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What Virtue Adds to Value

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ABSTRACT
In virtually every corner of ethics—including discussions of value, practical reasoning, moral psychology, and justice—it is common for theorists to suggest that our actions, attitudes, or emotions should be proportional to the degree of value present in the objects or events to which they are responding. I argue that there is a fundamental problem with these approaches: they overlook the character of the agent and what it adds to the equation. I show that a commitment to proportionality is at odds with both ordinary and admirable instances of love, ambition, and forgiveness. To make room for disproportional attitudes and actions, I introduce a novel account of virtue and its relation to value.

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1. Introduction

Consider the following claims: 1) We should give people what they deserve: to do otherwise would be unjust. 2) Our attitudes toward an object should be determined by that object's value: we should value it neither more nor less than it is worth. Each of these claims articulates a common assumption informing work being done on justice, value, emotion, and practical reasoning. What they share is a commitment to the proportionality principle, which is concerned with the relationship between a) the value of an object, action, or event, and b) our responses thereto. The proportionality principle claims that our actions and attitudes ought to be proportioned to the degree of value present in the object, action, or event to which they are a response.

The proportionality principle looks like it ought to guide our practical reasoning. However, I shall argue that accepting it leaves us unable to account for several significant features of our ethical lives. The proportionality principle is out of step with common sense understandings of a number of virtues, including some of the qualities we value most, which help give our lives direction and meaning. These traits include the virtues of love, ambition, and forgiveness. If we are to retain commitments that are central to loving relationships and personal projects, then we need to rethink the

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proportionality principle. In particular, we need to rethink the role of the agent in acting, valuing, and reasoning.

Section 2 looks at the proportionality principle in the context of Robert Nozick's, Thomas Hurka's, and Christine Tappolet's work on value. Section 3 uses love, ambition, and forgiveness to challenge the proportionality principle and modifies it to accommodate them. Section 4 introduces an alternative account of the relationship between virtue and value that draws attention to what virtue adds to value.

2. The Proportionality Principle

The proportionality principle has been endorsed either explicitly or implicitly by a number of theorists. For example, Robert Nozick [1981: 429–32] claims that we should care about and be attracted by that which has value. And the greater its value, the more we should care about it. Furthermore, we should be repulsed by and hate that which has disvalue. And our hatred should be more intense the greater the disvalue. 'Something is askew,' he insists, 'when the intensity of the response is not proportioned to the magnitude of the value' [ibid.: 431].

Similarly, Thomas Hurka's account of value claims that we should love what is good and hate what is evil. Not only that, but matching our attitudes to the value or disvalue of their objects is itself 'intrinsically good', and failing to match our attitudes to the value or disvalue of their objects is 'intrinsically evil' [Hurka 2001: 11–19]. What it means to match one's attitudes to the value of their objects involves more than liking good things and disliking bad ones. Hurka claims, 'If x is n times as intrinsically good as y, loving x for itself any more or less than n times as intensely as y is intrinsically evil as a combination' [ibid.: 84]. So it is important not only to get the right valence—positive or negative—but also to get the correct magnitude relative to other things we value. Hurka proposes that the proportionality principle should apply to our attitudes toward people, as well, treating virtue as a form of value and vice a form of disvalue. We ought to desire, pursue, and take 'pleasure in situations where a virtuous person is rewarded or a vicious one punished, and be … pained by their opposites' [ibid.: 194].

Nozick's and Hurka's commitment to proportionality is explicit and has been widely recognized (e.g., see Brian McElwee [2015]). Less noticed is that a variant of the proportionality principle can also be found in recent work in philosophy of emotion. Christine Tappolet [2014], for example, argues for a 'perceptual' theory of the emotions according to which our emotions are perceptions of value (see also Döring [2009], Pelser [2014]). 'An appropriate emotion is an emotion that is correct from the epistemic point of view, in the sense that it represents things as they are, evaluatively speaking' [Tappolet 2015: 84]. Part of an emotion's correctness will involve being the right kind of emotion for the circumstances: one is not overjoyed at tragic news or disheartened when one's hopes are realized (other things being equal). Another part of an emotion's correctness will involve its intensity: 'Emotions vary with respect to their intensity, and these variations are plausibly taken to correspond to the degrees of the corresponding evaluative properties' [Tappolet 2016: 23–4]. For example, more intense sadness is correlated with a greater loss, whereas milder sadness is correlated with less significant losses. One thing that follows from Tappolet's perceptual theory is that our emotions should be proportioned—both in kind and intensity—to the value of the objects they perceive. Just as an accurate sense of taste should portray a meal as neither sweeter nor saltier than it is, and an accurate sense of touch should portray a surface as neither smoother nor rougher than it is, so an accurate emotion should construe its object as neither more nor less valuable than it is. Otherwise it is inappropriate, because it is a misperception, a false construal of the world.

