachable moment. This kind of outreach work to secular, skeptical and hostile people as well as novices looking to be apprenticed in the *dawa* group is second nature to her because she has been practicing this for a number of years already. It is Jamal's second tactic where we see Abir's virtuosity. Jamal, as a person raised culturally Muslim in Egypt, tries to confront Abir on her own normative territory. He knows that Islamic norms of feminine piety have a bedrock of obeying the husband's authority and he admonishes her that she is not being pious. He also threatens her with another piece of Islamic knowledge, that he can take a second wife. Here I want to highlight two of Abir's tactics that show her creativity. As a person now well versed in Islamic traditions from the Qu'ran, hadiths and norms from different opinions of *fiqh*, she questions his authority to be able to command her, his household or even have the virtue to be able to take another wife. As described by Mahmood, the way this is done is skillfully. Instead of hectoring him and lording her superior learning over him, she is able to control her emotions to be pious. She becomes *uncharacteristically* gentle, cajoles and humours him (Mahmood 2005, 177). Here Mahmood is invoking Abir's mastery of the virtue of *Sabr,* or patience, passivity, endurance, and steadfastness without complaint that is one of the marks of mastery of feminine Islamic virtue (Mahmood 2005, 171). Mahmood is also demonstrating how Abir is continuing to inhabit the norm of *al-Haya* or shyness. Shyness here does not mean giving in to others' social pressure. In observing another mosque participant, Amal, Mahmood realizes that being assertive and outspoken is not opposed to the virtue of shyness. Mahmood describes, "as I was to learn,

Amal, had learned to be outspoken in a way that was in keeping with Islamic standards of reserve, restraint and modesty required of pious Muslim women" (2005, 156). One of the lessons of Chapter 2 was that *the way* that one does things has an effect on one's habits and one's affects and so etiquette [*adab*] has a large role in Islamic virtue ethics. Again, it has to be emphasized that *how* Abir argues with her husband is as important as what the content of her argument is. Through her internalization of Islamic virtues through training, Abir perfectly manifests *Sabr* and *al-Haya* even under pressure and even when Jamal changes tactics on her.

Her virtuosity here is her grace under fire and of finding alternative ways of persuasion, not just through facts, but through affect. She weaponizes shame by praying out-loud for his soul to land on the straight path whenever he interacts with her. She is also able to externalize her aggression, so that she can remain gentle, in the form of tape-recorded sermons that she plays at high volume in the house especially on Fridays. By doing this, she also harnesses the power of existential angst by making sure the content of these sermons are about death, the tortures of hell and the final day of judgement with God.

We can see the final manifestation of Abir's virtuosity with her ability to influence other's habits. Although it was Jamal's deepest desire to be more secular, more socially mobile and he defiantly resisted her at every turn, including refusing to lead prayers when asked of him, he could not help the gravitational pull of Abir's virtue. Abir's tactics were not just effective in getting Jamal to leave her to freely go to her *dawa* teacher training, but Jamal's habits and virtue were also changed! As Mahmood relates "he even started to pray more regularly, and to visit the mosque occasionally with her. More importantly for Abir, he stopped indulging his taste for alcohol and X-rated films at home" (Mahmood 2005, 178).

Section 7.2 – Continuing to Inhabit the Norm

In the previous subsection I emphasized Abir virtuosity, in this section I try to further expand my arguments that Abir is neither undermining Islamic norms as Butler might assert nor are her actions considered oppositional resistance as Weir argues her actions are. As Mahmood notes, Abir already gets ahead of her husband's objections to her teacher training by taking care of her duties toward her children and the housework. She also does it because it is a basic part of what she believes Islam asks of women. Her entrance into the public sphere does not undermine the patriarchal norms of women's duties in the private sphere. But I argue that this basic wifely duty at home has become routine for her, like fasting and praying. As a person who has already gained mastery in basic virtuosity, *only* doing the basic requirements would hold her back and her virtue would stagnate. *Dawa* is not seen as a duty in Islam, but in her advanced stage because she did not want to stagnate, I argue that becoming a teacher took on a more practically compulsory character, to put in Wittgensteinian language, it gained a "mustness".

Stopping her from continuing her teacher training is not the only way Jamal stagnates Abir's gaining of mastery. We have to remember the hadith of Prophet Muhammad from Chapter 2 on friendship and the ways that others affect your character. The upliftment of character that good people exude is compared to a perfume. That just by being around good people, you pick up their fragrance. On the other hand, bad people are like a blacksmith, you can get singed on the bellows and they leave a bad smell on you. Jamal's character, in general, threatened to bring down all of Abir's hard work. We have two examples from Chapter 2, at the end of Section 5.3, of two pious women who handled intimate partners with bad characters in a very different way than Abir. Petra Kuppinger told the story of Susanne-Samiha who converted and began her self-transformation toward piety at the same virtue level as her husband, who was

semi-religious. Yet when their character paths diverged too much, she separated from him.

Mahmood also tells of a pious novice who has a husband with bad character, who is told by a

daiya that as a last resort, she should divorce him for the sake of her and her childrens' character.

One difference we should notice is that in both of these stories, the women are "novices," still on

the way to self transformation while Abir is fighting to become a teacher, already having gone

through the self transformation of a novice on the way to mastery. Abir has internalized the

basics, her husband's smell of bad character may get all over her, but it's not a crisis to the

person she aspires to be. As a virtuoso, rather than getting "singed by the bellows" of her

husband's vice, her more pungent perfume of virtue ends up rubbing off on Jamal. Instead of

breaking Islamic and Egyptian norms and separating from her husband, Abir keeps her character,

gets to go to teacher training *and* changes her husband. She is truly a virtuoso.

The more intractable argument is the one that Weir makes, that disobeying her husband's

authority for the sake of her piety is a clear case of oppositional resistance. Abir says to

Mahmood explicitly that even if Jamal took an absolute stand, she would not give up *dawa*.

First what is important to see is *how*[77] she disagrees with Jamal. She does not disagree

that he *should* have authority over him, neither does she disagree about his threatening to take a

second wife, because that is his prerogative in Islam. It is also important to notice what

argumentative path she does *not* take. There have been feminist attempts to use Islam to push

back on arguments for polygamy. She does not historicize and contextualize Jamal's threat to

take a second wife and say that polygamy historically only happened after a battle when there

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[77] A student of a great and virtuosic shaykh relates to Nakissa that part of learning how to be a great shaykh is not just to pay attention to the content of the answers the shaykh gives, but also how the shaykh gives the answer: "A student must pay attention to the smallest details of his teacher's behaviour. If someone comes to question his shaykh, the student cannot merely focus on the answer given. He must also scrutinize how the shaykh reacts to the type of question. Does he smile, frown, or keep silent? It is by paying attention to these details that the student learns how to react to questions himself" (2014, 101).

were many widows and orphans and so polygamy was needed to protect them. Nor does Abir use

a popular argument that a man cannot take another wife unless he can treat them equally and that

the Prophet was the only person to be able to do that. Instead, she argues, even as the male head

of the household, he has no authority over her and therefore has no authority to approach a

second wife[78]. This argument of authority I think is the key to why Abir would absolutely reject

Jamal's order not to go to *dawa*. The assumption of jurists of *sharia* and *daiyat* would be that the

man of the house would be the leader of the faith within the house. That he would, by default, be

the one with more cultivation of Islamic virtue[79]. But it is clear from Jamal's various

predilections for alcohol, X-rated films and most damningly, his abdication of something as

basic as leading prayers at home, that Abir judges that Jamal has *no authority*.

In Islam, roles of authority are not just offices that anyone can hold as long as they are

procedurally eligible. There is a virtue component to having proper authority and Jamal, in the

expert eyes of Abir, is someone who lacks this virtue. Importantly Mahmood's theory cannot

both argue that women can inhabit a norm while also claiming that Abir's story is not one of

opposition. This is because her theory is that norms remain fixed while being inhabited. Weir

seems obviously correct because it is obvious that Abir is changing an Islamic norm, but

Mahmood doesn't have the conceptual resources to explain *both* how Abir remains inhabiting

the norm *and* that she changed the norm on obedience to one's husband. This is because

Mahmood claims that while inhabiting a norm, the norm must stay fixed and unchanging. This is

a new situation: the particular context of the man of the house having less virtue than the woman.

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[78] Recall Mahmood's account: "Abir responded by saying, 'You keep insisting on this right God has given you [to marry another woman]. Why don't you first take care of His rights over you?' It was clear to everyone that she was talking about Jamal's laxity in the performance of prayers"

[79] See Zahra Ayubi's *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society,* Chapter 1 for why Islamic ethicists and jurists historically see men as naturally having more religious virtue than women.

So Abir creatively skirts his authority so that she can start to change him, all the while maintaining that if it came to it, she would not recognize his religious command over her.

Good character is the foundation of understanding the *sharia*. Nakissa argues that "having poor *akhlāq* [character] was seen as compromising one's ability to interpret the sacred texts accurately." Islamic knowledge is directly tied to good character and judgment. A judgement on *fiqh* "is only trustworthy when exercised by individuals who live in accordance with the *sunna*" (Nakissa 2014, 104). The authority of the person with good character to overrule someone who does not have good character, is illustrated well by a Master scholar at the Al-Azhar University who relates to Nakissa: "There is a strong relationship between knowledge and ethics. In Islamic law, a jurist must seek rulings from his heart. But the heart can only be trusted if it has been purified through ethical living. Those of wicked character cannot properly engage in juristic reasoning because corrupt hearts produce corrupt legal opinions" (2014, 106). Jamal just happened to know, through his socialization into Egyptian society, that a Muslim woman should obey her husband and that he can take a second wife. It was pretty obvious that his non-religious inclinations to be upwardly mobile, drink, not pray and watch X-rated movies were driving his intentions (*niyat*).

The important conclusion here is that Abir would like nothing more than to be subject to *proper* Islamic patriarchy. I argue that if Jamal was a better Muslim, she would have no choice but to obey him. So, it is not *just* for the sake of her mastery of piety that Abir disobeys Jamal, but his lack of religious authority over her. In response to Butler, we can imagine in the future if Abir is able to bootstrap Jamal's virtue, that Abir, instead of undermining the norm of patriarchal authority, would in fact reinforce it by allowing Jamal more authority over her over time. In response to Weir, if we look at Abir through the framework of virtue and virtuosity we can begin

to see how Abir can claim to both reject Jamal's authority, yet continue to inhabit the norms of *al-Haya*, *Sabr* and even gender complementarianism of roles. In this case, Abir is, what Cavell described as, projecting the essence of Islamic norms into a new context. She is so immersed in Islamic norms that her mastery gives her warrant. As I quoted Cavell earlier: "Only masters of a game, perfect slaves to that project, are in a position to establish conventions which better serve its essence."

Section 8 – Critiques of Mahmood's work

At the start of Section 3 I claimed that my argument about inhabiting the norm would keep the spirit of Mahmood's initial argument but also go beyond it by addressing the idea of inhabiting a norm yet still changing a practice. In the rest of this chapter I will be making the normative argument that leaving open the conceptual space for women to be involved in practices that aren't oppositional nor undermine norms has its own ethical and political advantages. This is not a repudiation of resisting patriarchal norms nor am I claiming that inhabiting the norm is the *only* normatively good way to change practices, just that we should be open to changes in practice that happen by experts inhabiting the norm.

Section 8.1 – Feminist Worries About Mahmood's Project

While Mahmood emphasizes the bodily and affective capacities that the women she studied were able to develop by inhabiting the norm, Rosa Vasilaki argues that Mahmood occludes the various ways that religious practices are not enabling and is instead one of the central mechanisms of social reproduction (Vasilaki 2015, 118). Mahmood's project also makes a larger argument about imperialist feminists who would destroy forms of life of Muslim women

without exploring how these forms of life give us other ways of thinking about flourishing "beyond the bounds of the liberal progressive imaginary" (Mahmood 2005, 155). Because of these arguments, Sindre Bangstad accuses Mahmood of culturalism. Combined with the occlusion of the possible hinderances on flourishing, Bangstad argues that Mahmood prioritizes the preservation of forms of life over women's rights (2011, 42).

There are many worries from feminists about detaching the analytical, descriptive part of theory from the normative critique of practices. Robin May Schott wonders how far this detachment can go and brings out the standard worries about the affects of cultural practices on women in minority groups such as FGM (2009, 53). This naturally leads to the argument that without normative critique in the feminist arsenal, Mahmood's work just falls into a relativism that would make it hard to justify calling *any* practice oppressive (Bangstad 2011, 43). Many worry that without critique and normative lines in the sand, whether this kind of project "risks the neutralization of critical social theory itself" (Vasilaki 2015, 106). This is because the motor for feminist social change has always been oppositional consciousness (Vasilaki 2015, 119).

This assumption about oppositional consciousness as the motor of social change I think undergirds the claim that although "Mahmood pushes boundaries like no one else, the question is towards which direction?" (Vasilaki 2015, 118) The question becomes whether this improved understanding of piety will "further" or undermine feminism as an emancipatory movement (Van Der Veer 2008, 811). This question about the future weighs heavily on the critics of Mahmood. Bangstad argues that once we have accepted Mahmood's normative conclusions about inhabiting the norm, it presents no way forward for any sustainable feminist politics (Bangstad 2011, 44). Sadia Abbas puts her finger on the underlying problem that these critics have that weaves together Mahmood's argument about enablement of agency through inhabiting a norm, feminism

and futurity. "Increasingly, [in Mahmood's work] agency stands in for antiteleological history… It sanctions the present and justifies suffering… It is the coin used to buy a way out of the irredeemability of human pain and worldly injustice, the term to which we turn when we want to be helped out of our sense of futility and absolved of our complicity in structures of privilege. Change in history is not needed; there is always, we can tell ourselves, 'agency'" (Abbas 2013, 187-188). Abbas accuses Mahmood of a kind of Panglossian theodicy that threatens and stultifies the hope for a feminist future where there is less oppression by making current oppression perfectly fine and maybe even redeemable. As Alia Al-Saji argues about what the Muslim veil symbolizes to French feminists, "Muslims are understood to be trapped in the past. Women wearing the *hijab* are thought to be a visible symbol of a lack of progress" (2019). To Abbas, this more teleological future time of less oppression should be seen as the *real* theodicy that makes sense of all the suffering of women not the anemic prize of "agency".

Section 8.2 – Does Mahmood Say Anything About Resistance?

Although Mahmood has written about viewing Muslim women who veil as needing to be saved as justification for colonial imperialism[80], I would like to disconnect those arguments from the arguments in her *Politics of Piety*. In this book, Mahmood makes another type of argument about social transformation. She argues that "any social and political transformation is always a function of local, contingent, and emplaced struggles whose blueprint cannot be worked out or predicted in advance" (Mahmood 2005, 36). Here Mahmood evades making concrete in advance both what oppression looks like and what normative strategies against it should be followed. But

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[80] For instance, Mahmood, Saba. "Feminism, Democracy, and Empire: Islam and the War on Terror." In Gendering Religion and Politics: Untangling Modernities, edited by Hanna Herzog, 193–215. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

there is a skeleton of a methodology here. Mahmood seems to actually agree with Butler's argument about subversion being contingent but also immanent to the situation rather than universal and general. Without the proper ethnographic work, we cannot know what actions will be taken as subversion without the cultural understanding to read it (Mahmood 2005, 167). But against Butler, even subversion and resistance is conditional on paying attention to the durative body (as opposed to signifying body of discourse) and its relation to the norm: "the mosque participants regard both *compliance to* and *rebellion against* norms as dependent upon the teachability of the body… such that both virtuous and unvirtuous dispositions are necessarily learned. This means that the possibility for disrupting the structural stability of norms depends upon *literally* retutoring the body rather than on destabilizing the referential structure of the sign, or, for that matter, positing an alternative representational logic that challenges masculinist readings of feminine corporeality" (Mahmood 2005, 166).

This skeleton for a method of truly analyzing resistance and changes in practice within the *dawa* movement that Mahmood briefly expounds are both illuminating and unsatisfying. Nowhere in her ethnography is there an example of this methodology she briefly talks about. I think if she had taken more seriously that experts have a way of endogenously changing practices with their communities while still inhabiting the norm, Mahmood might actually have a normative answer to some of these worries in the previous section. In the rest of the chapter I will give a normative argument for why this "changing practices through inhabiting the norm" that I have argued for since section 3 is both legitimately, normatively feminist, but also a genuine alternative to resisting and undermining norms.

Section 9 – A Defence of anti-Teleological Feminism

Section 9.1 – The Hegelian Trap

Getting out of an oppressive norm does not just involve no longer doing what the norm prescribes. Oppressive norms seem to give a "directional" instruction toward what good norms are. The path toward good norms is in the opposite "direction" of the oppressive norm. There can be good reasons for doing this. Heading in the opposite direction of an oppressive norm guarantees that we do not fall back into what was oppressive about the norm we are opposing because we are always headed "away" from the oppressive norm. For some in a more revolutionary bent, moving directly opposite a bad norm can lead to a definitive break with the bad norm such that we may be free of the influence of that bad norm. But this can lead to what I call the "Hegelian trap." This trap is that in opposing something and taking one's normative direction *only* from opposing something, one tends to replicate assumptions and take up parts of what is oppressive into one's opposition.

Hegel argued that overcoming historical problems always involve a movement toward, what he called, a "determinate negative." This is a productive opposition that both erases the "bad stuff" that was being opposed and also preserves the best content from the opposing position. For Hegel, this negative movement was a descriptive, metaphysical fact underlying both nature and culture, but I will just concentrate on his normative arguments for why it is a good thing that determinate opposition has this conserving effect. Hegel's work, particularly the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is a theodicy of history where all the failure that makes up the need for continual oppositional movements is redeemed because we as a society were learning from our mistakes and progressing teleologically toward an end. Looking back on these failures, the conserving aspect of opposition is the permanent, diachronic record of everything we learned.