The same applies to many of those who offer a prominent alternative to the perceptual theory, namely a 'cognitive' or 'judgementalist' theory of emotions which claims that the emotions are closely tied to our judgements. While admitting that our emotions don't always precisely correlate with our judgements regarding the degree of value we believe their objects to possess, nevertheless they insist that when our emotions are functioning properly, they are proportioned to what we judge to be the goodness (or badness) of their objects. Our fear, for example, will be no stronger than is warranted by the danger of its object. Similarly, our trust will be no stronger than is merited by the person we are trusting (see Neu [2000], Nussbaum [2001], Solomon [2003], Hieronymi [2008], Roberts [2013]).

Nozick, Hurka, and Tappolet are not alone, then, in putting forward accounts that are committed to the proportionality principle. Indeed, Hurka [2001: 28] suggests that, in one form or another, a view like his has been 'affirmed … by philosophers from Aristotle through Rashdall and Brentano to the present'. This may be so; however, there are significant aspects of our ethical lives that are at odds with the proportionality principle. Section 3 will consider three such aspects, namely, love, ambition, and forgiveness.

3. Beyond Proportionality

A common thread running through love, forgiveness, and ambition—both commonly and at their virtuous best—is that each involves valuing or bestowing favour upon a person, object, or project in a way that is not fully determined by its value (or our perceptions or judgements of its value).[1] A parent's love for her infant child is not generated by that child's value (see Velleman [1999], Adams [1999], Kolodny [2003], Frankfurt [2004], Kennett [2008]). Nor should it be. Parents routinely love their children even before they are born, before they have any acquaintance with their child's value. (This is one of the reasons why still births and miscarriages are so hard to bear.) The parents we admire do not love their ten-year-old more than her four-year-old sibling, even though she possesses a number of valuable qualities—positive traits of character, more sophisticated aesthetic sensibilities, better means-end reasoning skills, more developed conversational skills, and so on—that her younger sibling does not. Nor do they love their relatively patient fifteen-year-old more than his somewhat snarky twin sister. As Francis Hutcheson [2004: 148] observes,

> [T]he Affection of Parents … cannot be entirely founded on Merit or Acquaintance; not only because it is antecedent to all Acquaintance, which might occasion the Love of Esteem; but because it operates where Acquaintance would produce Hatred, even toward Children apprehended to be vitious.

[1] The virtues of love, ambition, and forgiveness involve a range of characteristic behaviours, emotions, and dispositions. In this section I focus on emotions and actions that typify them, since they are the aspects of these virtues to which the proportionality principle might be thought to apply.

Were we to insist upon observing the proportionality principle in the context of parent-child relations, then an ideal parent would be one who did not love his child until he was acquainted with the child's value. And we would expect his love to grow (or diminish) in proportion to the degree to which the child developed in a way that merited more (or less) favour. Common sense ideals of parental love are clearly at odds with the ideal proposed by the proportionality principle. Marilynne Robinson [2004: 238] seems nearer the truth when she writes, 'Love is holy because it is like grace—the worthiness of its object is never really what matters'.

One might attempt to preserve the proportionality principle by suggesting that the value to which fitting parental love responds is not the child's present value but the child's potential future value. It is unclear whether focusing on the child's future value will make room for parental love for newborns. It depends on whether there is reason to think it more probable they will have a positive future than a negative one. If we wished to guarantee that there was room for parents to love their newborn children, then we might propose a variant of the potential proportionality principle that gave infants and young children the benefit of the doubt, focusing on their positive potential. While this variant would permit parental love for most infants, it only forestalls objections. It is still unable to account for the love of parents whose infant is born with a congenital condition that is sure to take her life within her first year. Parents who loved such a child to the same degree that they loved a child whose chances to realize her future potential were higher would be irrational. The potential variant of the proportionality principle does not do much better even in more typical cases. Practically rational parents will still be obliged to adjust their love over the course of a child's lifetime depending on how the child develops. Indeed, it might stipulate that most parents' love should gradually diminish over the child's lifetime. At the start, there were many valuable futures the child might realize. But over time it would become clear that most of these futures would not eventuate and much of the child's potential would not be realized. At each milestone the average child passes, her practically rational parents would need to adjust their favouring downward to reflect the fact that previously possible futures were no longer in the running and previous potential had not been developed and thus had been lost. We can see how far out of step either variant of the proportionality principle is with our standing assumptions about parental love by imagining a conversation premised on it: As her child heads out the door for school (or steps onto the athletic field) a mother says, 'Do your best today, darling, because if you don't, Mummy will be obliged to love you less.'

Another possible response on behalf of proportionality would be to claim that all human beings have considerable—perhaps even infinite—value.[2] Such an assumption would have the benefit of justifying parental love for infant children. Depending on how much value human beings are assigned it might have the interesting consequence that all of our loves fall short of proportionality. Others' value is so great that our love, even in its best moments, is less than they deserve. Such an assumption is not without its attractions, one of which is that it would clearly rule out the mother's comment considered above. However, this assumption will not solve all of the proportionalist's problems. Assuming all human beings have considerable—but not infinite—value still leaves us in a position where a parent should love her ten-year-old more than her

[2] I am grateful to Trenton Merricks and Rebecca Stangl for encouraging me to consider this possibility.

four-year-old, her patient son more than his snarky sister, and her healthy child more than her terminally ill one. Assuming all humans have infinite value might eliminate these problems but introduces difficulties of its own.[3] One consequence of adopting this premise would be that the proportionality principle would no longer do the work its advocates expect of it. They mean for it to explain why we should treat some people differently than others: nice people better than nasty ones, honest people better than liars, and so forth. An infinite value that our loving always falls short of will not enable us to make such discriminations, since it would entail that we should always be striving to treat every person better than we do, regardless of their character. Furthermore, these problems are not limited to parental love. Other loves face similar problems.

When thinking about love, many will take the disparity between the competing ideals of common sense and the proportionality principle to be a *reductio* of the latter. At the very least it indicates that advocates of the proportionality principle will need to acknowledge the difference between its ideal and common sense ideals of love and explain why the difference is not a defect of the proportionalist's view. If we turn our attention to ambition, we discover a similar lack of proportionality between our attachments to particular projects and the value those projects possess.

The aims to which we aspire, which give our lives direction and meaning, do not become our aims because we have judged them to be the worthiest goals to which a person could direct her energy and desire. Typically our choice of projects results from the intersection of three factors: i) our abilities, ii) our opportunities, and iii) what captures our interest. Some perception of value is usually involved in the third of these factors. It seems to be part of the phenomenology of interest that we see its object as good to at least some degree. But we need not think it a terribly important good in the grand scheme of things, let alone comparatively the best. There is nothing paradoxical or improper about someone saying, 'I know it doesn't matter all that much, but I'm fascinated by X' or 'I realize there are more important things I might choose to study (or build or pursue), but X is the thing that really excites me.'

At this point a defender of the proportionality principle might try to salvage it by claiming that the excitement or fascination just mentioned is what is needed to motivate an agent to continue pursuing their aim even in the face of potential setbacks. So an agent who combines such excitement with an aim of lesser value may be able to achieve greater things as a result of their excitement than they could have achieved had they pursued a greater good about which they were less excited. And surely that will sometimes be correct.[4] But there is no reason to think it always or even typically will be true. Many of us have multiple abilities and interests that could have been channelled in a number of directions, each of which we would have had the energy and enthusiasm to pursue in ways that would have led to a reasonable degree of success and fulfilment. But we don't ordinarily expect such people, when choosing their academic or vocational path, to give ultimate weight to the value of the aims they might pursue or the goods they expect to produce in the course of pursuing

[3] Whether it would eliminate them or not depends on whether some infinities can be larger than others.

[4] Notice that this defence shifts the object of our valuing attitude. It had started off being something about the project. But this salvage attempt changes it to the good we would achieve by pursuing this project (as opposed to others we might pursue). Those who were attracted to the proportionality principle because they endorse a fitting attitude account of valuing will part ways with our imagined defender of proportionality at this point, because the beneficial outcome of my valuing project P provides the wrong kind of reason for my valuing P.

their aims. We do not expect the philosophy student to believe that the goods internal to the study of philosophy are the most important ones or to show that they exceed the goods internal to the study of history, theology, engineering, or medicine. For those who carry on with their studies, we do not think they are obliged to demonstrate (at least to themselves) that the pursuit of an academic career in philosophy will enable them to produce the most significant goods in the world outside the discipline of philosophy. Nor need they think studying philosophy will best enable them to lead a life marked by virtue or fulfilment. They may find philosophy more challenging than history, more puzzling than engineering, or more rigorous than sociology, but their thoughts need not be this comparative. They may carry on studying philosophy simply because they find it so engaging without that being a blemish on their moral record. Indeed, we even think it acceptable for them to carry on with their studies in contexts where they think there are other vocations through which they might produce (marginally) more numerous, more tangible, or more important goods (for further discussion see Pettigrove [2007]). In other words, common sense morality is not committed to proportionality as the standard for morally acceptable enthusiasm or for the vocational choices that might follow from it.

Thus far, I have chosen examples from student life to raise questions about whether the proportionality principle provides the standard for blame. What about for praise? One might think that the standard Nozick, Hurka, and Tappolet recommend is best read as a standard for picking out when our valuing attitudes and emotions are functioning optimally, and the examples I have been using don't address this matter. The question we ought to be asking, it might be suggested, is, 'Could the proportionality principle serve as the standard of virtuous enthusiasm for an intellectual or vocational pursuit?'