There are two things for Hegel that guarantee that this oppositional movement is a good way to pattern our way away from injustice. Firstly, that in actuality, we really are progressing ethically. This seems a metaphysically dubious claim to hang a whole methodology on. But also, secondly, that what is conserved when opposing a bad philosophical position is *only* the good stuff. The work that opposition does is the work of slowly but surely eliminating all the bad stuff.

My claim is that we fall into the "Hegelian trap" if what we oppose not only takes up and conserves the good stuff, but also preserves bad things, behind our back, such that we don't even know that we continue to be "haunted" by the problems of our past. What I mean by being haunted is that often our generalized, ideal political philosophical theories are a deracinated list of particular enemies at particular times which were confronted with particular, oppositional solutions. The framework of these oppositional solutions are conserved but stripped of their context and so as Wendy Brown argues, when we use these solutions for our contemporary problems, our oppositional solutions "frequently recycle and reinstate rather than transform the terms of domination that generated them… Such images of freedom perform mirror reversals of suffering without transforming the organization of the activity" (Brown 1995, 7).

We can see this in a non-political context in my critique of Hubert Dreyfus' response to philosophy's intellectualization of action in Chapter 1, Section 1. Dreyfus opposes the rationalistic, overly deliberative picture that analytic philosophy assumes of the human and instead tries to reclaim and valourize the role of the body in everyday action. But in doing this oppositional move, his strong anti-intellectualism merely flips the claims that strong intellectualists make by saying that there is *nothing* cognitive about the "flow" or "absorbed coping" of skilled, expert action. But in only flipping the claim, Dreyfus conserves the framework of the problem that was supposed to be overcome. He preserves the distinction

between the mind and the body, that the body is completely uncognitive, giving us no clue how propositional deliberation gets the non-propositional motoric body to act[81].

This worry about the various problems with Hegel's dialectic method has prompted a number of thinkers to turn to philosophical figures such as Bergson, Foucault and Deleuze, to find new ways that we can think of difference in a non-oppositional manner. In doing this, difference can be truly different, rather than being haunted by those things that we want to be different from. As Elizabeth Grosz argues, if we only keep this oppositional, negative concept as our solution to problems, then we remain tied to the options or alternatives provided by the present and its prevailing and admittedly limiting forces, instead of accessing and opening up the present to the invention of the new (Grosz 2010, 141). In the next subsection I will briefly explore how I think the work that the *dawa* group does breaks from the Hegelian trap and how this group can endogenously give us a different vision of their own feminist future as well as, inspired by Foucault, Bergson and Deleuze, a vision of difference and newness that is not oppositional.

Section 9.2 – Projects of Transformation and Oppressive Norms

Even though the creating of new norms is done by acknowledged virtuosos of the *dawa* group, we should not think of this as the work of an elite vanguard. The entity that changes is a whole community of practice. While the individuals go out into the world and act in ways different from previous majority norms, it is only when they come back to the group, share their new technique and then these techniques are taken up that there is a change in practice[82]. The

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[81] This is called the interface problem. See Butterfill and Sinigaglia 2014.

[82] While I have previously cited Wenger and Lave's theory of Communities of Practice, work on displacing the individual knower toward a larger group also have their roots in feminist epistemology. For an example see Lynn Hankinson Nelson's classic *Epistemological Communities* in Alcoff and Potter ed. "Feminist Epistemologies".

dawa group as a community of practice is a micro-community where norms different from majority norms can be practiced, like a laboratory. These new norms might get taken up and tried out by others. Then these new norms may become more prevalent and become a "natural", taken for granted practice that is taught to everyone, including novices. We can see this cycle of new techniques turning into norms that even a novice practices at the end of section 3.2 of this chapter. For example, once the Fosbury flop was taken up as a technique by all long jumpers, Olympic records quickly fell and now even novices can master this technique. In the same way, I am arguing, new techniques that change these women's relationships to patriarchal (and other) traditions are *incubated* within the *dawa* group endogenously. As their practices change, these incubated norms make the micro-community practices slowly, imperceptibly, different from majority norms.

In this way, the transformation of the group is much like I have described the transformation of the individual. In social thought, from Marxists to Heideggerians, the movement of opposition is usually premised on a crisis and then a sudden conversion or break with previous practices in a moment of oppositional resistance or undermining of the majority norms. The change within the *dawa* group I am describing is *not* like this paradigmatic description of the phenomenon of social change. It is more of a slow, drifting, turning away from majority norms. The motor of this change being experts of a traditional norm, novelty comes contingently, in fits and starts and norms can often be static for a long time. What I mean by the language of "drifting" and "turning" is that the movement away from majority norms is immanent. There is no break. Practices partake both of newness but also of potentially oppressive majority norms since these women are not constantly with the *dawa* group, they are immersed in their daily lives within majority norms. The normative promise of the drifting,

turning movement that is done by the community of practice is that incremental changes in degree can turn into changes in kind, given enough time. Here the most apt description of this movement is one of "becoming". Becoming, in the technical language of Deleuze influenced by Bergson, is the elaboration of a self-differentiating movement that only manifests itself when we focus on its duration. Duration here is the unitary, immanent unfolding over time of the practices of the *dawa* group. The movement of a becoming follows no preset plan or teleology of progression toward a future without patriarchy. Instead the focus is on pluralization and difference. The importance of this kind of becoming and difference to feminism for Grosz is the proliferation of activities and practices of difference it opens up. Taken in this way, the *feminist work* that the community of practice known as the *dawa* group does is to enable "more action, more making and doing, more difference… [which enables] women to partake in the creation of a future unlike the present" (Grosz 2010, 154).

One might ask why oppositional resistance or resistance that undermines norms would not create "a future unlike the present?" We can explain what Grosz might mean by this through a quote from John Dewey, from his book *Human Nature and Conduct*. Here Dewey's target is what he calls "short-cut revolutionists" who think that revolution is paradigmatically when people revolt, and institutions are overturned. He argues that the person who advocates for this kind of revolution "fails to realize the full force of the things about which he talks most, namely institutions as embodied habits. Any one with knowledge of the stability and force of habit will hesitate to propose or prophesy rapid and sweeping social changes. A social revolution may effect abrupt and deep alterations in external customs, in legal and political institutions. But the habits that are behind these institutions and that have, willy-nilly, been shaped by objective conditions, the habits of thought and feeling, are not so easily modified. They persist and

insensibly assimilate to themselves the outer innovations — much as American judges nullify the intended changes of statute law by interpreting legislation in the light of common law. The force of lag in Human life is enormous" (Dewey 1922, 108).

Dewey recommends that *true* political and social change demands a slow transformation of habits. This is rooted in a descriptive claim about the nature of human embodiment and affect that I have tried to show throughout this dissertation. That it takes effort, strategy and time to change habits and emotions. It is not like a sudden conversion. Sixty-five years after the Supreme court of the United States overturned *formal* school segregation in its precedent setting ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* in the South, segregation is even more entrenched as Black and Brown parents fight local governments and affluent white parents to try to integrate their schools in New York.[83] Oppression, racism, colonialism, and sexism have entrenched roots in our history and are deeply ingrained in our bodies through habits and affects. What might be more controversial is Grosz's strategy of the proliferation and pluralization of practices of difference rather than opposing patriarchy. Grosz's suggestion is rooted in what Abbas in section 9.1 criticized as the anti-teleological view of history. To completely defend the anti-teleological, politics of becoming would go well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead I sketch-out, using a metaphor about evolution, why the strategy of proliferation and difference as a normative feminist agenda should be given conceptual space rather than considered as anti-feminist in the next section.

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[83] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/18/the-weekly/nyc-schools-segregation.html

Section 9.3 – Thinking About Creativity and Difference Rather than Opposition and Resistance

What does an anti-teleological politics of becoming promise normatively that's different from oppositional, teleological political solutions? Why should feminists who worry that Third World women are not getting the immediate justice that "Western women"[84] have should be patient enough to see if veiled women can generate less oppressive norms without intervention? This truncated explanation I give emphasizes the Bergsonian account of becoming and can be seen as a division of labour with other accounts of anti-teleological Deleuzian political theories of becoming[85].

Bergson used many metaphors to try to get the concept of becoming and duration into better focus for his readers such as a colour spectrum or a gradually inflating rubber balloon. In his book, *Creative Evolution,* he explains his entire theory of becoming and duration using the history of the evolution of life itself. Here I also use this metaphor to illustrate a point about what proliferation of difference, creativity and time can produce. Becoming and duration as the history of the evolution of life is a good stalking horse to show various important concepts such as the emphasis of immanence, contingency, creativity and worries about the retrospective illusion of inevitability that troubles our thinking about possibility.

If one wanted to write a progressive and teleological story about the history of evolution, emphasizing the evolution of intelligence, one could craft a narrative focusing on the "great leaps forward". These would be fish coming out of the sea and onto land, then mammals emerging from reptiles, primates emerging from mammals who walk on all fours, then humans emerging from these primates. What gave the conditions of possibility for human beings the most

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[84] This division of Western from Third World women makes it seems as Muslim women who veil could never be considered Western women.

[85] See Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter,* William Connolly's *World of Becoming* or Davide Panagia's *The Political Life of Sensation* for three among many examples of this kind of work.

intelligent creatures on the planet was our encephalization (the increased size of our brains compared to the rest of our bodies) which gave us the ability to create tools, to pass knowledge on to our offspring with language and have social practices in order to do large, complicated and co-operative projects. Now imagine two immortal evolutionary biologists who begin at the start of life and follow along this history of evolution but have no foreknowledge of where it leads. One immortal theorist is like the teleological feminist, he has theorised where evolution is headed and knows what evolutionary progress looks like. Evolutionary progress is any step that takes us closer to human intelligence. He argues we should only follow evolutionary species that progress toward the highest intelligence and that following other species is pointless because as far as intelligence is concerned, these other species are regressive and evolutionary dead-ends. The other immortal biologist is anti-teleological and is willing to keep an open mind about the different ways intelligence could emerge and look different.

These two immortal biologists encounter a pivotal duration of evolutionary history, the moment a mammal turns away from land to go back to water to evolve into a sea creature. The first immortal biologist might argue that it is pointless to follow the path of this mammal: he knows where intelligence is headed and the greatest intelligence on earth will evolve on land rather than water. In fact, a land animal attempting to find a niche in the medium of water could be considered an evolutionary regression if the standard is to be the progression toward the most intelligent organism.

The second immortal biologist is willing to follow this new development.[86] Evolution is a good way to show what Bergson meant by his technical term of "creativity" [87]. Creativity is a kind of difference that is not oppositional. For Bergson, creativity in evolution it is the durative and immanent taking up of matter as parts and pieces and using them for a different function than they were adapted for. This gives a new "solution" to a "problem" that was raised by the environment an organism lives in. By "problem" what is meant is the kind of adaptive pressures posed by an organism's environmental niche while "solutions" are ways that organisms can evolve to survive better in a particular niche. Bergson's ability to use the language of "creativity" with regard to how organisms have novel solutions to these adaptive problems is possible from the fact that the exact and specific "solution" to any "problem" posed by an environmental niche is "radically underdetermined" (Walsh 2012, 99). It is underdetermined in a way that looking at a niche, one could not generate specific possible "solutions" in advance.[88] Denis Walsh gives the example of the "problem" of locomotion in water being solved in three very different ways: by the side to side motion of fish, the smooth laminar flow of the porpoise or more creatively, the

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[86] I take the information for this next part from Lori Marino's work on cetacean and dolphin intelligence. A beautiful summary of this lifetime's worth of work can be found in this presentation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-x9NgnZrdI

[87] Bergson explains the "creativity" of evolution through its unified duration by comparing it to the durative process of the painter: "But, to the artist who creates a picture by drawing it from the depths of his soul, time is no longer an accessory; it is not an interval that may be lengthened or shortened without the content being altered. The duration of his work is part and parcel of his work. To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal. The time taken up by the invention, is one with the invention itself. It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea. The painter is before his canvas, the colors are on the palette, the model is sitting-all this we see, and also we know the painter's style: do we foresee what will appear on the canvas? We possess the elements of the problem; we know in an abstract way, how it will be solved, for the portrait will surely resemble the model and will surely resemble also the artist; but the concrete solution brings with it that unforeseeable nothing which is everything in a work of art. And it is this nothing that takes time." (370)

[88] Much like the idea of "institution" in Chapter Three, looking back on solutions to problems, they look almost inevitable, but this inevitability is an illusion.

development from parts that were used for other functions by bacteria into cilia and flagella (Walsh 2012, 99).

Looking again at mammals evolving to go back into the sea, as a species, these creatures were posed the "problem" of adapting to water, a medium and environmental niche for which they were not specialized in anymore. Looking at the modern cetacean, we can see various creative "solutions" using the historically land faring mammalian functions and parts bequeathed to the dolphin from evolutionary history. Unlike the fish, mammals do not move in a side to side motion, and the modern cetacean took the basic, undulating "galloping" motion of most four-legged mammals and adapted it to the medium of water.[89] Through certain selection pressures 35 million years ago, smaller water mammals with larger brains survived. This became the condition of possibility for completely new kinds of solutions that fish and other mammals who had occupied the sea did not have evolutionary access to. These larger brains created new "problems" that attracted creative new solutions. As land mammals, they were equipped with hearing and voices, but this only worked within the medium of air. So, taking the hearing equipment and speaking equipment they already had, we can see, looking back through evolutionary history, that developing echo location provided a solution to the problem of communication in the medium of water. With larger and more complex brains and echo location to communicate, dolphins uniquely are able to use tools, transmit behaviours and culture through learning to their offspring and also are able to do socially complex and co-operative projects together.

Encephalization, language, tool use, cultural transmission and social co-operation are all signs of intelligence that humans possess but that manifest in different, unpredictable modes for

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[89] https://www.livescience.com/59188-difference-between-shark-and-whale-tails.html

the aquatic mammal. It has also been shown that dolphins can recognize themselves in mirrors and demonstrate metacognition. I go this deeply into the evolutionary history of dolphins to demonstrate that there are alternate evolutionary routes to sophisticated intelligence. From the view of the immortal biologists who were following along with the evolution of animals, this route to intelligence could not have been predicted in advance. There is a lot of contingency involved in evolutionary history[90], but what was needed to track this route to intelligence was time but also a sheer plenitude of different forms of animals with slightly different solutions to the problems that water posed to land roving mammals. Like the teleological biologist argued, most of these different aquatic mammal forms, with their slight differences were not viable enough to continue their line and were "evolutionary dead-ends". Yet there were some that were viable and continued to become more and more different in morphology and behaviour. But all of this would have been ignored by our first immortal biologist who thinks he already knows, in advance, what progression toward sophisticated intelligence looks like. In fact, humans as the most intelligent creatures on earth was never inevitable. For the last 34 out of 35 million years of life, it was actually cetaceans that were the smartest organisms on earth and continue to be more intelligent than humans' closest evolutionary relatives, the great apes and chimpanzees.

In the same way, I think it can be argued that teleological feminists have a certain pre-existing idea both of what the normative ends of feminism *already* look like *and* what progression toward that goal would manifest itself as. The anti-teleologist asks for some epistemic humility and to let women in the *dawa* movement slowly and creatively create an Islamic feminist future of their own, within their own "medium" of norms and socialization. Although this feminist future might take on a completely different mode, something maybe

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[90] To see the role of contingency in evolution see Gould and Lewontin's famous article about spandrels https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.1979.0086

unrecognizable as "feminist" by our contemporary ideas of the feminist future, it should the responsibility of us as theorists to make the conceptual tools to understand these new modes of being and their feminist potential. Like evolution, what these women need is time and the encouragement of various Muslim womens' groups proliferating their own small communities with their own differing micro-norms.

It might be argued that this is an unfair comparison, of course evolution does not have a teleology while normative political theory does. To teleological feminists, Mahmood and Grosz's "wait and see" argument is too open-ended with its prescriptions and seem to empty out feminism of content (Hutchings 2013, 25). This kind of claim has been a fundamental difference between non-ideal and ideal theorists and for now seems to be an irreconcilable gap between the teleological and anti-teleological kinds of feminism that is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make a final determination on.[91] To the anti-teleological feminist, normative theory *is* exactly like evolution in this way and is exactly the reason that people such as Grosz have turned to Bergson, Deleuze and Darwin.

Beyond this, the anti-teleological feminist can point to two things in their favour. The first is the history of feminism so far. One way of looking at this history is as waves of feminist theorists putting forward their definitions of oppression and how it must be opposed followed by other feminists arguing that these definitions of oppression do not include them. Women of different classes and races begin this push back, but more recently even feminist work that include this kind of intersectionality have not taken account of women with disabilities[92] and trans people. Looking back, retrospectively, one might say this is a line of progression that is

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[91] That being said, look to Lisa Tessman's *Burdened Virtues* or Serene Khader's *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethics* for good arguments as to why good feminist ethics should be non-ideal.
[92] See the introduction of Alison Kafer's *Feminist, Queer, Crip* for an argument that feminists have traditionally excluded disability from their imaginings of utopian feminist futures.

slowly expanding its circle of inclusion toward everybody. Yet this seeming sense of inevitability is an illusion. For instance, even a decade ago, few would have seen that the next pushback toward inclusion would have included disabled women *as* disabled or trans acceptance *as* women.