The answer that common sense morality gives to this question can be seen in our attitudes toward the adults our imagined students become. One example will suffice to show that the proportionality principle does not pick out our standards for praise any more than it does for blame. There were other, arguably worthier, channels into which Joan could have directed her energies, but what captured her interest as a student was the legend of King Arthur and its historical development from its origins in early Welsh tales like the ones collected in the *Mabinogion*. Not one for half-measures, Joan threw herself into studying the history, languages, and literature of medieval Britain and graduated with distinction. She went on to write a thoroughly researched, rigorously argued doctoral thesis on a neglected fragmentary text that predates the *Mabinogion*. Over the next 30 years she became an internationally respected expert in medieval Welsh literature. She taught hundreds of students how to interpret historical texts, how to conduct research, and how to stretch themselves intellectually. She wrote letters of reference for her students as they applied for jobs. She celebrated their successes and was saddened when things failed to go their way. She did her share to keep the university running, serving on committees that occasionally succeeded in making her colleagues' or her students' lives marginally better. That is to say, she lived the life of a successful academic. At her retirement, her fellow literary historians expressed their gratitude for her contribution to their field, her colleagues praised her passion and dedication, and her students shared stories of being challenged and inspired in her classroom. As they did so, they felt no need to look back to ascertain whether there was a better vocational path that Joan might have pursued and to weigh its merits against those of being a scholar of medieval Welsh literature or to decide whether medieval Welsh literature warranted thirty years of devoted attention. Their praise only required them to recognize that she travelled her chosen path well. For the few who did look back and reflect on those earlier choices of academic major, research topic, and vocation, her admirable travelling of that path was part of what enabled them to appreciate the value of Joan's original decisions.

Common sense is backed up by theoretical reasons, as well. Tal Brewer [2009] has argued persuasively and at length that in early steps on the journey we have a very imperfect grasp of the kinds of goods that might be associated with studying a given subject or pursuing a particular vocation. This is not only because generally we have only a vague and ill-defined notion of how philosophers, lawyers, social workers, or architects spend most of their time when we are asked to make our decision. It is also because many of the goods that define what it means to be a good philosopher, lawyer, social worker, or architect are goods that we are only in a position to appreciate after we have been initiated into the practices associated with these vocations and have mastered the skills they require (see also MacIntyre [1984: 187–91]). Being initiated into such practices takes a degree of time and commitment (and very often money) that precludes being initiated into very many of them to the extent required for one to make an informed decision guided by the proportionality principle. As a result, guiding ambition's aspirations and actions by the proportionality principle is a practical impossibility for most. Diligence and genius could help the rare exception get into a position where she might hope to apply the principle accurately, but the lion's share of the credit would go to luck.

Our discussion of love suggested that observing the proportionality principle in that context is at best preposterous and at worst pernicious. The discussion of ambition has not ruled it out as perverse, just absurd. What about our third example, namely, forgiveness? Do we expect favour to be proportional to merit or value here? The most striking thing about turning our attention to forgiveness is that what occasions the possibility of forgiveness is a certain disvalue. It is because someone has acted in a way that does not merit favourable treatment—in fact, in a way that would justify unfavourable treatment—that forgiveness is possible in the first place (see Downie [1965], Murphy [2003], Allais [2008], Pettigrove [2012]).

One might try to preserve the proportionality principle in the context of forgiveness by making forgiveness conditional on the wrongdoer's subsequent action. One might require the wrongdoer to repent, apologize, or make amends before he may properly be forgiven (Griswold [2007]; see also Swinburne [1989], Hieronymi [2001]). Elsewhere I have argued against requiring forgiveness to be conditional in these ways so I shall not repeat those arguments here [Pettigrove 2012]. However, even if one takes forgiveness to be conditioned on apology, repentance, or reparation, the satisfaction of these conditions will routinely fall well shy of the threshold at which the wrongdoer would merit forgiveness. Unless the wrong was fairly trivial, an apology will not be sufficient to reverse the wrongdoer's drop in merit. Unless the wrong was uncharacteristic, even deeply felt and sincerely expressed repentance will be insufficient to demonstrate that the wrongdoer has changed his ways and improved his character to the point that he merits a favourable appraisal from his victim. Such repentance will make him look better than he did at the time he committed the misdeed, but it remains to be seen whether his repentance is a sign of a deep change or merely a temporary emotional state. The situation is similar in the case of reparations. It is impossible to repair some damage. But let us stick to cases that can readily be mended. After the perpetrator has made reparations, the victim's losses have been recovered. And the fact that he has made reparations provides some evidence of the wrongdoer's character. But there is still an open question regarding whether tomorrow he will break what he has mended today. So repentance and reparations might merit a reduction in anger, but it may not yet have restored trust. It may merit no more than a shift from hostility to indifference on the part of the victim. This may be enough to count as forgiveness in some cases, such as when the two parties were strangers before the transgression occurred. But in other cases, where there was a more substantive relationship between them, a move from hostility to indifference will fall short of what we would ordinarily expect of forgiveness.[5]

The uncoupling—which ambition, forgiveness, and love involve—of a) the attitudes and actions of valuing and favouring, and b) the value of that which is valued or favoured, cannot be accommodated comfortably by views that accept the proportionality principle. From the latter perspective, 'injustice should not be forgiven but should whenever possible be punished in proportion to its seriousness' [Ci 2002: 202], the intensity of love should be proportional to the worth of the beloved,[6] and we should only aspire to or pursue the very best. I want to suggest that the tension between love, forgiveness, and ambition, on the one hand, and the proportionality principle, on the other, highlights an important lacuna in much of the work currently done on value, justice, and moral psychology.

What is missing in accounts that recommend the proportionality principle? One thing missing is breathing room. There is not space for one person to value X more than Y and another to value Y more than X without one of them being wrong. Nor is there space for a single agent to care about the same object in different ways or with different intensities at different times without that agent having been mistaken on at least one of those occasions.

In light of the examples discussed above, one might be tempted to dispose of proportionality altogether. However, that would throw the baby out with the bathwater. There is something attractive about the idea of proportionality that explains why people have been drawn to it in the first place. Suppose someone loved a (particular) cup of coffee in the same way and to the same degree that she loved her child. Or imagine that one of the vocational paths our university-age friend is considering is to devote his life to amassing the world's largest ball of twine.[7] In both cases something is amiss. And one natural way to explain what is wrong is to say that the love or ambition in question is out of proportion to the value of its object. It is cases like these that make the proportionality principle seem attractive in the first place.

A more moderate approach would be to modify the proportionality principle, so that there is greater latitude in what counts as a proportional response. An important feature of the cases considered in the previous section is that the object of love or the target of ambition already clear a fairly high value threshold. Since the objects of love we discussed were all people, one might argue, they are all fitting objects of love. Similarly, in the case of ambition, we might think the freedom to choose a vocational path and its associated goods presupposes that the options among which we are choosing are all sufficiently worthwhile to be reasonable contenders for our time and energy.

[5] I defend this claim at greater length in Pettigrove [2012].
[6] Keller [2020] argues for an account of romantic love like this.
[7] At present, both Cawker City, Kansas, and Darwin, Minnesota, lay claim to this title.

In light of this observation, we might try to develop a threshold principle according to which there are minimum standards that an object must meet if it is to be a fitting object of certain kinds of valuing attitudes. But once that threshold has been cleared, the principle does not offer any further guidance. Anything that clears the threshold for valuing attitude A will be a suitable object for A.

We may also wish to couple the threshold with a ceiling, such that if an object's value rises above a certain level, some higher or more intense valuing attitude is required. This would create a valuing range with upper and lower bounds similar to Joshua Gert's [2004] 'interval model'. It would allow for a degree of latitude that more nearly resembles our judgements about love, ambition, and forgiveness. It may lose the precision for which some advocates of proportionality had hoped. And it will need to be coupled with other principles in order to be useful in practical deliberation or moral assessment. But the proportionality principle's advocates may have been hoping for too much precision and too much parsimony. So losses like these may be exactly what is required.

However, even if we modify the proportionality principle in these ways, we still will not have fully accounted for what is going on in the cases we have been considering. We will not yet have accounted for the bonds that exist between a parent and his or her child, between husband and wife, between friends. Nor will we have made sense of why we think it okay that a particular project or pursuit captures one person but not her like-minded flatmate or sibling. To account for these features we need to consider qualities not only of the valued object but also of the valuing agent. In part 4 I shall make a start on this project by looking at the virtuous agent to ascertain what virtue adds to value.

4. Virtue and Value

In the examples we have been considering, the proportionality principle grew out of an account of the relationship between value, on the one hand, and attitudes, emotions, and actions, on the other. So if we are to move beyond proportionality and make room for character to contribute something distinctive, it will be important to offer an alternative account of this relationship. This section will look at two ways in which the relationship between virtue and value has been conceived, arguing that each of them is critically flawed, before proposing a new approach that can avoid these problems and help us account for the goodness of virtue.

One way of conceiving of the relationship between virtue and value would involve defining virtue in terms of the value of other things to which it is responsive. Hurka [2001: 20] follows this route when he presents his recursive account: 'The moral virtues are those attitudes to goods and evils that are intrinsically good, and the moral vices are those attitudes to goods and evils that are intrinsically evil'. Three examples of intrinsically good attitudes are:

1) If x is intrinsically good, loving x (desiring, pursuing, or taking pleasure in x) for itself is also intrinsically good [ibid.: 13].
2) If x is intrinsically evil, hating x for itself is intrinsically good [ibid.: 16].
3) If x is instrumentally good because it promotes intrinsic good y, loving x because it promotes y is intrinsically good [ibid.: 17].