The second thing the anti-teleologist can point to is Mahmood's argument that completely ignoring anything that does not currently count as "progress" or "resistance" denies us the analytical tools to even track the history and alternate routes toward a different feminist future. Anti-teleological empirical work is few and far between because of the lack of conceptual space for movements that do not conform to the modality of resisting oppression. One prominent empirical methodology that holds some promise for the far-reaching potential of small, anti-teleological movements is Foucault's Histories of Sexuality. The three books (and the lectures from that time) are a demonstration of an empirical methodology and the honing of the conceptual tools to be able to get into focus and keep track of anti-teleological becoming. Colin Koopman demonstrates the promise and power of Foucault's work. "Consider the role of monastic rituals of time in Foucault's genealogies of modern discipline. Foucault's point was obviously not that monks developed timetables with an eye toward eventually overturning sovereign power. His aim was to show how monks developed ritualized habits that existed for centuries in a relatively isolated fashion before they were hooked up in a relatively short span of time with certain other practices in a way that proved mutually reinforcing for both. The monastic rituals formed alliances of support with other practices such as merchant capitalism and wage manufacturing in a way that was certainly not inevitable—and yet there was no looking back from the first moment this alliance was formed" (Koopman 2013, 107). Here we see how through contingency and immanent creativity, a small group's norms that are different than the

majority can come together and change function and become the solution to the waning of sovereign power. But this link between monks and the end of the paradigm of sovereign power might not have been made if not for Foucault's unique empirical methodology.

Rather than seeing her work as a break with feminist tradition, Mahmood describes her efforts as one in a long line of parochializing the universalized, naturalized and dominant Western subject (Mahmood 2005, 180). She traces this work through three lineages of feminist projects that she thinks she is connecting together and adding to. The first was in response to white middle class feminism that assumed it was a universal feminist goal to dismantle the family. The reply from Indigenous and Black feminists was to argue that freedom for them was not being unshackled from kinship ties. After the history of genocide and slavery, freedom was the ability to finally form families. The second is feminist theories of care that launched the critique of liberal notions of autonomy. Finally, she links herself to the kind of poststructuralist theory that attempted to decentre the transcendental subject (Mahmood 2005, 13). By presenting ethnography of women who wear the veil in Egypt, her aim is to frame agency as historical and culturally specific. We cannot know what the ideal of agency is as a concept until we go out and empirically analyze that culture's specific modes of being, responsibility and what effective action is (Mahmood 2005, 186).

The plea here is for the conceptual space within feminism for this to be viably part of the feminist project so that the empirical and conceptual tools of analysis can be honed to detect these clandestine movements. I call movements like the *dawa* movement clandestine because without Mahmood's anti-teleological, ethnographic eye, this movement would have been invisible. Conceptual tools that look only for resistance do not carve reality close to the bone, they are faulty. The framing of resistance becomes an analytical foreclosure that Mahmood

argues implicitly condones a kind of silence around other ways of talking about agency (2005, 206).

The practical effects of this foreclosure is demonstrated with theoretical attempts to explain the resurgent popularity of the veil in Egypt since the 1980s. Scholars were clearly surprised by "modern Egyptian women" returning to this practice after a few generations of abandoning the practice. Almost without fail, feminist analysis reached for two theories that could both be used to render these women as being forced to return to a practice that is seen as patriarchal yet also seem like they were resisting in some small way. The first was a functionalist explanation where women wear the veil as a bargain with patriarchy. These women are granted more freedom of movement and protection against sexual harassment in exchange for wearing something they would truly never otherwise wear. The other theory was that it was a post-colonial resistance of a worse norm of capitalism and sexual commodification of women's bodies imported by the West and their media (Mahmood 2005, 215n33). Importantly, Mahmood is not disputing the truth of these arguments, she is arguing that we are not getting the full picture.

Going back to the first Section of my first Chapter on the empirical power of ethnography. What Mahmood accuses those who only stick to this one way of thinking about norms is a lack of curiosity (Mahmood 2005, 206). Mahmood describes what the effect of contact with our subjects of study should have on our theories. That "we might come to learn things that we did not already know before we undertook the engagement… my suggestion is that we leave open the possibility that our political and analytical certainties might be transformed in the process of exploring nonliberal movements" (Mahmood 2005, 209). This not just a simple call for greater self-reflexivity, but it is a critique of how empirical work should

shape our theories. If we are surprised by reality, like scholars were about the return to the veil, this might be a time to go back and question the adequacy of our theories. Empirical work is not just a constraint on our theories but instead should be a productive site to start shaping better theories to adapt to the subjects we study. That is the importance of surprise and curiosity. Surprise should question our faith in what we assume are settled and taken for granted concepts and curiosity should drive us to investigate further.

As a conclusion to this chapter, I argue that a virtue of the feminist thinker is the ability to be open to the ongoing incompleteness of knowing what could be feminist. This shows us a feminist vice of dismissing the authority of marginalized women to have a say in what is feminist because of the assumption that we already know what a feminist future is like and that all that is left is realizing it. This kind of epistemically arrogant, teleological version of feminism, as Kimberly Hutchings argues, "discount[s] feminist pluralism in the light of a projected unanimity on the question of what it means for women to be free" (2013, 22).

Abbas' argument that feminist work must always be teleological, with an eye constantly monitoring progression or else there might be the worry that one is justifying the status quo and current injustice is what Eve Sedgwick labels a "paranoid reading" of feminist goals. Sedgwick articulates many features of paranoid readings of feminism, but I will just quickly concentrate on two critiques of paranoid readings that I think apply to the critics of Mahmood. The first is an aversion to the unanticipated and the second is that it closes off conceptual space for anything other than oppositional projects.

Feminist projects that countenance *only* resistance amidst a world of great injustice and patriarchy can never be paranoid enough (Wiegman 2014, 10). Bad norms are everywhere and therefore positive projects of new norm formation are always undermined because complicity

with oppressive norms is pervasive. As I have just argued, one can view the history of feminist philosophy as a series of positive projects that continuously failed to be inclusive enough and were revealed as oppressive. A paranoid way of responding in our theories later being revealed as oppressive is to be anticipatory and vigilant in trying to avoid the fate of previous progressive theories. But because of the ubiquity of possible complicity, critical work becomes an "elegant diagram of spiralling escapes and recaptures" (Sedgwick 2003, 132). The strategy of paranoia and hypervigilance becomes the task of "disciplinary future-proofing" (Jagose 2015, 34) current feminist theory. The work that paranoia aims to do is bootstrap feminism normatively into a better future not through any positive project but through avoiding any "bad surprises" (Sedgwick 2003, 130) with anticipatory critique.

We can see the problem with regards to French feminism and the Muslim veil. We can understand white feminist opposition to the veil and their resistance to listen to veiled women if we understand them as following a paranoid reading of what feminism should be. For these feminists, feminism as a theory has already theorized what oppression looks like (traditional, religious etc.) and veiling seems paradigmatically a way that patriarchal oppression would manifest itself, since religious patriarchy has always been a way in the past that oppression has manifested itself. So, we do not need to learn anything new about these veiled women. But this lack of wonder of what could be learned from Other women, of a lack of wonder about the possibility of different feminist futures forced these veiled women into a dilemma that they could never both veil and speak *as* a feminist. As Al-Saji argues, to French feminists, one had to be either one or the other, either a Muslim woman or a feminist (2010a, 880). This gives the teleological feminist a strange ownership and sovereignty over the definition of feminism. This kind of claim seems epistemically and normatively bad to the point that we might say that it is a

kind of "hermeneutical injustice"[93] against those veiled women who *know* they are feminists but

are being robbed of the conceptual vocabulary to articulate this. As Mahmood argues, to even be

effective in the normative work of opposition that teleological feminist aim for, we must

"consider that perhaps we do not always know what we oppose and that a political vision at

times has to admit its own finitude to even comprehend what it has sought to oppose" (Mahmood

2005, 209).

Sedgwick also argues that this kind of paranoia stultifies other, non-teleological ways of

feminist theorising. Because of the paranoid, hyper-vigilance of avoiding falling into complicity

with the world's oppressiveness, the stakes of deviating from this "hermeneutics of suspicion"

becomes very high. As Abbas explicitly argues, deviation risks the entire feminist future if the

feminist present abandons its progressive debt to the past (Wiegman 2014, 5) and so the paranoid

reading becomes understood "as a mandatory injunction rather than a possibility among other

possibilities" (Sedgwick 2003, 125).

The conceptual space occluded by paranoid feminist theory is what Sedgwick calls

"reparative" readings of feminist futures. Recently there have been feminist attempts to open up

this conceptual space through, for instance, trying to differentiate between "normalization", the

disciplinary power enforcing norms and "normativity", the process where alternative norms of

flourishing get taken up (Shotwell 2012). If we want alternative ways of being and flourishing

outside of majority norms and normalization to proliferate, there must be an opening up of this

conceptual space so that as philosophers we can be attentive to diverse positive orientations and

projects beyond negation, opposition and resistance (Singh 2015, 11). Not enforcing a purity

against norms that aren't "progressive" is important to forming the conditions of possibility for

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[93] I will explore further what this kind of epistemic justice entails in the next chapter.

collective work that cements new norms and new orthodoxies. But doing this always courts risk. As Caroline Pedwell concludes from Sedgwick's work, "it is precisely in learning how to inhabit (rather than transcend) ambivalence, conflict and complexity that we might move from simply diagnosing 'bad habits' to the difficult and productive work of creating new tendencies–ones that might take us to a different (and more affirmative) intellectual and socio-political place" (2016, 110).

Chapter 5: Abandoning the Concept of Adaptive Preferences

I ended the previous chapter by advocating methodologically for what Eve Sedgwick calls a "reparative reading" of the practices of the women in Saba Mahmood's ethnography. I also argued that feminists with a certain teleological view of how the feminist future should progress have a "paranoid reading" of the women in the *dawa* movement. This means that the actions of these women are only interpreted through the lens of how much these actions resist majority social norms. In this chapter, I continue my critique of paranoid readings that stop us from listening to non-Western women's intuitions and refusing to be surprised with what they have to say. Previous chapters have involved a lot of engineering of conceptual tools I have been dissatisfied with, but in this chapter, I advocate for the abandonment of the concept of adaptive preferences. In previous chapters, changing the concept was enough to save that concept as useful but here my argument is eliminative rather than a strategy of amelioration or improvement of a concept.

In Section 1, I look at traditional feminist accounts of adaptive preferences and argue they lead too easily to testimonial injustice of Third World women. In Section 2, I look at a decolonial attempt to save the concept of adaptive preferences by Serene Khader. Although I take a lot of good ideas from her work, I argue that this theory cannot address a much larger problem for the concept of adaptive preferences. This problem is that as a concept, adaptive preferences implicitly assume that women only *adapt* to socialization and that their actions have no effect on their own socialization.

In Section 3, I introduce my own unique take on the complexity of the direction of socialization by presenting the idea of "niche construction" from biology to contrast to "adaptive preferences". I do not do this to show that these women characterized as having adaptive

preferences actually have immunity to their socialization. My argument should not be mistaken for an individualist, libertarian argument. Instead, I argue that these women shape their environment to shape themselves and others. I show six different kinds of evolutionary niche construction and then parallel each of these kinds with examples of practices and techniques from earlier chapters of what could be called social niche construction by the women in the *dawa* movement. In doing this, I trouble the simple dichotomy that non-Western women either completely adapt or completely resist their circumstances.

Section 1 – The Traditional Feminist Account of Adaptive Preferences

The concept of adaptive preferences has been used in a wide variety of philosophical contexts, from questions about patients' ability to make decisions when ill to more abstract questions about prudential value. Jon Elster originally used the term to be about "sour grapes". Taken from an Aesops' fable, the fox desires some grapes high up on the vine that it cannot reach. Not being able to get it, the fox instead gives the excuse that it never wanted the grapes anyway because they are probably sour (even though they are not). In general, adaptive preferences are a situation where I cannot attain a goal I desired so instead I change my desire, giving the excuse that the goal I desired before is actually no good. It is a way of defusing the unconscious frustration of living in a world that does not always respond to my wants.

As a concept, it has changed as it has been used in different contexts. Martha Nussbaum gives the paradigmatic example of the work adaptive preferences do where feminist philosophy and global development ethics overlap. She gives the account of Vasanti, an Indian woman, who through impoverishment and patriarchal conditions continued to stay with her abusive husband (2000, 106). In Nussbaum's view, Vasanti has adaptive preferences because if she had been

socialized with more and better options, she both descriptively would have but also ought to prefer to leave her husband. We can think back to what I called the socialization problem in feminist philosophy in Chapter 3. We are all socialized into some culture, but feminists argue that some socialization shapes us to prefer norms that support unjust systems. Adaptive preferences in this context is used as a conceptual tool to help us normatively make the cut between good and bad socialization. Rosa Terlazzo argues that the value of the concept of adaptive preferences "arises from its ability to do a certain kind of 'political work': it allows philosophers to oppose the claim that 'women's enjoyment of sexist practices makes such practices morally and politically unproblematic'" (2016, 207).

My main worry is that traditional feminist accounts of adaptive preferences can do this work without listening first to the woman they claim have adaptive preferences. How does the concept of adaptive preferences lead to this? Normally, the philosopher will argue that a certain practice is oppressive and that participating in that practice is therefore bad for women. The burden is put on this woman to defend her acceptance of this oppressive practice. The philosopher and the woman participating in the practice have a live disagreement, we can't in advance of a fuller dialogue and more empirical work know who is correct. But the concept of adaptive preferences shuts down this disagreement in advance of the fuller dialogue. This is because adaptive preferences are a coercive way of distorting the agency, preferences and, desires of the oppressed. These harms are both material in the case Vasanti and psychological[94]. The philosopher can ignore the woman who has adaptive preferences and because her psychology is *already distorted*. Any defence of what she is doing is already a *manifestation* that

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[94] See Bartky (1990)

the woman has acquiesced to her oppressive circumstances. This can lead to counterintuitive

conclusions.

Normally the more passionately a person defends herself, the more we should believe that

the person came upon their reasons herself and therefore we might have good reason to listen to

her. The polarity is reversed if one uses adaptive preferences. The passionate defence becomes a

tragedy, it shows just how deep an oppressive preference can bury itself, such that a woman

doesn't just acquiesce but is actively embracing her oppression. As David Enoch remarks, "if

there really is no disharmony in the woman's structure of desires, then there is no self there that

objects or indeed can object… This picture is especially depressing because according to it this

case marks oppression's absolute victory" (2020, 181n49). Once a practice is labelled as

oppressive, if the concept of adaptive preferences is used, the woman participating is caught in a

trap where disagreement becomes a further proof that adaptive preferences have completely

taken hold. This is because we already know what she is going to say if she is defending her

oppressive practice. It is whatever ideology she was socialized in and so the step of exploring her

reasons and her way of life can be skipped. This is a demonstration of what happened when

adaptive preferences were weaponized against Muslim women who veil in Western countries

such as France and Quebec.[95] This is a non-ideal argument, based on real epistemic injustice.

I certainly agree that socialization is powerful and sometimes can be complete. This was

the point of my Third Chapter. Our generative endowment and inauguration into our own culture

through the inculcation of a second nature sets, without our consent, many of our normative

goals, values, and deep desires. One could give push back to my goal in this chapter by admitting

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[95] See Joan Scott and Mayanthi Fernando for more on how veiled women's voices were erased in the debate over banning the veil through this kind of self-sealing argument.

that we do need to reform, not abandon the concept of adaptive preferences.[96] Although not a

logically necessary, deductive argument, my political argument here is that we live in a world of

past imperialist and colonial injustice and to not self-reflexively think that if adaptive preferences

affect the intuitions and judgement of Other women, that socialization should affect the Western

feminist philosopher. As Elizabeth Barnes has argued about applying adaptive preferences to

those that are disabled and prefer their disability over a cure, "misapplied, the adaptive

preference model can simply entrench pre-existing biases" (2016, 137). Surely we can use

another concept, one that encourages rather than shuts down further conversation[97].

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, part of the problem is that often feminists think

they already know what oppression looks like based on a contrast with the ideal of gender

eliminativism. Serene Khader has a term that describes the problem with this narrow normative

vision for all feminism: "justice monism". This is the belief that gender justice could only

manifest itself through a Western instantiation (Khader 2018, 22). It is an inability to see other

ways of life as good, it confuses "difference with deprivation" (Khader 2011, 12). The epistemic

hubris involved is the assumption of the Western feminist that her "aversion to 'Western

patriarchy' immunizes her to every form of participation in problematic aspects of 'Western

culture.' This belief is perhaps a feminist version of a mistaken but commonplace belief, that a

deeply critical stance against one's culture places one entirely outside its orbit and influence"

(Narayan 2007, 58).

There can be comparisons made between adaptive preferences and the concept of false

consciousness in that both are vulnerable to the same kinds of criticisms. Clare Chambers gives a

dilemma for false consciousness that I argue can be applied to adaptive preferences as well. This

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[96] For example, this is the explicit goal of Terlazzo (2016).
[97] In the final chapter, I argue that an ameliorated version of "relational autonomy" could be one of these concepts

argument is that either the adaptation to one's social situatedness is so pervasive and impermeable that it loses its critical edge or that the person applying adaptive preferences to others' claims are immune from distortion in such a way as to render the subjects of critique of adaptive preferences as what Uma Narayan calls "dupes of patriarchy". Neither horn seems appealing (Chambers 2017, 186). Interestingly, Narayan finds one damning difference between false consciousness and adaptive preferences. At least with false consciousness, it is those who are oppressed that have an epistemic leg up on those critics who are socially situated closer to the distorting force of capitalism. "The term 'adaptive preferences' suggests that oppressed people are less likely to 'get things right,' it can help support the view that the desires and preferences of poor non-Western women might be discounted by the more fortunate… This… is all the stranger because most theories of oppression, feminism included, often have as their starting point an analysis of the ways in which forms of privilege distort not only the preferences of privileged subjects, but their expectations, entitlements, and understandings of how things work" (Narayan 2019, 17).