It is easy to see why someone developing a recursive account like Hurka's would find the proportionality principle attractive. Within such an account, the goodness of virtue piggy-backs on the goodness of other things. What is good about virtue is that it values the valuable and disvalues the disvaluable. What does all of the heavy lifting are the lower order goods and evils. Virtue is simply a matter of having attitudes that track those lower order goods and evils in the requisite way. It makes sense within such an account for better goods to be valued (loved, desired, appreciated) more intensely and similarly for worse evils to be hated more intensely [ibid.: 84], for the same reason that it makes sense within a perceptualist account of emotions for the type and intensity of emotions one feels to vary with the quality of their objects. They are conceived along epistemic lines as ways of knowing the value present in our environment and of responding to it accurately.

One of the attractive features of Hurka's account—in contrast to consequentialist accounts of virtue like Julia Driver's [2001]—is that he takes the contents of our attitudes seriously and thinks they can have a worth that is not derived from or explained by the good consequences they characteristically generate. We don't need to appeal to probable outcomes to think there is something good about having a positive attitude toward something one believes to be good. However, there are reasons to be dissatisfied with a recursive theory like Hurka's. An appreciation of the perceived goodness—or dislike of the perceived badness—of its object is not the only thing that contributes to an attitude's worth. Still less is it all that contributes to a virtue's worth. Having a virtue is generally thought to involve more than just having an attitude. It also involves characteristic actions and some measure of regularity in having those attitudes and performing those actions (among other things). Furthermore, even if we took attitudes to be the defining feature of virtues, the recursive account fails to reflect the orientation toward value that is characteristic of a range of important virtues, as we have already seen in relation to love, forgiveness, and ambition.

Whereas the recursive account takes value to be the condition for the possibility of virtue, an alternative account reverses this relation, taking virtue to be the condition for the possibility of value. Trivially, of course, virtues like creativity might bring some goods into existence—such as the aesthetic properties of the novel, the musical composition, or the sculpture—that otherwise would not have been. But the account in question proposes a more fundamental relation than this. Virtue is not just taken to be the instrumental condition for the possibility of some goods; it is put forward as the metaphysical condition for the possibility of all goods. A response-dependent account of value that anchored it in the responses of virtuous agents would be one such view and it could dovetail nicely with a perceptual theory of emotion like the one Tappolet puts forward.[8]

A response-dependent account of a property X claims that X emerges through the relationship between an object and a respondent to that object. The classic example is colour. An avocado has a certain reflectance profile. Light waves bounce off its surface in a particular way. If they did not, then we would not perceive the colour green. But the reflectance profile itself is not the property of being green (according to the response-dependence theorist). Green also depends upon the cone structure of the human eye. Greenness is what results when the reflectance profile of the object

[8] Tappolet [2012: 220] endorses a response-dependent account of the value properties perceived by emotion.

meets the cone structure of the eye. On this account, the response of the perceiver is partially constitutive of the property of being green.

A number of people have argued that (at least some) moral properties are response-dependent.[9] Were there no valuers, there would be no value. However, there is less unanimity among valuers than among colour perceivers about which objects have the response-dependent property in question. This has led some to propose that the properties picked out by value claims should be fixed relative to the responses of the virtuous, who are taken to be expert perceivers (see Zagzebski [2004]). The joyous will be that in which the virtuous take joy or in which they would take joy if they stood in a particular relation to it (such as being an actor in the award-winning film on Oscar night). Similarly, the admirable will be that which the virtuous admire or which they would admire if fully informed, and the beneficial will be that which the virtuous desire for themselves or others.[10]

If a response-dependent account like this is advanced as a way of picking out value concepts, then it has a number of attractions. It is less plausible as an account of value properties.[11] If value properties were dependent on the responses of virtuous observers, then if it turned out there were no virtuous observers, it would follow that there were no value properties. Worse yet, if it turned out there *could be* no virtuous observers—perhaps because the standards of virtue exceed the capacities of any actual agent—then it would follow not only that there are no value properties but that *there could be no value properties*. When developing a response-dependent account of property X, it would seem more plausible to assume what is required are *adequate* respondents, rather than *excellent* ones. So it is not clear that the most promising response-dependent account of value is one that would make virtue the condition for the possibility of value.

However, let us suppose that the response-dependent view we are considering has a way of dealing with these concerns. It still would not help us explain the different emotional responses of two like-minded, virtuous flatmates with similar abilities who make different vocational or romantic choices. If one adopts a perceptual theory of emotions like Tappolet's, then each virtuous flatmate should have an identical emotional perception of the value associated with each of the vocational paths or romantic prospects on offer. But often they don't. One of them falls for Betty and the other for Veronica. One of them is captivated by philosophy while the other is taken with engineering. And they choose accordingly. As noted above, that doesn't automatically give us reason to assume one of them has made a mistake.

The recursive and response-dependent accounts of the relationship between virtue and value that we have been considering attempt to forge a necessary link between virtue and value, using one to explain the other. A third option would take virtue to be an independent sort of value, without trying to reduce it to a function of value of other types (or vice versa). I shall sketch one such view, which I call the modus operandi account of virtue. At least sometimes, I shall argue, a virtuous action will not be

[9] Johnston [1989] introduces response-dependent concepts. In Johnston [2001] it becomes clear that he does not think a response-dependent account is limited to making claims about concepts. There can also be response-dependent properties that correspond to our response-dependent concepts.