Of course, there is another way out of Chamber's dilemma. People like Nussbaum and, I will argue in the next section, Khader who do use adaptive preferences use an undistorted, universal concept to gain critical purchase to compare what unadapted preferences should look like. Nussbaum uses her ideal capabilities list as a theory of justice to compare while Khader uses a purposely vaguely defined perfectionism or universalism as her normative measuring stick. But it has to be asked, if the theory of justice is what we should consult as the index of comparison, what work is adaptive preferences doing? It seems the main work is to silence dissent from those women who are being accused of having adaptive preferences. If the theory of justice is doing all the work, I think this is a good reason to discard adaptive preferences as a tool

and rely on an ideal or non-ideal theory of justice. At least then, as I argued at the start of this section, there can be disagreement on whether the theory of justice put forward is correct or not.

Section 2 – A Decolonial Attempt to Rescue Adaptive Preferences

My concern with traditional accounts of adaptive preferences, as I have argued in the previous chapter, is that not all women want to pursue their goals of justice in the same cultural mode. There is an assumption that the ways these practices manifest in their own cultural approach is a second-best way of doing things. So, the assumption is that anyone who would want to do things this way must have adapted their preferences. Serene Khader's work addresses my concerns about traditional frameworks of adaptive preferences directly. Over the course of two books, Khader uses two couplets of concepts, "Deliberative Perfectionism" and "Non-Ideal Universalism", to argue that it is possible to use adaptive preferences yet not do testimonial injustices to the women we are concerned about. In this section I agree with the first half of each couplet, deliberation and non-ideal theory, but argue that without perfectionism or universalism, we could still do much of the work that Khader argues the concept of adaptive preferences does. My suggestion is to drop the concept of "adaptive preferences" and instead work toward a non-ideal gender justice.

In her first book, entitled *Adaptive Preferences and Women's Empowerment*, Khader defends the use of adaptive preferences from the worry of testimonial injustice by arguing for a much more robust idea of deliberation with Third World women. She gives the example at the start of her book of PAEM, a women's group dedicated toward empowering women to get education and participate in the public sphere in rural Honduras. PAEM neither overrode the rural Honduran women's beliefs nor merely acquiesced to their existing preferences (Khader 2011, 5). Instead, there was a continual dialogue where alien forms of gender justice were not

forced onto them but instead the strategies for change came from the women themselves. This is not an account where these women's views are merely a single data point in a reflective equilibrium about the problem. Instead "deliberation" is much more robust and treats these women "as agents who deserve to play a decisive role in determining the outcome of their lives" (Khader 2011, 6).

A second move made by Khader in that work was to decouple the concept of adaptive preferences from relational autonomy. She argues that we are less likely to interfere with and treat Third World women's testimony with disrespect if we are not worried that they are rendered non-autonomous through adaptive preferences. We can save the concept of adaptive preferences by eliminating the concept of relational autonomy. It is interesting to note that my strategy is the opposite of this. In this chapter I argue we should eliminate the concept of adaptive preferences in order to, in the next chapter, save the concept of relational autonomy.

The point of thin normative notions of perfectionism in her first book and of universalism in her second book is to push the idea that we do not need a thick normative concept to know what choices are better for women. Yet for Khader, we do need *some* normative concept so that we know that "some things are better and worse for human beings across all contemporary contexts" (Khader 2019, 22). This is because we need some yardstick in order to make cross-cultural moral judgments. Khader argues that just because we must have a normative yardstick such as "flourishing", this doesn't mean that there aren't many different ways to flourish (Khader 2011, 109).

Khader explores this point further in her second book, *Decolonizing Universalism*. Here, as I have mentioned already in this chapter, she names the normative fallacy that it is only possible to actualize gender justice within one set of Western cultural forms as "justice monism"

(Khader 2019, 22). The way, according to Khader, to avoid this kind of "transcendental institutionalism" where we assume that there is only one possible sort of just social arrangement (2019, 30) is to not state what the endpoint of gender justice looks like and leave open "the possibility that multiple culturally specific ways of living gender, could embody gender justice" (Khader 2019, 38). This fits well with my argument from the previous chapter. While I agree that this work gives us concepts to help articulate what is wrong with positing the goal of feminism before talking to Third World women, here I push back on the need to use "perfectionism" and "universalism". I argue this because Khader uses adaptive preferences as a cross-cultural way to tell if women are not flourishing. Instead, I look further into her argument in her new book in order to argue that we do not need cross-cultural standards but that instead non-ideal theory allows us to have culturally specific normative standards.

In *Decolonizing Universalism,* Khader argues that one of the problems of what she calls Strong Idealism is that it ends up manifesting as Enlightenment teleology. That in the Western social imaginary, utopia will all look the same. Not just that, but utopia will look like Western Enlightenment Europe/North American culture. Enlightenment teleology isn't true because Justice Monism isn't true. This is because justice as a general concept can instantiate in many cultural forms, not just one. As I have argued already, I think there's also an epistemological problem with Strong Idealism because it already assumes beforehand what justice looks like, "a priori", without investigating empirically. And so, Western philosophers have this predrawn roadmap and criteria of what justice is supposed to look like. The justice monist sees a different culture's arrangement of gender and just assumes that it is wrong because it doesn't match this predrawn criteria. And this is wrong not only because justice monism is wrong but also because

idealism's concentration on the ideal makes it miss out on oppression and self-reflexively its own oppression.

As I argued in the methodological introduction of this dissertation, it is imperative when looking at injustice and oppression that one's methodology be contextual and historical. We cannot know what form it takes and how to solve the instance of oppression beforehand, in our armchairs, so we need anthropological work first; we need to go out into the world first and then come back to our concepts afterward. The strength of this non-ideal argument, though, is premised on reassuring the idealist that just because we don't have ideals doesn't mean we have to worry that there will be no justice. We don't need to know the ideal to tackle injustice. It is injustice that should be our priority which ideal theory occludes. Khader gives three arguments for those worried that relying on nonideal theory would lead to cultural relativism.

The first is that nonideal feminist theory realizes that there can be oppression other than just gender oppression that women in Other cultures have to deal with. She emphasizes imperialism because this is a kind of oppression that Western feminists aren't able to acknowledge because Western feminists "are likely to have their judgments about 'other' women's exercises of power infected by ideology" (Khader 2017, 16). In doing this, nonideal theory is useful because it allows us to see that although a decision by a woman in another culture may acquiesce to some practice of gender oppression, it might lessen oppression overall by opposing some imperialist practice. The second argument is that nonideal theory allows us to realize that the best option that Other women can make is one that gives the ability to effect some kind of *transition* away from injustice rather than being the one that corresponds to ultimate gender justice (Khader 2019, 131). The movement toward gender justice cannot be done in a single stroke. "Because social change almost always involves long-term negotiation with existing

structures of power and systems of meaning, and because such social change often imposes costs on the vulnerable, recommendations about how to achieve it will rarely be articulated as visions of ultimate gender justice" (Khader 2019, 6). In looking for the best transitional option, Khader recommends a contextual method of looking at strategies that women in that society embrace because this "can reveal genuinely feminist possibilities that would otherwise be difficult for Western feminists to imagine" (Khader 2019, 94). This kind of work has to be contextual and nonideal because indicators of advantage differ from context to context (Khader 2019, 93). The third argument is, for me, the most important and this is that nonideal theory takes the focus away from the spatialized comparisons. This is important because comparisons are usually of the Other culture contrasted with Western culture. And Western culture becomes the yard stick to know if the "other" culture is headed in the right direction. Instead nonideal theory asks us to focus *diachronically* on whether a culture has reduced injustice over time, it is a comparison over time with itself (Khader 2019, 135). "What matters, under nonideal conditions is whether women's ability to shape the conditions of their action is increasing" (Khader 2019, 136) and not whether it lives up to the ideal set up and in comparison to Western cultures[98].

So, the problem with tying universalism to ideal theory is all of these problems with ideal theory. Khader's solution is not to throw out universalism, but to throw out ideal theory which is where she gets the conceptual couplet of "non-ideal universalism". Her universalist principle and normative yardstick is taken from bell hooks' early work, that the criteria for justice that we should aim for is an "opposition to sexist oppression" (Khader 2019, 93). Khader touts the vagueness of this definition as a *virtue* of the concept. I wonder then, since it is so vague, if it really does the prescriptive work that it needs to? I also wonder if discarding universalism is

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[98] I will come back to and elaborate further this important point in the next and final chapter.

even a problem? I say this because the account given by Khader of non-ideal theory is so strong, convincing and reassuring. That in fact there is actually quite a bit of conceptual space between the bad pole of relativism and the other extreme pole of enlightenment teleological idealism with her three arguments. In her second argument, Khader emphasizes that before making any decision about gender justice, we must first seek the context of the situation for the women there and look to their strategies. So what role does universalism, a prescription that is either useful because of its lack of context, or is so vague that it gives no concrete direction without nonideal theory, play? This worry is also motivated by the problem of justice monism and empiricism. If gender justice can be instantiated multiply, what is the point of a concept such as "universalism" that tells us *beforehand* what oppression is going to look like before we go in empirically and investigate? And if there is a reason to have a prescriptive concept beforehand to check against the multiply realizable conceptions of gender out there, shouldn't it be much less vague so that it can do its prescriptive work better?

This is all to say that if non-ideal theory as a concept is strong enough not to fall into relativism without ideal theory, it should be strong enough to not to fall into relativism without universalism. To me this makes universalism redundant because it is non-ideal theory that's doing the conceptual work. If I'm on board with nonideal theory and that its contextualism won't lead directly to relativism, why not kick the ladder of universalism? Without the ladder, Khader has assured us that if we follow a culture's improvement diachronically we will not fall into relativism, so again, the work that universalism does is minimal.

Where we stand now, my critique Khader in this part of the chapter could still be taken as a friendly amendment by supporters of adaptive preferences. But my goal has been to suggest the elimination of the concept of adaptive preferences. In the final section of this chapter, I argue

that the concept of adaptive preferences misdescribes the phenomenon of socialization such that the power of socialization is seen as active and unidirectional and that people are then seen as completely passive in adapting their preferences. I argue instead, that socialization can be thought of as a feedback loop between the individual and the social environment/community. I do this by using the concept of "niche construction" borrowed from evolutionary biology and the concept of affordances discussed in earlier chapters.

Section 3 – Rethinking Socialization Through "Niche Construction"

The main problem with adaptive preferences is the descriptive assumption of the asymmetry of causation in the idea of socialization. On this account of socialization, it is the social conditions that has the power to manipulate us into acquiescing to and in some accounts, even embracing our own oppression. Society is *the* active force while we are all passive objects to be molded. We can see this asymmetry of the activity of socialization in the way that feminists talk about adaptive preferences. For instance, Terlazzo defines the feminist problem of adaptive preferences as the worry that in a world that harbours unjust and inegalitarian norms, "our circumstances can *effectively socialize* us to prefer conditions or options that are bad for us" (Terlazzo 2016, 206). Here ideologies embedded in our circumstances are so effective that they have the coercive power to make us prefer harmful options. Nussbaum also has a variety of ways of describing the power of socialization that adapts our desires. One way she puts it is that people's ambitions only rise, or worse, lower to the levels of their social context. Another account by Nussbaum of how her Bangladeshi research participants Vasanti and Jayamma prefer their oppression is as a construction of the laws and institutions under which they live (2000, 155). A third way Nussbaum frames the socializing power of adaptive preferences is that it

comes from long habituation, lifelong socialization and the absence of information about other ways of life (2000, 139).

My argument isn't just that women have *sui generis* agency but instead that the women whose practices I have talked about throughout chapter 1, 2 and 4 have some agency *over their environment*. This changes the direction of socialization not just by simply reversing the direction, but by creating a more complicated loop. In the following sections of my account of niche construction, we will see that these women aren't exclusively active or exclusively passive; rather, there are *both* active and passive elements to socialization. These women actively manipulate their environment so that they can be passively influenced by it (Colombetti 2017, 1444).

Section 3.1 – What is Niche Construction?

The philosophy of biology has confronted its own problems with the idea that the only causal force in evolution is an adaptive force that originates from the environment. As far back as the 1980s, Lewontin and Levin complained in their famous *The Dialectical Biologist* that in evolutionary biology, the environment is treated as an autonomous force of selection while the organism is treated as a passive object of external forces (1985, 89). This explanation tends to reify the environment "as a self-standing, causally efficacious entity — a given. It also, erroneously, casts the organism as a passive medium to be molded by the environment" (Walsh 2015, 109). Lewontin and others are part of a movement called the "Extended Synthesis" (Pigliucci and Muller 2010) that oppose the traditional "Modern Synthesis" account of evolution. This "Extended Synthesis" encourages us to see organisms as objects, but also as subjects that construct their environmental niches. Using these parallels in the problems facing both

evolutionary biology and adaptive preferences, I use niche construction to help us think

differently from the one-way account of socialization given to us by the concept of adaptive

preferences.

Niche construction as a concept is deceptively simple if we recall one of the lessons that I

have pushed regarding embodiment and affordances. This lesson is that the line separating the

organism and the environment is porous and that the environment and the organism actively

codetermine each other. Against the thesis that the environment is the only cause, niche

construction posits that "organisms themselves shape or 'construct' (1) the external conditions of

their existence, and (2) their *experience* of those external conditions" (Sultan 2015, 37).

We can see the effects of this reciprocal, feedback loop of causation through failed

attempts at engineering plants through artificial selection and genetic engineering. As related by

Lewontin, this engineering was attempted in order to improve crop yields in microenvironments.

These plant engineers grow

> leaf phenotypes optimized to a measured microenvironment, for example, the
> temperature, light exposure, humidity, and oxygen and carbon dioxide concentration
> around the plant. The problem is that the newly selected leaf morphologies tend to *alter*
> the humidity, light, carbon dioxide, and other distribution and create a different, less
> optimal microenvironment. The plant engineers can intervene again, but only to have the
> plants change the environment once more. 'The plant engineers are chasing not only a
> moving target but a target whose motion is impelled by their own activities,' states
> Lewontin (Chiu 2019, 301).

There are two ways of thinking about how niche construction shapes both the

environment and the organism. The first is the "causal" explanation, the second is the

"constitutive" explanation. The causal explanation is the traditional way of looking at niche

construction with its famous example of the beaver dam. The beaver builds the dam, causing a

change in the river environment. This new environment then causes different selection pressures

on the beaver. The constitutive explanation looks at niche construction as a relation between the

organism and its *affordances* rather than with the brute environment. Importantly, the constitutive account is a larger umbrella concept and all examples of causal niche construction are also examples of constitutive niche construction. The reverse though is not true. What the concept of constitutional niche construction allows us to do is include new and interesting phenomena that previously didn't count as niche construction to be seen as niche construction.

As Denis Walsh argues, "constitutive niche construction underscores the reciprocity between organisms and their affordances that does not hold [in the causal account] between organisms and their environments. What a feature of the environment affords an organism depends upon the organism's capacities, and the capacities of the organism in turn depend (in part) on the features of the environment" (2015, 182). In Chapter 1 and 2, I defined affordances as a triadic concept that connects the organism's skills/capacity, their social milieu and their material environment. Causal niche construction looks only at the brute external environment, literally everything outside the organism, as a separate entity that influences and then is influenced by the organism. But the brute environment really isn't what influences/is influenced by the organism since it is only a *part* of the brute environment that can have a relation with the organism. The organism can only have access to the environment it can *afford* to access through its own capacity/skill. For example, a winged creature's affordances allow it to have a completely different relationship to the brute environment than a creature without wings. The constitutive theory of niche construction posits that while the brute environment is a separate entity from the organism, using the concept of affordances, there is a certain part of this brute environment an organism *can* access such that the organism and accessible environment constitute a unit, a *single organismal/environment complex*. In this chapter, I embrace the

constitutional definition of niche construction because it explains a wider breadth of social

phenomena than the causal definition.

Now that we understand the definition and impact of niche construction, I look at

different kinds of natural niche construction and parallel them with ways the women in the

mosque movement construct their social niches. Importantly, I take all of these examples from

previous chapters in this dissertation, especially Chapter 2.

Section 3.2 – Relocational Niche Construction

Let's start with the simplest kind of niche construction: relocational. This kind of niche

construction easily fits into the causal category of niche construction, but as I have argued, all

causal niche construction can also be considered examples of constitutive niche construction. As

opposed to changing the environment itself, the organism counteracts the effect of the

environment by relocating. There are two kinds within this category of niche construction. The

first is "inceptive", where the organism exposes itself to a new environment for a positive

advantage. The other is "counteractive", where the organism responds to a negative change in the

environment such as seasonal migration in response to intemperate weather (Odling-Smee et al.

2003, 47). This alters environmental variables by changing the relationship of the organism to

the environment. This most easily parallels social niche construction in the example of a person

who has a special set of skills for a particular environment. Think of a chef in a kitchen versus

being in a car garage. The skills of the chef can find very few affordances in the garage because

there is a mismatch of what the environment offers. But by simply walking into the kitchen,

because of their skills, the chef can multiply the number and kind of affordances they encounter.

In Chapter 2, we can see examples of both inceptive and counteractive social niche construction if we remember to consider *affect* as part of the scaffolded environment. I gave the example of the alcoholic avoiding going to a bar, which we can classify now as counteractive affective niche construction. We can remember the woman whose house had a sinful atmosphere because of the influence of a terrible husband. The woman was then advised by the *daiya* [piety teacher] at the *dawa* group to divorce the man and presumably, move out. The reason for this advice was the warning about bringing up her children in that environment and that she would not be able to be obedient to God with him in the house. She counteracts this negative variable in her environment by leaving.

I also discussed the habit breaking power of the ritual space of the mosque as well as its positive influence as a place of freedom to practice piety. It is a place where good habits are anchored and positive moods are scaffolded. The mosque is a concrete example of inceptive social niche construction. Just as a home is a container niche with a number of constituting and overlapping niches (Colombetti 2017, 1445), so is the mosque. The kind of emotional technologies that religions have invested in their houses of worship are multifarious (Krueger 2014, 159). The way it is constructed creates a space of intimacy. The ritualized practices and ceremonies, the aesthetic dimensions within the building as well as decorations like the *mihrab* bring out the proper values and experience when inside. The prayers have their own embodied movements, the recitation has its own aesthetic aurality, and the codes of dress and behaviour all facilitate proper and virtuous habit formation within so that these good habits can be practiced even when one is away from mosque.

Section 3.3 – Affective Scaffolding as Niche Construction

The second form of niche construction is the idea of externally extended emotions, or as I call it, affective scaffolding. Contemporary humans are born into a massively niche constructed world, with an ecological inheritance that includes houses, hospitals, farms, factories, computers, satellites, and the World Wide Web (Laland and O'Brien, 19). Recently, some philosophers of mind and biology have argued that our cognition is massively scaffolded, both in our environment and in the tools we use. From a pencil and pad, to clocks, now to the GPS on our cell phones, humans as organisms build scaffolding that rachets up our cognitive abilities to further build more advanced cognitively scaffolded environments. Beginning with Griffiths and Scarantino and more recently taken up by Giovanna Colombetti, (and as I have already argued in Chapters 1 and 2), philosophers of emotion argue that mood, like epistemic things, can be scaffolded in the environment.

Unlike the previous example of niche construction, affective niche construction can only gain legibility as "niche construction" when thought of as constitutive niche construction. This is because of affect's reliance on affordances. In affectively scaffolding the environment, people can change their affordances. These different effects that emotion and affect have on us is different for different people because of our unique experiences. Without affordances we cannot make sense of the idea that the same environment could emotionally effect two organisms differently. For one person it is a random threadbare sweater that should be consigned to the garbage, for another it's a favourite hoodie that brings tactile feelings of comfort because of their prior relationship with it. Different affective scaffolds afford different things for different people. There is no better example than the way various people use different kinds of music or different

foods to manipulate their moods. It takes a completely separate upbringing and aural skill to appreciate and get certain emotions from Bach while others resonate more with Qawwali music.

Colombetti's own paradigmatic example of affective niche construction is her handbag. She points to work from sociology that the handbag, "plays an important role in the life of many people who rely on this object's looks and feel to regulate their mood—for example by choosing a certain colour to brighten up their day, or a certain texture and shape for comfort and reassurance" (2017, 1445). In a perfect parallel to this, I ended the second chapter by arguing the veil that pious Muslim women wear was a portable mood shaper. In Chapter 2 I showed the remarkable work of the situationists and how much unconscious changes in our moods affect whether we do good actions or not. I also showed that these action changing moods were able to be induced by something as simple as finding a dime on the ground.

Colombetti talks about making and baking her own pizza to calm herself down rather than drinking alcohol because of the smell of dough and the tactile resistance and effort needed to knead the dough. "In other words, the notion of scaffolded moods opens the door to the recognition that some of the reasons we rely on the world to regulate our moods is that the world has unique material qualities which allow us to achieve specific moods that would otherwise be outside our reach" (Colombetti 2017, 1446). I argued in the same way, the materiality and tactile feel of the veil allows these Muslim women to regulate their moods and to counteract bad feeling perturbations from the social environment. Our relations to clothes are not just as a layer of material to keep us warm. Clothes in fact integrate into our general body schema. For example, when we get used to a hat, we compensate for it naturally, like it is a part of our body, so that door frames or tree branches don't knock the hat off our head. From Cairo to France, to Germany to Belgium I presented ethnographic work of women who wear the veil and all related an

affective bond with their veil. They related that it put them in the appropriate mood, such as pride, elation and most of all spiritual protection. This bond was so strong that one Quebec woman testified that if a legislative ban forced her to take her veil off, she would feel amputated. Here, her veil becomes the environment and we see the porousness of organism and environment that Lewontin and Walsh argue is a part of their account of constitutional niche construction. Wearing the veil is much like inceptive and counteractive relocational niche construction. It changes the affective affordances of *any* environment. If the woman who wears the veil is forced, as we all sometimes are, to go into an environment inimical to virtuous habit or mood, she can use the veil as a shelter and refuge to counteractively niche construct her mood. Alternatively, in "neutral" secular space, she can use her veil to inceptively niche construct her mood with positive pious feeling.

Section 3.4 – Relational Niche Construction

The third kind of niche construction reminds us that the environment is not just inert matter, but can also be other organisms that we interact with. An organism affects and is also affected by creatures of its own species, especially social pack animals and social insects like bees and ants. Organisms also have relationships with other species, such as the predator/prey, host/parasite relationship. Because these relations only show up as significant because of the social milieu, one part of my triadic definition of affordances, this kind of niche construction could only be seen as niche construction with the help of the concept of constitutional niche construction. Unlike, the case of causal niche construction, these relations can be modified in the absence of the organism transforming its own constitution or the physical conditions of its environment. For instance, mice who pile up to keep warm do not change their environment but

are able to affect their rate of heat loss. Alpha male and female social primates have a selection affect on the whole pack merely by being there (Aaby and Ransey 2020, 12). "A lone adult lion might challenge an older and weaker male lion for control of its pride and usurp its place as leader of the pride. This is a perturbation of the social structure of the pride, but is not an alteration of the external (or physical) environment as conceived by [traditional causal niche construction]" (Aaby and Ransey 2020, 15). Relational niche construction has to be seen as a constitutive niche construction.

From the First Chapter, I emphasized how one's interactions with others, even coworkers, had affective and habit shaping consequences. Friendships too, I argued, are an effective "training ground for virtue" (Aristotle 1170a11–12) since friends are reciprocal shapers of each others' habits. Socially, relational niche construction can also be a kind of affective niche construction. Friends scaffold certain moods that can change our situation, especially if we keep in mind that something small like finding a dime or smelling cinnabon can change our actions through mood. This mood can heighten through a ratcheting up and feedback loop of emotion. "When sharing my anger over my wife's infidelity with friends, my anger solicits an angry response from them, which heightens my own anger, which in turn further animates theirs" (Krueger 2014, 164). Friends are also there to witness your emotions as spectators. There is empirical work on "audience effects" that shows this. For instance, bowlers rarely smile after bowling a strike when facing away from their friends but counterintuitively, smile very often after only knocking down a few pins when facing their companions. This has been replicated when looking at facial expressions of Spanish soccer fans, contrasting when watching a game with friends and alone. "Smiles are not outpourings of happiness which are merely witnessed by

other people, but rather affiliative gestures made by one person to another with respect to something good which has occurred" (Griffiths and Scarantino 2005, 4).

Section 3.5 – Multi-Level Niche Construction

The fourth kind of niche/social construction, multi-level niche construction, can be compared to Adam Smith's famous analogy of an invisible hand. The invisible hand is an idea that people working toward their own self good, unintentionally can cause invisible market forces such that the best interests of society as a whole are fulfilled. This is a collective niche construction that originates from a specific species but the effects of this niche construction does not affect that species, but *does* affect other species. Organisms can only interact with affordances if the affordances can be perceived as such. So sometimes when the brute environment is changed, the niche construction happens at a different "level" than the species who creates the perturbation in the environment. Consider again the beaver dam. The dam has great consequences for all the flora and fauna along the river in a way that doesn't affect the beaver. Often this kind of niche construction effect happens because a large number of individuals, not acting intentionally in concert with each other, like an invisible niche constructing hand, make individual perturbations that completely change the environment for other species. One major example was at the early stages of our planet, bacteria producing oxygen happened at the species level but the product of this had an influence on a different level, the entire ecosystem, which beget life as we know it (Archetti 2015, 105). Another example: "In the desert, rock-eating snails release significant amounts of chemicals in the soil, making possible the development of plants and in turn other organisms. In this case the whole ecosystem

benefits from snails' construction increasing other organisms' survival chances, while snails are indifferent to their construction" (Archetti 2015, 110).

The affectively scaffolded "Islamic Soundscape" of Cairo I detailed in section 5.2 of Chapter 2 is a multi-level social niche construction. It is a background that is barely noticed but that can be contrasted to the soundscape of somewhere like Montreal which might have church bells, but not the Islamic aural piety that Charles Hirschkind's Cairo does. This soundscape only makes sense if we consider it a constitutional niche construction. This is because only if we pay attention and have the requisite training in Islamic practice, ie. are able to afford the music as a pious mood enhancer, would we be able to notice this sonic feature. What the pious person training their religious character hears is different from those untrained. Hirschkind relates that he encountered foreigners that would feel attacked by the voice coming from the loudspeaker and instead of putting them in a pious mood, they perceived an angry noise that put them in a fearful mood. But with the right character and aesthetic skill, this ethical soundscape allowed training oneself and cultivating a "sensitive heart" (Hirschkind 2006, 9).

This phenomenon is not a coordinated action on the part of pious Muslims to make Cairo more piously pleasing! This is a phenomenon of an invisible hand creating a soundscape. Idling taxis, buses stopped at red lights both with their windows down, corner stores with their doors open, a mother working from home leaves her window open: all individually decide to broadcast sermons or pious music, independently from each other. Yet together, they create a scaffolded mood enhancer that I argue is as strong as finding a dime or smelling cinnabon for others. Created by an invisible hand, it is a strange affordance landscape that is both transient but is also a more permanent sonic structure than other mood enhancers. While the veil is a powerful mood enhancer, the Islamic soundscape is embedded within the city, it is public, allowing anyone to

use it. It originates at the level of individual scaffolding, but these mix of people distributed throughout Cairo affect a different level completely, they make a "sonic ecosystem".

Section 3.6 – Normative Niche Construction

The fifth kind of niche construction, normative niche construction, makes us focus not just on the material milieu but the social and prescriptive milieus that surround us everyday. Joseph Rouse argues that communicative and cooperative practices are preeminent examples of niche construction (2015, 21). Development into our second nature, that I explained in section 1.2 in Chapter 3, is our inauguration into this scaffolded, persistent public phenomenon of practices and norms. Socialization itself is heritable like a community of birds that passes down learned behaviour like using sticks to fish for bugs in tree holes. "Discursive niche construction is not limited to our abilities to perceive and produce linguistic expressions. Other symbolically significant expressive capacities (e.g., pictorial, musical, corporeal, equipmental, and more) are also integral forms of human niche construction. More important, however, is that the resulting capacities for symbolic displacement also incorporate practical-perceptual immersion in an environment" (Rouse 2015, 21).

As with previous examples, this kind of niche construction is a constitutive niche construction because it relies on the tripartite definition of affordances where the social milieu is a way of life. So far, I have mainly talked about affordances as a relation between the skilled body and the built, material environment. But as I argued in Section 5 of Chapter 1, affordances are actually a triadic relation between skilled body, material environment *and* a normative way of life. So, participation in practices always involves skilled practical perceptual responsiveness (Rouse 2019, 16). Unlike a physical thing like a mosque, ways of life, practices and communities

of practices don't persist in the same way. But they do have a diachronic aspect as practices are temporally extended patterns (Rouse 2019, 19). But practices and ways of life persistence through time is a "fragile achievement only maintained through ongoing adjustments of performances and reconstructions of circumstances" (Rouse 2019, 20). In their breakthrough work on communities of practice, Lave and Wenger's description of these communities can be paralleled to an evolving, niche constructed environment. Both have reproduction cycles, both leave historical traces such as artefacts, linguistic and symbolic, and finally both communities of practice and constructed niches are constituted and reconstituted over time "resulting in the 'continuity of roles while displacement of individuals'" (Lave and Wenger 1991, 59).

In Section 3.2 of the previous chapter, I argued that the Muslim women's *dawa* groups should be considered a community of practice. Also, in the previous chapter, at Section 9.2, I argued that these women, as experts within a pedagogical community of practice, change practices while still inhabiting the norm. I argue that this is a form of normative niche construction. Importantly, none of the women *alone* change norms and construct new norms, it is only within the group that this can happen. In talking about expertise in section 3.2 of the previous chapter, I gave an account of how once an expert changes a practice, it gets taken up and soon becomes a technique taught even to novices. It happened to violin technique with Paganini and it happened with the Fosbury flop in high jump.

Of course, these women are not a separatist community; many, maybe even most of their second nature and practices are from the dominant, majority culture. But in forming this *dawa* group and having ritual spaces to safely practice, they bring into the group their experiences with new encounters from the real world and practice with each other, freely giving each other tricks and tips. This sharing of technique and practicing scaffolds new, non-dominant norms, habits and

affects into the "normative environment". Each *dawa* group makes up its own distinctive pocket

of new norms that exist in parallel with dominant norms. Here the normative niche construction

piggy backs on all the other kinds of niche construction such as the relational niche construction

of joining a like minded group of people training to become experts at piety. I think it bears

repeating that the motor of this change and scaffolding of norms are the experts and so novelty

comes contingently, in fits and starts and norms can often remain static for a long time. The

movement away from majority norms is immanent. There is no break, practices partake both of

newness but also of potentially oppressive majority norms. This is because these women are not

constantly with the *dawa* group, they are immersed in their daily lives within majority norms.

The normative promise is that incremental changes in degree can often turn into changes in kind,

given enough time.

Section 3.7 – Experiential Niche Construction

Finally, experiential niche construction, is a controversial type of niche construction that

the concept of constitutional niche construction allows us to see that the causal kind does not.

For those that hold that niche construction is causal, claiming that it is niche construction when

an organism changes *itself* seems absurd. The beaver changing their environment to create a dam

has become the paradigmatic example of niche construction. So when an organism changes

itself, this phenomenon seems to take leave of the category of niche construction and instead fall

into the concept of phenotypical plasticity or arguably, just adaptation to the environment. It

seems an obvious point that niche construction should involve a change in the relationship of the

organism to the environment and so an organism changing itself should not be counted as

constructing an organism's niche.

Proponents of constitutive niche construction respond that causal niche construction misses the change in the relationship to the environment because they only consider the brute environment. Further, this brute environment is considered separate from the organism. If instead we consider the relationship of the organism with its *affordances* rather than the brute environment, a change in the morphology or the skill of an organism has the potential to completely change its affordance landscape. "What the agent can do depends on what the environment affords. But, conversely, what the environment affords depends very largely on what the agent can do. A brick wall affords very different possibilities to me and a gecko. To me it is a barrier; to a gecko it is a right-of-way" (Walsh 2012, 98). Aaby and Ramsey liken organisms to radios in that a change in the radio's constitution changes its ability to get different signals but also its ability to convert that signal into sound. In the same way, the size, shape and capabilities of an organism completely carve out different parts of the brute environment for it (2020, 11). Compare our perception with a bee that sees the UV spectrum or a dog that can smell a deer that passed an hour ago. Our environments are exactly the same, yet our *umwelt* or affordance landscapes are totally different.

For a lion, different time slices of its development give it a completely different relational niche. A young lion's relationship to prey is only to the old, sick and weak of the herd while a more mature lion increases what it can catch, thereby increasing its relational niche by its increase in size, speed and skill. In the same way as the young lion who changes into a mature lion, as the aspirant pious woman joins the *dawa* group, the community of practice, and becomes more skilled and becomes an expert, what the social world affords for her changes. The previous chapters have culminated to make this overall point. From the emphasis on *askesis* in the First Chapter, to the demonstrations of the different techniques and ways of practicing virtue in the

Second Chapter to the explanation of expertise in piety in Chapter Four. What they did in these groups was to work on the cultivation of their bodily aptitudes, habits and desires and ground these in feminine Islamic principles. "The mosque lessons provide a training in the requisite strategies and skills to enable such a manner of conduct, and the lives of the most devoted participants are organized around gradually learning and perfecting these skills" (Mahmood 2005, 45). The underlying point has been to connect this with the fact that as embodied beings, we are constitutively connected to the world. These women's work on themselves gives them the power to dilate their being in the world (PP 145). Their new skills literally open up their social affordance landscape, with more skill and virtue they both create and come into contact with more affordances. Their relationship to the world is changed in a self directing way.

We can see if we concentrate on these women's embodied practices and affordances that their relation to their circumstances and environment is more than simply lowering their aims to their situation or breaking free of their context. The complexity of shaping the niche and being shaped by the niche that one has shaped makes the account of adaptive preferences as only a product of socialization, and socialization as a force completely divorced from the women it shapes as inadequate. This also complicates the argument that runs the opposite way, that women can show their autonomy and freedom by somehow showing their immunity from the power and influence their situation has over them. What I have shown in this chapter is that descriptively, the adaptive preference framework is inaccurate. Through the introduction of the concept of niche construction I have shown that this framework relies on an outmoded interaction between agent and environment. I have also shown that since there is no reason to think that the social world should operate differently from the biological, we can see that the "unidirectional" account

proposed by the adaptive preference framework is wrong and that we should eliminate the concept.

Looking ahead to the next chapter, this new framework of niche construction can help us think differently about autonomy and freedom. Chapter Two and this Chapter show that changing the self cannot involve only "inner" will power, there must be a compact of sorts made with the outside because of its ability to shape us. But once we can start tapping into the way that the situation we are in changes us, we can tap into a concept of autonomy that is more truly relational. The outlook of autonomy as sovereignty involves the will compelling us to give us what we want from ourselves. Instead, if we think of the relation of organism to environment we have just explored, we find autonomy to be an ability to broadly, though not accurately, shape ourselves. There are further caveats that this shaping must involve, especially in the cases of multi-level, normative and relational niche construction: the influence of other people. The triadic definition of affordances that includes ways of life, material environment and skills really helps us see the contributary role of all three to a person's agency in the world. The way I have described it, it is not just a few other people, but a whole community. Here community, just as much as the material environment is *constitutive* of our abilities to gain freedom and autonomy. It is this idea of relational autonomy that I will be turning to in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The Affordance Account of Relational Autonomy

In this dissertation I have presented an empirical account of the women's *dawa* movement as a kind of Islamic virtue ethics. In this final chapter, I argue that this virtue ethics can help us give a conceptually superior account of relational autonomy. I call this the "affordances account of relational autonomy". In the previous chapter, I advocated for no longer using the concept of adaptive preferences. In this chapter I argue we should save the concept of relational autonomy but shift it to a better version. I do this by using the *dawa* movement as well as examples of "Other" women from the Global South to rethink our intuitions about what is important about autonomy. A secondary task is to bridge the conceptual rift formed in the literature since the year 2000 between procedural and substantive accounts of relational autonomy.