[10] This is one way to read the argument advanced by Philippa Foot [1985].

[11] Zagzebski [2004] appeals to human exemplars to define value concepts. To do the metaphysical job of constituting properties, she sticks with a response-dependent account but it is divine emotions that constitute value properties, rather than the emotions of virtuous humans.

explained by other goods the agent appreciates, pursues, or promotes. It will be explained by qualities of the agent. Joss Whedon draws attention to this dimension in the screenplay for *Serenity* (Universal Pictures, 2005) in a conversation between Malcolm Reynolds and his friend, Shepherd Book. Malcolm is reflecting back on a choice he made, wondering if he should have done something else instead. Shepherd responds,

> 'That's not your way, Mal'.
>
> 'I have a way?' Malcolm replies. 'Is that better than a plan?'

In the scene Whedon plays on the difference between an agent's characteristic way of being, on the one hand, and his aims, strategies, and assessments of the weight of competing goods on the other. The qualities that make up an agent's characteristic way of being will include, among other things: what he notices and how he notices it, what he cares about and how he cares about it, what he thinks about and how he thinks about it, what he does and how he does it, his ongoing projects, and his personal style.

The idea that a person might have his own characteristic way of being, an identifiable modus operandi, is not a new idea. It was central to the development of the modern novel, as it became important for characters to develop distinctive personalities with their own recognizable ways of thinking and behaving. It has long played a role in law as barristers and jurors deliberate about whether a particular action is likely to have been performed in thus-and-such a way by this witness or that defendant. It is a familiar feature of our everyday interactions with the people around us. When in need of help with a task, we don't knock on the door of colleague A, because she's never in her office on Thursdays. We don't ask colleague B because, although he is quite helpful and a very reliable source of information about his area of specialization, he has little interest in institutional policies and is unlikely to remember which form needs to be filed with what office in cases like this. Colleague C is sure to know the answer to our question, but will begin by telling us how they handled cases like this when he first joined the university and then proceed in chronological order to describe each of the changes in the relevant policies and personnel from that day to this. Since we only have 15 minutes before our next class we bypass C's office and head around the corner to visit D, who might not know the answer but will offer to find out and get back to us later in the day. What explains the differences in our colleagues' responses need not be a difference in their awareness of the types of value that have a bearing on the case. If we would account for their different responses we should attend not to their present environment but to their past, to their socialization, formative experiences, individual temperament, and personal style.

Virtue and vice concepts help us group some of these temperament/style combinations together into recognizable constellations. They pick out salient patterns shared by those we admire or deplore.[12] For instance, the tendency to think principally of oneself and to give one's own fleeting desires greater weight than the needs of others is common (and frustrating) enough that we have given it a label of its own. We call it selfishness. Likewise, the tendency to come up with new ideas and follow up on (a number of) them is one we notice and admiringly call creativity.

[12] Of course, not all of one's personal style need be captured by virtue and vice concepts.

Taking people's characteristic ways of being into account is something we do every day. But it is something value theorists seldom talk about.[13] To make room for the agent's characteristic way of being, I want to revisit an earlier metaphor that was used to explain value. Plato likened the Good to the sun that shares its light and warmth with all. For early Christian writers it was both sun and rain:

> I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [Matthew 5:45]

What these metaphors share is that they conceive of goodness as emanating from a good source in a way that is not conditioned upon the value of the beneficiary. And virtuous agents are encouraged to resemble the Good or God in this respect. The goodness of their activities will be explained by the goodness of the agent.

Leaving aside the Platonic metaphysics, the Platonic/Christian metaphor offers us a useful way to think about the good person. Adopting an account like this enables us to make sense out of what we appreciate in parental love. That love is explained by who the parent is and what he is like, not by the child and her qualities. The metaphor offers a useful way of expressing what we appreciate about gracious forgiveness, as well. The attitudes of the forgiver are not held hostage by the actions of the wrongdoer; rather, the forgiver's gift is explained by the generosity of its giver. In both of these cases the good is directed toward the recipient in a way that is more intentional and more responsive to the qualities of the recipient than are sunshine or a cloudburst. Nevertheless, part of what both explains and commends the actions and attitudes of the loving or forgiving is something about them rather than something about the one to whom their actions or attitudes are directed. Sometimes the goodness of their actions or attitudes can be explained by referring to a good outcome they produce. But at other times their goodness is to be accounted for simply by reference to a good way of being they instantiate.

The Platonic/Christian metaphor is useful for drawing our attention to an aspect of virtue that the recursive and response-dependent accounts overlook. However, the quality of virtue it highlights is not unique to Platonic or Christian conceptions of virtue. Thinking of virtues in the way Hume did, as traits of character that are useful or agreeable to oneself or to others, provides another resource for noticing what the recursive and response-dependent views leave out. Traits that are useful or agreeable are not exhaustively explained in terms of the goods to which those traits are responsive and the extent to which those responses are proportional. Hume further observes that different personalities have different ways of doing and seeing things.

> The man of a mild disposition and tender affections, in forming a notion of the most perfect virtue, mixes in it more of benevolence and humanity, than the man of courage and enterprize, who naturally looks upon a certain elevation of mind as the most accomplish'd character. This must evidently proceed from an immediate sympathy, which men have with characters similar to their own. [Hume 1739: 3.3.3.4]

Different agents, even different virtuous agents, have their own personality profiles with different dispositions and distinctive ways of valuing and acting. Hume does not think this a liability but rather a feature of his account. A theory that did not

[13] Among moral philosophers it has been discussed most by those working on living with integrity, authenticity, or meaning. See, e.g., Calhoun [2018].

make space for this feature of human life would not be a theory for creatures like us. If we were attempting to construct a theory that accounted for the behaviour of any other organism, we would expect some behaviours to be explained by features of the organism and others by aspects of the environment in which it is acting. Why expect anything different in the context of explaining moral behaviour and identifying what we admire about it?

Part of the attraction of recursive and response-dependent accounts is that they offer an explanation. When asked why trait T is a virtue, the recursive account can point to something, namely value, to explain T's goodness. When asked why object O is good, a response-dependent account can point to something, namely virtue, to explain O's goodness. Each of them exemplifies the classic structure of explanations: One explains X by pointing to its relationship with something else. And in each case, the explanation they offer is a metaphysical explanation: One explains what makes T a virtue, the other how O's value is constituted. The modus operandi account also offers an explanation, but it is an epistemic explanation, not a metaphysical one. In answer to the question, 'Why is T a virtue?' the M.O. account says, 'Because we approve of it when we see it, and on reflection we endorse that approval'.[14] (The same goes for the actions and attitudes that express T.) It does not answer the question, 'What *makes* T or any other virtue good?' And this might appear to be a drawback. However, it would only be a shortcoming if there were something else to which one could point from which it derives its goodness. Eventually, explanations of this kind bottom out in properties that are good in themselves and do not borrow their goodness from elsewhere. The point of the M.O. account is that virtuousness is its own kind of goodness and its goodness is fundamental. In a complete normative ontology, we would find the goodness of virtue in the ground floor of the theory. It doesn't need to be explained in terms of some other property from which it is derived. A failure to recognize virtue's fundamental goodness is a shortcoming of the recursive account and others like.

The examples of virtuous love, forgiveness, and ambition also highlight a shortcoming of the perceptual theory of emotion. The perceptual theory takes the epistemic function of emotions to be their chief defining feature: 'emotions consist in perceptual experiences of value' [Tappolet 2016: xi–xii]. However, there is more to emotions than what they help us know. They enable us to form attachments. They bind us together into communities. They discourage others from offending us. They motivate us to pursue certain courses of action. These are some of the dimensions of emotion that love, forgiveness, and ambition highlight. Sometimes one of these other dimensions is what explains why our love for one person is stronger than our love for another even when we recognize that the intensity of our love does not track a difference in value. Furthermore, upon reflection we think a difference in intensity is exactly what virtue calls for in such a case. We need to make room for these dimensions if we are to provide an adequate account of the relationship between emotion and value. And if being disposed to experience certain emotions is part of having certain virtues—as almost everyone agrees—then an adequate account of the relationship

[14] The assumption is that approval comes in different flavours. Approving of an excellent backhand in tennis feels different than approving of a self-sacrificing concern for the welfare of others. Some of these flavours of approval we associate with virtues. Others we don't.

between virtue and value will depend upon an account of emotions that can make room for the non-epistemic ways in which our emotions contribute to value.

5. Conclusion

Although the proportionality principle sounds eminently plausible, I have argued that it does not square with common assumptions regarding the nature of love, ambition, and forgiveness. It would be impossible for most of us to govern our ambition by the proportionality principle, since at the time we choose a vocation we are not yet in a position to recognize or appreciate the goods internal to the practices between which we are selecting. Someone who governed their loving and forgiving by it would be someone who seldom forgave and whose love was conditional and inconstant. Noticing the shortcomings of the proportionality principle gives us reason to rethink the theories of value and emotion that recommend it. Articulating our best understanding of the virtues of love, forgiveness, and ambition will require us to pay attention to what virtue adds to value. The virtuous agent does not just react to the values she sees in the environment around her. She is also active. We admire her clear-eyed appreciation of the value she encounters, to be sure, but that is not all we admire about her. We also admire what she brings to her environment, the range of other qualities that contribute to her characteristic way of being. An adequate account of the relationship between virtue and value must make room for them, as well.[15]

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