In Section 1, I highlight four criticisms of substantive theories and one criticism of procedural theories that any positive account of relational autonomy must answer. All these criticisms can be boiled down to a basic dilemma for relational autonomy theorists of how to be both critical of practices and diagnostic of possible oppression and external threats to autonomy while also being respectful of the choices, intuitions, and ways of life of women from the Global South. In Section 2 I set out my affordances account of relational autonomy. In Section 3 I show how my affordances account answers the criticisms from Section 1. I do this by laying out a substantive way of thinking about autonomy that focuses on a way of life's change over time rather than comparing Western culture to a culture in the Global South.

As a preparatory observation, I want to draw attention to the overemphasis on the *autos* to the detriment of *nomos* when thinking about autonomy. Writers on relational autonomy have a preoccupation with providing and protecting conditions for revising choices, which obscures

what Eamonn Callan calls "autonomous adherence" (2002, 129). To get a more complete picture of autonomy, it is worth going beyond the focus on deliberation about different choices to investigate the idea of "making a law for one's self". We attach great value not only to the autonomy of our decisions but also to our accomplishing something with our lives by carrying out our decisions (Griffin 2008, 150) As Jennifer Nedelsky argues, the "law" part of autonomy points to the importance of commitments to oneself (2011, 49). Once one has found the right path for oneself, there is still the further task of sticking to that path. In doing so, the values to which one has committed start to claim authority over one's agency. We can see that the work the Muslim *dawa* women have put into their self-transformation makes other choices and ways of life less of a live option, no matter how accessible the other options are. This is the natural outcome of the hard work of self-transformation, yet it would be strange to say that this work has made someone less autonomous.

Following the law these women set for themselves may seem to be harmful for their autonomy because it slowly takes away their capacity to choose something else. Yet why not see following the law itself as an achievement of their autonomy? From the various situationist experiments at the start of Chapter 2, we saw just how powerful external and internal moods are at distracting our considered goals in different contexts. The point of Chapter 2 was to gain an appreciation of just how resourceful and agentic these *dawa* women are in the face of their own shifting moods and worldly distractions. They used ritual spaces, the relationships with their friends and loved ones, even their veils, to stop the adverse affects of moods leading them toward vice. As Daniel Weinstock puts it, "conscious adoption and revision have come for many to seem criterial of procedural autonomy. But surely the capacity to abide and remain true to a set of values in a range of circumstances that might put pressure on them… is part of the total

package of dispositions that are pointed to by the very etymology of the concept [of autonomy]" (2009, 137). Just as the problem of adaptive preferences in the face of a narrow range of alternatives can hinder someone's life from going well, being unable or disinclined to adhere to the good we seek in the face of distraction or episodic doubt and temptation may damage our lives as well (Callan 2002, 134).

It is also worth emphasizing one of the main themes of Chapter 4 was that resisting dominant norms should not be taken to be the only manifestation of autonomy. I argued instead that it is one *epistemological* way of knowing if someone is autonomous, but it is a mistake to take it for autonomy itself. The problem of socialization is of finding an accurate way of knowing what criterion picks out autonomy-undermining socialization. This allows Western commentators of certain Otherized practices to assume too easily that a person following the norms of dominant society is non-autonomous. As I have just mentioned, this is partly a problem of being preoccupied with providing maximal choice. In practice, a woman's autonomy cannot be easily observed unless it is being exercised and manifested. This epistemological worry can lead some thinkers of autonomy to over-simplify in their judgments and literally take the distance of a person's actions from the norms of society as the degree of autonomy of a non-Western woman. "Because it may be difficult to establish whether women who continue to endorse traditional practices and life-styles genuinely had the opportunity to develop a more autonomous life, there is a danger that *only the rejection* of such a life-style will be taken as conclusive proof that the women indeed had, in [Martha] Nussbaum's language, the opportunity to develop the relevant capabilities" (Baumeister 2011, 289). Because resistance to dominant norms is plausible *evidence* of autonomy, there is a false inference that lack of resistance implies a lack of autonomy, that *only* a rejection of dominant norms corresponds to autonomy.

Section 1 – Problems with Substantive and Procedural Autonomy My Account Must Overcome

In the last two decades of the blossoming of feminist relational autonomy as a topic, two positions have become entrenched. These two positions are called procedural and substantive relational autonomy. In essence, procedural theories aim to be content neutral. Substantive relational autonomy is the position that there is a necessary connection between autonomy and the normative content of someone's actions. Described less abstractly, this position insists that a woman cannot be autonomous if she chooses to participate in oppressive practices.

There have been some procedural theories that have criteria that gesture toward the social conditions of people in order to determine if they are autonomous such as Christman's dialogical approach (2009). But for the most part, the proceduralist strategy has been to show that one can be autonomous purely through procedure by showing autonomous competency is psychological and *internal*. Proceduralists such Marilyn Friedman and Emily McGill have also worried about a kind of "social determinism" that sneaks into theories of autonomy when feminists concentrate too much on the external structural influence on people (McGill 2015, 83). Substantive positions often have internalist components that need to be satisfied, such as minimal mental competency. Yet the main strategy for substantivists against the proceduralist is to shift the concept away from a purely subjective kind of autonomy toward a more objective view that examines the *external* social conditions within which a choice is made. While there is no *necessary* conceptual link between proceduralism and internalism or substantivism and externalism, there are rhetorical reasons that those with differing intuitions on the role of objective normative content in theories of autonomy might be attracted to separating the inside from the outside[99].

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[99] I motivate this association of substantivism with the social conditions with Amia Srinivasan's work on ideology and externalism. Srinivasan argues that her theory of radical externalism over internalism appeals to those whose intuitions are that structural oppression can warp a person's judgment and desire such that they are not in a condition to choose autonomously. She goes on to conclude that "insofar as one thinks, as I do, that we live in a

I argue that a way to overcome this dichotomy of internalism/externalism is by focusing on embodiment, affect and affordances. The fact that many philosophers within the relational autonomy literature, the lone exception to my knowledge being Diana Tietjens Meyers, have ignored this confluence of concepts is surprising. One of the founding conceptual moves for feminists when the concept of "autonomy" was transformed into "*relational* autonomy" was a concern with philosophy's obsession with cognitive rationality as the essence of autonomy and independent self-sufficiency as the ideal of autonomy. The impetus then became highlighting the importance of our embodiment and unavoidable vulnerability and therefore our dependence on others. In the next sections, I highlight the classic problems of substantive and procedural relational autonomy that the final part of my positive account must overcome in order to start to close the rift between these two positions.

Section 1.1 – The First Critique of Substantivism: Feminist Intuition Needs Broadening

Natalie Stoljar relates that there is a feminist apprehension over the ease which proceduralism's internalism grants the status of autonomy to women who willingly participate in their own oppression.[100] She distils this unease and articulates it as "the feminist intuition" that "preferences influenced by oppressive norms of femininity cannot be autonomous" (Stoljar 2000, 95). There is something wrong with the content of the beliefs and norms of someone who would choose oppression that makes them autonomy inhibiting. Stoljar's example is of women who are

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world suffused with bad ideology… [a theory] that is capable of operating in terms of structural notions becomes more attractive than one that can trade only in individualistic ones. One might be an externalist, in other words, not in spite of externalism's detachment from the individualistic normative notions we hold dear, but precisely because of it." (2020)

[100] We will come back to this worry about proceduralism in more detail in Section 1.5.

swayed by society into the false belief that their entire worth is wrapped up in their motherhood (2000, 98).

A question proceduralists respond to this with is "whose intuition"? That it is "the" rather than "a" feminist intuition brings up the worry that this projects a false unanimity (Hutchings 2013, 22) over what is oppression and what counts as participating in it. Beyond this, proceduralists claim that their content-neutrality follows its own feminist intuition. "This is the intuition that, however oppressive their conditions might be and however much change is morally required, traditionally subordinate feminine lives nevertheless can and do often nonslavishly embody and express values worth caring about" (Friedman 2003, 25). As Khader points out, a woman who reflectively endorses being a traditional housewife elicits feminist intuitions that traditional lives can be autonomous yet to others she is a *reductio* that any concept of autonomy would allow such a conclusion (2020, 2).

If intuitions just are the basic currency of normative political and moral philosophy, then it is imperative that enough weight be given to "Other" women's intuitions as well. As I argued in my previous chapter, relying on the concept of adaptive preferences does not help us in this matter either and neither does relying on trans-cultural or a list of criteria to rule out some practices as non-autonomous ahead of time. What *is* necessary is getting the input of those women affected otherwise these two ways can too easily lead to epistemic injustice.

Section 1.2 – The Second Critique of Substantivism: The "Tragic Structure of Oppression" Dilemma

In a recent paper, Serene Khader continues an argument she made in her first book (2011) about the problems of assigning autonomy deficits in non-ideal situations to women in oppressive situations. She sets up a dilemma for substantivist positions of relational autonomy. Consider Lydia, a woman of colour in a law office. Lydia must keep up her oppressive beauty

regime and high heels to be able to advance as a woman lawyer. She also mitigates the racist

perception attributed to women of colour that she's aggressive by doing a lot of emotional

labour. Here, more idealized substantive conceptions of relational autonomy would want her to

unchain herself from the oppressive shackles of beauty regimes and emotional labour (Khader

2020, 11). Yet, Khader argues, this resistance to oppression would force Lydia to lose a lot of

well-being. Why should Lydia, a person whose double oppression as a woman of colour that has

probably caused her to lose out on so much well-being already, shoulder such high costs of

oppression (Khader 2020, 12)?

Because oppression has this tragic structure, the other horn of the dilemma Khader argues

should be just as unpalatable for feminists. Non-ideal, more contextualist substantivists might

tailor their response to the external circumstances. But in unjust circumstances, Khader argues

the other horn of the dilemma is that contextualist substantivists "ask agents like Lydia to

reinforce their own subordination" (2020, 13). The point of substantivism is supposed to help

women resist oppression, but instead the contextualist is forced to treat the values of the

dominant oppressive morality as correct. This should be a perverse outcome for feminists

looking for a concept that is supposed to be a diagnostic and critical tool (Ibid.).

Section 1.3 – The Third Critique of Substantivism: Proceduralism is the Real Essence of Autonomy

Friedman argues that the rift between proceduralism and substantivism can be healed:

"there may, however, be a middle ground. By construing both content-neutral and substantive

autonomy as forms of autonomy but treating substantive autonomy as embodying a greater

degree of autonomy than content-neutral autonomy, we may be able to retain a content-neutral

account of autonomy while still giving the feminist intuition important weight" (2003, 24).

Friedman argues that if we take the feminist intuition seriously, we can say that proceduralism is both necessary and sufficient for autonomy while substantivism, while being sufficient, is not necessary. This means procedural autonomy meets the minimal criteria to qualify as autonomy while substantive definitions are "supererogatory" autonomy. We can think of proceduralism as autonomy and substantivism as "autonomy plus".

But this is not how substantivists would want to think about autonomy. To substantivists, Friedman misdescribes the rift between the two positions by making it a mere difference in degree. Substantive autonomy is not just autonomy plus a bit more added on, it is different *in kind* than proceduralism. For substantivists, taking account of the external conditions of the person is a *necessary* part of autonomy. Friedman portrays proceduralism as the true heart and essence of autonomy while "substantive autonomy is content-neutral autonomy augmented in a certain way" (2003, 20).

Section 1.4 – A Fourth (Related) Critique of Substantivism: People Can be Autonomous Under Oppression

In the previous section, proceduralists argued against the necessity condition of an external criteria to the concept of autonomy with the strategy that nothing is added to the concept of autonomy if you *add* external criteria. Here I outline the same kind of critique, but with a different strategy. This position is that if you *take away* the external conditions of autonomy, you can still have autonomy. Stated another way, the claim is that people can be autonomous under oppressive conditions.

Marina Oshana holds the classic version of externalist substantivism and is usually the target of this critique. For Oshana, the key idea is practical control which is undermined when external conditions are oppressive or too constraining. For Oshana, autonomy is *primarily* a

function of the external social situation rather than psychology, practical skill or other internalist situation (2006, 6). Oshana fully embraces the implications of this externalist view. On her analysis, it is possible for "two people to satisfy all the psychological, historical, and competency conditions… but to differ nonetheless with respect to their status as autonomous beings. This difference is explained in terms of some variance in their social circumstances" (2006, 49).

Proceduralists argue that even under oppression, if a person has great skill, resourcefulness, courage or other internalist competencies, regardless of opportunity, they still have autonomy. Proceduralists are willing to concede that not living under oppression can certainly help autonomy, but that it's not necessary for autonomy. This is because the proceduralist goal in conceptual analysis is the necessary and sufficient conditions of relational autonomy. The proceduralist strategy to accomplish this is to give counterexamples that pump intuitions that "surely *this* person is autonomous". Surely, proceduralists argue, that some of Oshana's own examples such as Rosa Parks (2006, 175) or Nobel laureate human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi have autonomy even though they were under Jim Crow or under a patriarchal theocratic government. Meyers argues that Ebadi snatched autonomy from the teeth of the Iranian regime that tried to keep her down. That in fact Ebadi seems to show *more* autonomy in her resistance than the white middle-class people she knows who just drift along and conform to societal expectations (Meyers 2008, 2005).

There seem to be two opposing intuitions here. Oshana argues that external conditions show these dissenters lack autonomy because a person's actions cannot be guaranteed to be effective unless the world cooperates. Meyers on the other hand wants to highlight the degree of autonomy that can still be achieved under oppression. Oshana's theory of autonomy highlights all the people who aren't Parks or Ebadi who don't achieve autonomy because of oppression

while Meyers' highlights the exceptions and their ability to achieve autonomy despite external

hurdles. For the proceduralist, these exceptional people break the hold of *necessity* that

externalism has from the concept of autonomy. Paul Benson argues that actually, a useful theory

of autonomy should highlight *both* intuitions, that it should "be able to distinguish between the

autonomous agency of the defiant resister of oppression (even when her resistance fails to

achieve many of its goals) and the damage done to other women's autonomy by that very

oppression" (2014, 112).

Section 1.5 – The Critique of Proceduralism: It Can't Address the Socialization Problem

One of the founding motivations of feminist relational autonomy was to produce the

conceptual tools to be able to find the cut between good and bad socialization. The enduring

legacy of Stoljar's feminist intuition has been that proceduralism comes off as fatally

unsatisfying as a *feminist* concept. If it cannot solve the socialization problem, one has a right to

wonder, although descriptively different, what even is the normative point of separating

traditional autonomy from procedural relational autonomy? It seems a necessary component of a

properly feminist concept of autonomy that it be able to do this critical, diagnostic work. For

Friedman to then intentionally disqualify the concept of autonomy from doing this work seems

like a lacuna that needs to be filled, rather than avoided completely.

For those that are in the procedural camp yet still want to use autonomy as a tool to solve

the socialization problem, I argue proceduralist's internalism is an uncrossable barrier to it, as a

concept, being able to solve this problem. We can imagine any number of examples of women

who have in actuality internalized their oppression yet could still get past Friedman's self-

reflection criteria, Andrea Westlund's dialogical criteria, John Christman's historical criteria, and

Benson's self-worth and self-confidence criteria. This is because on the substantivist account, socialization and therefore oppression does not stop at a certain "depth." We can be deeply habituated and completely socialized such that oppression feels unquestioningly natural and right to us such that no amount of self reflection could leverage us out of it. And so if someone like Westlund were to ask us to justify why we do things, we could easily give reasons, we could also answer truthfully to Christman that we are not alienated from our socialization and finally we could do this with great self-confidence, fulfilling Benson's criterion. As David Enoch comments, the problem with having an entirely subjective account is that once sufficiently oppressed, *all* of these accounts have to declare the woman fully autonomous (2020, 181).

So far, there are no procedural theories of relational autonomy that specify even minimal external criteria. But there have been creative attempts to solve the socialization problem through a mediated externalism. What I mean by "mediated externalism" is that these theories of relational autonomy use internal criteria that could be seen as sometimes mirroring what is going on in the outside, in the social context. Self-esteem, or alienation or not being able to justify in words the reasons for participating in a practice become an internal heuristic device to measure the external affect of oppression on an individual. A bad sense of self-worth *could* be because of oppression, but there is no necessary link between self-worth and oppression. "They can only address oppression's harm when it is filtered through an agent's psychology, capacities, or skills" (Kozma 2010, 78). Without an external criteria, there will always be an unbridgeable gap if the oppression doesn't manifest as one of the internal defects that Westlund, Christman and Benson use to "measure" oppression's effect on a person.

Before moving on to lay out my own positive account of relational autonomy, I want to conclude this first section with my own brief analysis of where we stand. Stoljar's "feminist

intuition", despite its controversies, points to an insight in methodology, about the criteria for concepts to be useful in feminist philosophy. The recent cottage industry of "ameliorative" projects[101] within feminist philosophy is, I think, a manifestation of something that was always implicit. Namely that any account of the concept of relational autonomy, in order to be properly feminist, needs *some* normative critical bite and should be able to be used as a diagnostic tool for making society less oppressive. Another concession that needs to be made to the substantive position is that, along with internalist criteria, at least some minimal external criterion of autonomy is required. Yet I think the proceduralists are right that feminism should be pluralistic and priority should be given to listening to actual women's voices. And so I think a useful, feminist concept of relational autonomy should be critical, and include an external component, but also have a way of giving the proper weight to Other women's intuitions.

Section 2 – My Affordance Theory of Relational Autonomy

To lay it out simply, my main position in this chapter is that *more affordances give people more autonomy within their form of life*. My positive account of relational autonomy focuses on the way that embodied and affective skill, along with the *necessary* cooperation from the outside world, give people more affordances. The laying out of my position involves two steps. In this section, I talk about embodiment, affect and skill. In the next section I talk about what it means to increase affordances.

It is worth going over the argument about embodiment, affect, skill and expertise that has been made so far in this dissertation to see exactly what I am claiming about relational

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[101] My own project in this dissertation involves quite a bit of conceptual engineering so this dissertation is a part of this cottage industry. See Haslanger (2012, 2020) on the history of her invention of "amelioration" as a kind of feminist, normative, conceptual engineering.

autonomy. In the First chapter I made the argument that the body, while not as open-endedly intelligent as conscious deliberation, is, in the words of Ellen Fridland, "not un-intelligent" (2014, 2731). This means that our affects and emotions but also our habits and automatic actions are both trainable and context sensitive. Self-transformation and the virtue of piety are like any other embodied skill that you need to practice. I presented, in Chapter Two, various methods and ways of practicing to train one's emotions and habits that the women in the *dawa* movement undertook. Like any other embodied skill, one can only strive to become an expert in piety with the right kind of coaching and practice. I argued in the Fourth chapter that the *dawa* group as a "community of practice" provided both coaching and the skills necessary for the women who wanted to become experts at piety.

Meyers details five kinds of self that theories of autonomy usually concentrate on. The first two are the "unitary self," which is the independent, self-monitoring, self-controlling self, and the "divided self," which is the inner, psychodynamic self (Meyers 2005, 29-30). While these two are paradigmatic for normal theories of autonomy, they have been de-emphasized by relational theories of autonomy. Relational theories of autonomy concentrate more on the "relational self", the interpersonally bonded self as well as the "social self", the socialized and encultured self (Ibid.) While emotion has been a central aspect of relational autonomy, my concentration on the "embodied self" (Meyers 2005, 31) is a departure from this literature. I am aware of only Catriona Mackenzie's (2001), Meyers' (2004, 2005, 2013) and Bartky's (1990) work on this aspect of the self. This should be a surprise since one of the founding impetuses of relational autonomy was that descriptively we are not self-sufficient, but are instead made vulnerable by our corporeal make-up.

I take cues from Meyer's work which has already traversed this kind of conceptual terrain. But there are two very important and related differences between Meyers' work and my own. Firstly, my theory of relational autonomy cannot specify the particular skills needed for autonomy ahead of time. Meyers names specific skills such as introspection, communication, imagination, volition, instrumental reason and memory (1989, 79) as capacities that are necessary for autonomy for *all* women. In my theory, the social and embodied skills necessary for autonomy must be tailored relative to the local way of life. They cannot be known ahead of time *without being an initiate into that way of life*. This means there can be no list of universal capacities and skills that can be sufficient for autonomy as in the case of Martha Nussbaum's attempt for women in developing countries (2000). Here the hard work of cultural translation that anthropologists do must be acknowledged. I use work of many anthropologists who have insinuated themselves into the way of life of the *dawa* movement in order to make my normative arguments. This also means the different skills necessary for autonomy can change over time as the way of life changes. Importantly, this suggests the methodological need for anthropological and empirical work on a way of life to understand what skills are needed for what kind of affordances. As I have emphasized in Chapter Four, beyond Mahmood's work, there have been different ways different women's *dawa* movements have evolved and changed that have been revealed by ethnographic work ranging from France, Germany, Belgium, Canada and the United States.

Secondly, Meyers' skill theory of relational autonomy is geared toward acquiring skills that allow the individual to resist conventionality (1989, 176). In contrast, descriptively, I argue that there is no necessary connection of the skills that will be needed for gaining affordances in a

way of life and resisting that way of life. But normatively as well, I have spent many chapters separating relational autonomy as a concept from the need for resisting conventional norms.

But there is a second connotation of conformity and conventionality that Meyers gestures at. We can see this more clearly earlier in this chapter at Section 1.4 when she argues that some oppressed agents seem more autonomous than the white middle-class people she knows because the latter just conform to societal expectations (Meyers 2008, 2005). This is a kind of passivity in the face of socialization. These people are not autonomous because they do not put the extra effort, grit or active agency into sticking to their plans. Instead, they unconsciously just drift along their canalized, set path in life. The *dawa* women are not like this and more generally I want to separate conceptually the kind of activity necessary for autonomy from the activity of inhabiting a social norm. Here I am arguing we should not mistake the *dawa* women's active inhabiting of a norm with an idea of conformity as passive drifting along with the momentum of one's socialization.

I think what would be conceptually helpful here is the notion of the "OK Plateau" that I introduced in Section 4.3 of Chapter 1. The OK Plateau is the point where one unconsciously or consciously decides to stop actively trying to get better at something because one is just competent enough so that one can do that particular skill "on autopilot". The example I gave at the start of the Third Chapter was of typing. We usually begin to learn, improve and practice our typing, but once we hit 60 words per minute we tend to stop trying to improve. This is because 60 words per minute is fast enough to do what most people want to do, such as type emails. I then put forward my theory that I think we can extend the skill concept of the "OK Plateau" to our understanding of virtue. Most people learn ethics from their parents, teachers, peers, culture, and society. But they do not put in the continued effort nor do they get the moral feedback

necessary to continue to "progress" in their character virtues. I argued that people are ethically stuck on the OK Plateau. We can think of the people Meyers describes as conforming to expectations as stuck in the OK Plateau of autonomy. The women in the *dawa* movement, as I showed throughout Chapters Two and Four, work hard to train their bodies and affects to be more virtuous. While these women are inhabiting a feminine Islamic norm of piety, "conforming" in one sense, their lives are certainly not being passively lead; it takes an active kind of agency to continue to inhabit this feminine norm. As any athlete will tell you, if you do not continue actively to practice, one can easily back-slide into the "OK Plateau". And of course as I showed in the previous Chapter, part of this active work is also to change their environment such that they can better influence their own socialization.

Section 2.1 – We Cannot Know the Skills Needed for Affordances Before We Know the Way of Life

While the fact that my theory doesn't specify particular skills ahead of time might sound like vague gesturing, I can be more concrete about particular skills once the way of life of an individual is known. I now turn to the women in the *dawa* movement's way of life and give examples of the skills from Chapter Two and Four that these women trained themselves in order to allow themselves to find new affordances within their way of life. This ability to find affordances, I argue, gives these women more autonomy.

Throughout this dissertation, I have given glimpses into these women's way of life. Here I will give two examples of skills that open up new affordances. The first example comes from Section 7.1 from Chapter Four. It is the skill of *Sabr* [or patience, passivity, endurance, and steadfastness without complaint] that two of Mahmood's ethnographic subjects, Abir and Amal, trained to acquire. We can see how this skill opened up social affordances for Abir from her

story related in Section 2.4 of Chapter Four. When her husband forbade her from going to the *dawa* group, using the virtue of *Sabr*, she was able to calmly cajole her husband into changing his character to better match her own virtue. In doing this, she was able to attain her goal of not only continuing to attend the *dawa* group in the role of a student, but to advance her study to become a teacher. The second example is these women's skill of being able to train their affects/emotions. In Section 5.4 of Chapter Two, we saw an example of the virtuosity of these women being able influence their own emotion by their ability to weep the moment their foreheads touched the floor at the end of prayer. We can see this as a skill when we remember that women were told to pretend to weep until they had acquired the emotional mastery to weep with genuine feeling at the appropriate time and body motion.

My theory of skills is constitutively relational as well as social. The condition of possibility for any social skills is way of life and minimally a "second nature" of cultural aptitudes and capacities that one is always already enculturated into during development. As Meyers describes these skills:

> the skilled self-as-social registers convergences and clashes with cultural norms, accounts for convictions and conduct when appropriate, and revises these accounts as necessary. The skilled self-as-relational elicits, internalizes, and deploys candid reactions and sympathetic counsel from associates… the skilled self-as-embodied senses inclinations as well as needs, micro-manages itself to meet performance standards, and maneuvers to achieve goals. My suggestion is that autonomous people have a diverse, well-developed, well-coordinated repertoire of agentic skills that they exercise routinely and adeptly (Meyers 2005, 48).

As emphasized at the start of this chapter, these skills not only allow one to choose better options but as Callan coined it, these kinds of skills allow the aspiring woman in the *dawa* group "autonomous adherence" (2002, 129). It allows these women to stick to their plan of self-transformation despite various internal and external perturbations.

Section 2.2 – Connecting Skills to the External World and Creating Affordances

My argumentation on affordances in chapters 1 and 2 concluded at Section 2.2 of Chapter 2 with a triadic definition of affordances. Affordances are a relation between one's internal capacity and skill, one's social way of life, and the material environment (Alfano 2014, 73). I use this focus on affordances to make the case that neither internal nor external criteria *alone* are sufficient for relational autonomy. Internal and external criteria are *both* necessary since affordances are constituted by how a person's capacities can open up a person's environment as an affordance landscape.

My theory, while including external criteria, is unlike substantive theories of relational autonomy because my theory does not specify ahead of time what the socio-economic environment must be like to support autonomy. Despite this, importantly, one should not take my position as "content neutral," like procedural theories of autonomy. For the same reasons we saw in the discussion of skills, before encountering a way of life, neither the material nor social scaffolding necessary for affordances can be known. But this does *not* mean that there is no normative bite to my theory, and I will present this critical and diagnostic part of my theory at the very end of this chapter. But for now, we have to realize that just like a master chef in a car garage, because skills *and* environment are necessarily relational, there must be a fit between capacities and environment. This is because even the most skilled, three Michelin star chef will find few affordances in a garage.

My emphasis on affordances separates my theory from other external substantivist positions on what is counted as "external criteria". Often the external criteria for substantivists are only political structural changes: changes in civil rights, political rights, changes in political regimes, and changes in institutions. My point here is not to criticize or exclude these as external

criteria; they are supremely important and changes in the structure of classist, racist, and sexist institutions can open up significant new affordances for oppressed people. My aim is to broaden, using the concept of affordances, what we count as external criteria that can support autonomy. Meyers in her later work actually does point toward the importance not only of skills, but of the external condition of affordances: "Your psychocorporeal virtues would be otiose, though, unless you had awareness of a world of possible actions. Psychocorporeal cognition depends on the sensitivity of the body to the use value of affordances as well as its sensitivity to the meanings of ambient affect, attitudes, and the like" (Meyers 2013, 167). Meyers here acknowledges the necessity of affordances and the environment, yet she never takes the step of making affordances themselves the essence of autonomy rather than internal skills.

Just because we cannot know the conditions of autonomy ahead of time and without entering a group's way of life, this does not render the concrete conditions of autonomy inaccessible to us as philosophers. Looking *retrospectively* on the history of Egypt and getting to know their way of life through the work of anthropologists, we can think through these women's conditions of possibility within their way of life. As the work of many anthropologists have shown, for the *dawa* movement, of course, a change in political regime and the promise of the protests in Tahrir Square all mattered to the social affordances of these women. But so do circumstances that William Clare Roberts argues that anthropologists like Mahmood left out of her account, such as "family law, policing practices, labor practices, incidence of and responses to domestic violence, etc" (2017, 760). There are other shifts in the way Egyptian Islam is practiced that affected these women's autonomy that Mahmood *does* mention: The very existence of the *dawa* movement itself is premised on the mass literacy of these women, the new urban and educational mobility of women in Egypt, the opening up of mosques to women's

learning circles (Mahmood 2005, 54), mass media bringing religious knowledge to lay people

(Eickelman and Piscatori 2004) as well as the "democratization" of religious authority away

from the centrally run government religious institutions and the *ulema* that had previously held

all religious authority (Roy 2002).

The range of phenomena that the use of the concept of affordances allows us to see is a

kind of "meso-level[102]" of the external world. Our conceptual tools are usually focussed on only

the individual or only structural phenomena in society. But focussing only on these obfuscates

the phenomena in the "meso-level". Focussing instead on affordances allows us to see external

phenomena not quite at the level of structure, but not at the level of the individual, but in

between that, where the body's habits and affect get scaffolded externally. I categorized a

number of these phenomena under the heading of niche construction in the previous chapter.

Take for instance, the Islamic Soundscape that Charles Hirschkind describes within Cairo. It is

scaffolded within the city, but it is not material. It involves affect, the body through the senses,

and habit, and therefore affordances for those initiated within that way of life. Yet we could not

describe it as an institution or something structural.

While, as I have said, we cannot know the conditions of possibility of affordances ahead

of time, we *can* know what eventually became a condition of possibility of affordances when

looking back retrospectively. Doing just this retrospective look at the *dawa* movement, once

women were allowed more access to the learning areas within the mosque and pushed for their

own *dawa* groups, both these things opened up new religious affordances for these women. As

seen through Petra Kuppinger's ethnographic work with the *dawa* movement in Germany at the

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[102] For more on this "meso-level" see Section 1 of Chapter 1

start of Section 4 in Chapter 2, the mosque became a training ground and laboratory to experiment with piety (2015, 123).

Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized that expertise needs deliberate practice and that involves good coaching, feedback as well as a way to transmit new techniques to the group. The *dawa* group as a community of practice does both of these things, which has a ratchet effect on the skills of the group. This not only allows many more women to access social affordances, but also allows the women who become experts to help each other dilate new and different social affordances. Without the community of practice, new skills never get transmitted to others and the student in the previous paragraphs would never have known how to practice weeping or even see it as a skill that one should practice.

Finally, before I move on to the next section, I should make a clarification about my argument that increasing a person's affordances increases their relational autonomy. This is not a claim about measuring the aggregate of affordances according to some numerical scale to see who has more autonomy. Importantly, not all affordances are created equal: like skills and like environmental and social opportunities, they are different in kind from each other. Therefore, gaining certain affordances will not make a difference to a person's autonomy, or it might, but it might be very little. We can think of Charles Taylor's example that shows that freedom does not necessarily increase when we gain negative liberty by simply taking away obstacles from someone's path. If we build a number of traffic lights in someone's path, we normatively don't think that a person who now has to wait for other cars rather than darting through traffic, has a right to claim that their freedom has been restricted. Compared to a law that forbids me from worshipping according to my religious beliefs, the restrictions due to traffic lights being installed are too trivial (Taylor 1985). In the same way, there are some gains and loses of affordances that

deserve to be fought for by feminists because they hamper women's autonomy but other

affordances are too trivial to matter whether they are gained or lost.

Section 3 – How My Theory Answers Problems with Substantive and Procedural Autonomy

In Section 1 of this chapter, I gave five critiques of both substantive and procedural

theories of autonomy. In this section I return to these critiques and show the ways my theory

responds to them. The first worry about substantivism in 1.1 was the worry about feminist

intuition being too narrow. The second worry about substantivism, 1.3, was that internal,

psychological autonomy is the real essence of autonomy, not external criteria. The third worry

about substantivism, 1.4, is that even under external conditions of oppression people can be fully

autonomous. I then move to answering substantivists' main worry about proceduralism from

section 1.5. This was proceduralism's denial that oppressive socialization can undermine

autonomy. I save my full answer to Khader's dilemma (Section 1.2) of being critical of "other"

women's practices while still being respectful of their voices for the concluding part of this

chapter.

Section 3.1 – Answering Proceduralist Worries about Substantivism

I will be brief in my reply to the problem in Section 1.1, the proceduralist's worry about

substantivism's idea of "the feminist intuition" being too narrow. My entire dissertation has been

an attempt to take seriously the fact that while intuitions are the basic currency of ethical and

normative political philosophy, the weight of so called "Third-World" women's intuitions needs

to press more heavily on the scales against traditional Western academic feminist intuitions.

Chapter 4's argument is that we as feminists should change our intuition that inhabiting a social

norm cannot be a goal of feminism. Chapter 5's argument is an attempt to completely stop using adaptive preferences as a concept because intuitions about it are too narrow and this Chapter is an attempt to create a positive account of relational autonomy by having these "Other" women's intuitions at the forefront. So, my concrete answer to the worry about the "feminist intuition" is that I make the intuitive engine of all three of these chapters driven by anthropological ethnographies of women of the *dawa* movement throughout the globe in an attempt at demonstrating how we might broaden our intuitions methodologically.

I answer the problem posed in Section 1.3, that what is sufficient for autonomy is only internal criteria with the argument that the internal and external form a necessary relation for autonomy. Proceduralists like Friedman in Section 1.3, argue that the internal is the essence of autonomy while anything external is just a kind of supererogatory autonomy. And so the external can be ignored for proceduralists. Substantivists do have internal criteria, but for them, internal autonomy without the right kind of external conditions is simply a kind of agency, not full autonomy. Substantivists, while acknowledging the necessity of internal criteria, do not link the internal and external but keep them apart as separate criteria. This is why proceduralists can so easily dismiss externalism as not autonomy: the internal criteria are conceptually separate from the external criteria and so can lead someone to ask that if the internal criteria are not affected by the external ones, couldn't we just drop the external ones?

I argued in section 2.2 of Chapter 2 that character is not an internal disposition like fragility is to glass. Instead, if we shift our focus to affordances, we can see that dispositions for a certain action have a relation to the outside as well. If we take autonomy to be embodied, the environment is a constitutively necessary part of our agency, it's not something independent of the environment. The fallout of this is that *there is no "external" oppression to be*

"internalized". Agency corresponds to a set of dispositions and skills that are formed in direct connection with the environment inhabited by the agent bodily. It is the condition of possibility of any agency at all. In my theory of relational autonomy, if we concentrate on affordances, we can see that internal skill has a *necessary* connection to both the social way of life of a community and also the material environment and that if you take one of these things away, the whole affordance goes away[103]. So, the external conditions cannot be dismissed since there is a necessary relation to the internal skills and capacity that afford autonomy within a culture or way of life.

Now I move to the problem in section 1.4, posed to substantivists, that some people who live under oppression are autonomous. My affordance theory has the advantage of being able to cover Benson's position that a truly useful concept of autonomy should be able to show *both* that people are debilitated by oppression as well as to celebrate those whose skill is able to overcome oppression. I argue the proceduralist assumption that an oppressed person could, only through internal resources, be autonomous relies on a mistake. No skill that allows someone to be autonomous in oppressive conditions could be acquired alone and without external scaffolding to allow it to develop. Yet I think substantivists also don't have the full picture either. Substantivists portray what we think of as traditionally structural political and social conditions as comprising the *entire* external situation of the agent. In doing this, they ignore the "meso-level" of phenomena that could provide skills and opportunities for women. Skills, dispositions,

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[103] As I argued in Section 3 of Chapter 1, all three, skill/capacity, way of life and material environment are related. If an entire culture died so would their form of life, but also the materials and tools they used in their form of life would no longer afford the same use, the affordance would disappear. Apprenticeships in certain practices are dying out and so certain materials no longer have affordances because the transmission of skill is no longer happening and so the affordance disappears altogether. Finally, if all pianos disappeared, while people would still have the skills and abilities as well as the infrastructure of teachers to teach, without the pianos themselves, there are no affordances.

bodily habits are both *constituted* by the environment and constitutive of agency. It took the mosque opening to women, women's education and literacy, their mobility and most importantly, the *dawa* movement itself, taken as a community of practice for Abir to be the expert in piety she became.

So, are oppressed people able to be autonomous? I think yes, but that is because they are able to find non-oppressive "meso-level" networks to gain the skills that can open up affordances within an oppressive society. Yet Oshana for instance would disagree because she restricts the "external" to political structures with authority. Until the Civil Rights Act was signed granting every citizen equality under the law, she would argue that we could not say that Black people in America could begin to be autonomous. Again, this is not to dismiss the importance of political institutions but to say that a focus on affordances allows us to conceptually locate other external phenomena than can support autonomy. Everything from affective scaffolds like the veil or the Islamic Soundscape to counter-communities of practice that scaffold new and different norms and ways of life. With this definition of external we can more easily see how what I labelled social niche construction in the previous chapter can help us discover and gain new skills and new affordances, even in an oppressive society.

Looking to Section 1.5, the reader might argue that although my affordance account of relational autonomy has an externalist component, it lacks the substantivist, critical and diagnostic bite that 1.5 argues is foundational of the feminist intuition. In Section 3.3, I present a positive account of how relational autonomy could be critical of a way of life and can be diagnostic when the external situation threatens the autonomy of women.

Section 3.2 – Answering Khader's Dilemma

The dilemma that is presented for any theory of relational autonomy theory is how to be both critical of practices and diagnostic of possible oppression and external threats to autonomy while also being respectful of the choices, intuitions and ways of life of women. In this section, I argue that I completely avoid the first horn of this dilemma by not forcing women to shoulder the burden of having to end oppression themselves by sacrificing their well-being. My simple answer is that my affordance account avoids this first horn by being a contextualist and non-ideal account of relational autonomy. I look at the way of life of the woman involved from the insider perspective and use the woman herself to show us what the affordances are with her capacities and skills. Here Lydia's skills with her beauty regimen and her mastery in emotional labour *afford* her the ability to rise up the ranks of her job to better succeed and gain well-being. But I also emphasize that these skills had to come from some community of practice, whether it was older women like her mother or sister, a mentor in the law office or even such niche constructions of skill such as makeup tutorials on Youtube.

But by doing this, it looks like I have gored myself on the other horn of the dilemma, of being content with oppression. I argue instead that I have found a contextualist, non-ideal third way to avoid this horn of the dilemma. This, like the previous section, relies on my argument in Chapter 4 about thinking of conditions of possibility diachronically. My account does not just accept the morality of the dominant oppressive society. Yet at the same time, my account also refuses to try to "progress" society because as an anti-teleological account, we cannot know what progress will look like. My substantive account holds the conditions as they are and argues that conditions should not take a step "backward". I call this account the "Against Backsliding" approach. The trust is that oppressed women will find the communities of practice to develop the

skills to creatively find affordances unthought by armchair theorists like us. For many feminists, this might not be a satisfactory account. But here I bite the bullet that we should normatively prefer the possibility of static morality against either forcing oppressed women to shoulder the burden of ending oppression at the price of their own well-being or against the contextualist, possibly allowing norms to backslide such that oppression gets worse. To paraphrase Alison Jagger, to confront oppression without choosing colonial interference is not necessarily choosing callous indifference (2005, 57).

Section 3.3 - A Diachronic Rather Than Culturally Comparative Substantive Theory

In Chapter 3 and 5 I brought up the problem of socialization within the feminist relational autonomy literature. We can now see my affordance theory's answer as to where the cut between "good" and "bad" socialization is. My affordance theory recuses itself from commenting on what good socialization is. My focus is on autonomy not on orthonomy (Benson 2005). This is because my account doesn't focus on getting things right, but instead on *not* getting things wrong. This is because it focuses on bad socialization. In this case, bad socialization is a kind of enculturation that takes away the present conditions for the possibility for future affordances.

Here I use the concept of "institution" that I established in Chapter 3. I use this concept to flesh out and help make sense of what it could mean to be substantively critical diachronically rather than interculturally while not using the concept of adaptive preferences. Looking from the present to the past, we can see some practices are integral to the current conditions of autonomy and we can substantively criticize any move that curtails these current practices. I argue that this can be done while still being respectful of these women.

The gist of my answer is given briefly by Khader as one of her guidelines for better practices of normatively evaluating "Other" women. She emphasizes the diachronic character of feminized women's movements and the importance of change over time. "The comparative assessments relevant to transnational feminist politics concern states of affairs *over time, and not relations among cultures.* It is important to know whether exercises of power improve gender justice vis-à-vis current conditions, not whether they match up completely to some ideal— culturally specific or otherwise" [my italics] (Khader 2018, 135). Here she is recommending that we compare a culture or way of life to itself over time rather than to Western culture. The problem with cross cultural comparison is a worry we have already encountered, what Khader calls "justice monism". This is the assumption that gender justice comes only in a single Western mode or form.

In line with Khader's thinking here, my substantive proposal is to normatively protect the *present* conditions of possibility for autonomy of "Other" women and prevent the loss or backsliding of these conditions. Here my proposal avoids the problems with substantive theories that set out *beforehand* what normative criteria should be used by women to make choices. It is an immanent and anti-teleological proposal that relies on and invests trust in the women themselves to come up with creative solutions to the problems *they themselves* see as problems. The normative significance of anti-teleological thinking follows from my critique of teleological feminist thinking in Chapter 4 and how it stifles the creativity of "Other" women to forge their own path of gender justice.

This conclusion also follows from two other arguments. The first is that the bundles of normative choices these women face is more interconnected and complicated than we, as outsiders of the way of life, can understand. As initiates in their ways of life, they are in the best

position to know how their lives can be bettered. The second critique is that teleological thinking that set out substantive directives hold the danger of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice by using Western women's intuitions to trump "Other" womens' intuitions. As long as we hold and protect the current conditions from backsliding, the "forward" movement will be generated by these women's social skills in finding new affordances. We trust these women will find the social affordances that we, from another way of life are not trained to see, in order to progress toward their own modes of gender justice.

What do I mean by protecting the conditions of possibility for women's autonomy? To begin to explain, I go back to Chapter 3 and my introduction of Merleau-Ponty's Bergsonian concept of "institution." Our way of life and our individual autonomy has a past, a past that is real and that pushes on our present and future in certain directions without fixing those directions in advance. The momentum of the past sets up the conditions of possibility of the present. In setting up these conditions, these conditions take on a status of being taken for granted. What do I mean by "taken for granted"? The conditions of possibility for certain practices begin to seem like they were always inevitable. They get forgotten as contingent and that the present could have been different if things in the past had been different at certain important moments. This hiddenness isn't inaccessible to us. I gave the example of Foucault and his followers' use of the historical method of genealogy. Genealogy is in fact explicitly about finding those important historical nodes that constitute our present and showing that things could have gone a different way and also thinking of what our present might be like if we as a society had taken up these unactualized alternate pasts.

This idea of the difference between "taken for granted" conditions and "controversial" conditions of possibility is important for my account. To see the difference it makes to "Other"

women's lives, we can take examples from Uma Narayan's work. Narayan remarks on the changes to upper caste Indian ways of life that are taken for granted but are important for these Indian women's current conditions of autonomy. This is in contrast to other changes that are not taken for granted and are resisted within patriarchal Indian society. "Third-World feminists, whose political agendas are constantly confronted with charges that they constitute betrayals of 'our traditional ways of life,' need to be particularly alert to how much relatively uncontested change in 'ways of life' has taken place… Some of these changes, while historically pretty recent, have become so 'taken for granted' in our lifetimes that I am often amazed to confront the details and the extent of these changes" (Narayan 2007, 25). Narayan's mother accuses her of betraying her traditions by abandoning arranged marriage and also wearing "Western" clothing. Yet the advent of television and its effect on the family and men's transition from traditional Indian clothing to trousers and shirt two generations ago went unnoticed and uncommented upon by general Indian society. More importantly, the autonomy that Narayan and even her mother currently share in their way of life was predicated on the unnoticed transition of the marriage age of women and greater access to education. While Narayan's grandmother was married at age 13 and never went to high school, Narayan's mother didn't get married until her 20s and was able to get a university education (Narayan 2007, 23). Narayan's point is that these changes in ways of life were taken for granted, could have been different but are also a necessary foundation for women in India's present way of life. I would argue that protecting these taken for granted changes is also important for the possibility of these women forging more creative ways of life with more important affordances for Indian women in the future.

The fact that these conditions are taken for granted is also important normatively because in having them *already* be the conditions for their present autonomy, the women who

uncontroversially enjoy this autonomy give tacit endorsement of wanting to continue this way of

life. In this chapter I don't give the means to protect these conditions of possibility, especially

since without knowing the way of life one cannot know concretely how to help. But because it is

taken for granted, these uncontroversial conditions of women's current way of life and

autonomy, the help given if any of these conditions were taken away should be accepted by the

women affected.

I described the concept of institution as a valve. What was once a single among multiple

contingent possibilities is now a necessary condition for future ways of life. Because these

conditions necessarily support a way of life, taking away these conditions ought to be considered

a violation. We can think of the transition of marriage age and women's access to university

education in the same way. If these were taken away, even Narayan's traditional mother would

be outraged since her present self was formed from these two conditions being present. In the

same way, if we look at the *dawa* movement, there are a lot of conditions of their present ability

that if taken away would frustrate these women. We can think back to Abir's own frustration at

her husband for not allowing her to further her religious education. Mahmood, although only

briefly, brings up many of these taken for granted conditions of possibility for the current way of

the women's *dawa* movement: mass literacy, the new urban and educational mobility of women

in Egypt, the opening up of mosques to women's learning circles, mass media bringing religious

knowledge to lay people as well as the "democratization" of religious authority away from

government run religious institutions and the *ulema*. In this case, I would argue these are some of

the things we can count that substantively needs to be protected from backsliding and being

taken away. Stopping backsliding and preserving current conditions is even important work in

contemporary Western society. One only has to reckon with the shocking fact that New York

schools are *more* segregated now than they were when the U.S. Supreme Court sought to

desegregate schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954[104] to realize that this work of

preservation isn't easy but is still important.[105]

Conclusion

In concluding, this dissertation has tried to answer three important questions. The first is

the obvious question of, are the women of the *dawa* movement and Muslim women who veil in

the Western countries autonomous? Secondly, we have to answer the descriptive and normative

question of how does socialization affect autonomy? And finally, do we have the critical tools to

know when these women are not autonomous? Another way to put this last question, can a line

be drawn between normatively good and bad socialization?

It is worth going back to the motivating question of the entire dissertation, are women

who veil rendered non-autonomous by their patriarchal socialization such that we should not, as

feminists, endorse their choice of the veil? The emphatic answer is "No", these women *are*

autonomous and should be allowed to make sartorial and other choices about their religious

practice. I concluded in Chapter 6 that the way we can see this kind of autonomy is if we think of

autonomy through the framework of "affordances". This is because it is not just an inner

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[104] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/18/the-weekly/nyc-schools-segregation.html

[105] Iris Marion Young argues in her later work, *House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme,* that society has for too long idealized the more masculine act of founding to the detriment of preserving. In this work, Young valourizes the more feminine mode of building such as cherishing, protecting, preserving and caring for as a crucial human value (2009, 125). Preserving anchors people's personal identity and physical being and makes a continuity between past and present (Young 2009, 140). "Beauvoir, like Sartre, tends to associate historicity with futurity... This focus on futurity, on the unique moment when the human actor brings something new into the world, makes Beauvoir ignore the specifically human value of activities that, as she puts it, guard the things of the past and keep them in store. She implicitly collapses the activities that consist in preserving the living meanings of past history into her category of immanence... as soon as the deeds of founding are accomplished, as soon as the heroic work of the artist, statesman, or planner are recognized and celebrated, a new task comes into play: preservation" (Young 2009, 141-142).

capacity, nor is autonomy only a social achievement, it is the necessary link between the two. This is what affordances allows us to see, the link between an individual's skills and capacities (which always have their source in the social) and the environmental opportunities to use these skills. Like the exemplars that procedural relational autonomy thinkers bring up to show that people can be autonomous in the face of oppression, these women have access to skills and situational opportunities to use them through a meso-level phenomenon: the *dawa* movement itself. As I showed in Chapter 2, it is not in spite of, but *through* the wearing of the veil that these women increase affordances that allow them to transform themselves. This is why, ironically, veil bans that purport to be autonomy enhancing for these women do the exact opposite. Bans take away opportunities for veiled women to be able to practice the skills in piety that they have acquired. Secondly, as I emphasized at the start of Chapter 6, the ability to change oneself is an important, if not often overlooked, part of autonomy. The veil is integral to self-transformation and bans take this important part of autonomy away as well.

This dissertation did not just approach autonomy from a proceduralist framework, it importantly tackled the complicated problem of how socialization affects autonomy. To answer this question, we have to move from looking at the meso-level of phenomena in Chapter 2, to Chapters 3 and 4 where I look at socialization. While virtue ethics allows us to access the meso-level phenomena, one problem is that this framework has had problems with connecting the individual to the structural influences of history, culture and socialization. Conceptually, the language of "constitutional/character luck" has been the closest virtue ethicists have come to wrestling with this. In Chapter 3 I attempted to amend this. In that chapter I showed that if we look at responsibility over one's character through the lens of "luck", we cannot help but come to a hard determinist conclusion, that we have no responsibility over our character. In looking at the

traditional framework of "luck," character is an endogenous aspect of a person while luck is an external perturbation that interferes with this already formed, proto-person. As I show, there is no pre-luck individual. That in fact one's socialization, history and culture are constitutive of character rather than a perturbation. Switching to Merleau-Ponty's framework of "Institution", I show that rather than impeding someone's character, socialization is the basic condition of possibility for any character in the first place. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, I show that this means that different cultures and forms of life cannot be prejudged as inimical to autonomy just because their goals and preferences don't conform to Western forms of gender justice. This is a parallel argument to the one in Chapter 3. Just as luck is seen as antagonistic to the pre-luck individual in the virtue ethics framework, often feminist frameworks either cast socialization as antagonistic to freedom or if the socialization doesn't yield a Western feminist subject it is seen as bad socialization. The first feminist framework yields a normative answer like Judith Butler's, that only resistance to one's socialization can show us a woman's autonomy and freedom. As I show in the Fifth Chapter, the framework that thinks there is only one form of gender justice yields a normative answer that leads to epistemic injustice of women who practice non-Western forms of life. But just because socialization sets up the conditions of possibility of autonomy, this doesn't settle the question of whether we can draw a normative line of good and bad socialization.

While we cannot draw bright normative lines before having ethnographic access to a different form of life than our own, we can see how different events and phenomena encourage either more or less affordances for women. And so the question of good and bad socialization is tied to the first question of if there is a way to know if the women in the *dawa* movement were not autonomous? I argued at the end of Chapter 6 that the way we know if women are autonomous or not is *not* to do cross cultural comparisons but instead to do a diachronic

comparison. If socialization and society provide the conditions of possibility for autonomy in the first place, a socialization that provides more affordances for women than women of a previous generation is one that is a robust society for the autonomy of individuals. Importantly this affordance framework allows us to see that resisting one's socialization is not the only way to be autonomous, but also becoming an expert in one's form of life. Mahmood herself gave examples of events that show that women of the current generation of the *dawa* movement are more autonomous than their previous generation. These include Egypt's movement to mass literacy, the mosque opening to women teaching *dawa*, the mass mobility of women allowed women in Egypt to get education. All of these are some of the taken for granted conditions of possibility for the autonomy of women in the *dawa* group. These conditions of possibility lead to my critical focus of preservation and prevention of backsliding as a normative tool toward seeing if a society has good or bad socialization. For instance, if mass literacy was taken away or the mosques reverted to not allowing women to teach, then we could say that women in that form of life have less autonomy. We can see this worry about backsliding when looking at the events of Tahrir Square. As Mahmood argues in the new preface of the second edition of her book, *The Politics of Piety*, many of the skills the women of the *dawa* group acquired allowed them to be not just participants, but key organizers of the political uprising against the government in 2012. But nine years later, we can also see the worry of backsliding, that conditions of possibility have been reduced in the disappointing aftermath of the military coup in Egypt. In my framework of autonomy as affordances, we can also see Western veil bans as a back sliding of the taken for granted conditions of possibility for autonomy. Bans are an attack on autonomy because they take away affordances that women always had but are now gone by taking away opportunities for women to practice their skills and transform themselves.

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