

Virtuous Activity Is Sufficient for Happiness and Some Minimally Favorable Circumstances Are
Necessary for Virtuous Activity

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Abstract

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I argue for a *nontraditional sufficiency thesis*: virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and some minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. This view satisfies two intuitions from the ancient dispute that might at first seem in tension. Happiness depends on favorable external circumstances, and virtuous activity guarantees happiness.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:

Traditional Aristotelian and Stoic Approaches to Happiness, as well as a Nontraditional Sufficiency Thesis

What is virtue ethics? ... The simple answer ... is that virtue ethics is what Aristotle did. Here Aristotelian ethics is contrasted with the familiar moral theories which became dominant during and after the Enlightenment: Kantianism, on the one hand, and utilitarianism, on the other.¹

§1. Introduction: Why Care about an Ancient Dispute?

Virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory are distinct from deontological ones, which focus on rules or duties, and from consequentialist ones, which focus on states of affairs. Aristotle's virtue ethical theory famously lays out two central concepts, virtue and happiness. This concept of happiness (*eudaimonia*) is distinct from the present-day sense of the term that denotes a positive state of mind such as a joyful one. It is the idea from ancient philosophy of a good life, a life that flourishes, or a life that goes well. The basic idea is that a happy life involves exercising moral virtues. On this view, the virtues are robust character traits, or sets of disposition for properly acting. Ancient philosophers agree that exercising these virtues is necessary for happiness, but disagree over whether favorable circumstances are also necessary. This divide marks a deep tension in eudaimonist approaches to virtue ethics. As traditionally framed, the dispute is over the relationship between virtue and happiness.

The paradigm case used to distinguish the two approaches is the fable of Priam (EN.1.9-10). He was King of Troy and suffered devastating losses during the Trojan War, including the loss of family and the destruction of his city. However, Aristotle suggests Priam's virtuous character was able to "shine through" (*dialampeí to kalon*) despite these tragedies (EN.1.10). The question is whether Priam remains happy. On a more Stoic approach, virtue is *sufficient* for happiness.² So, if we accept that Priam remains virtuous after the tragedy, then we must also accept that he remains happy. Similarly, someone living in poverty could be said to flourish or live well, despite her limited opportunities, so long as she remains virtuous. One attraction of this view is that it makes happiness universally accessible to everyone who can be virtuous. By contrast, on a more Aristotelian approach, virtue and some circumstances are both *necessary* for happiness, but neither one of them is alone sufficient. Priam cannot remain happy because

¹ Ruth Anna Putnam 1988, 379.

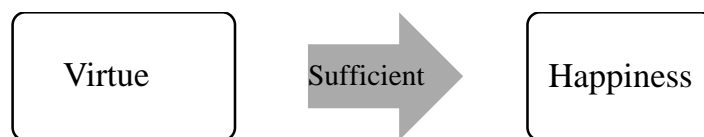
² Although I use the labels of "necessity thesis" and "sufficiency thesis" to refer to positions, my discussion is limited to views that hold that virtue is necessary for happiness. This is a common assumption in eudaimonist approaches to virtue ethical theory. In this respect, "necessity thesis" and "sufficiency thesis" are terms of art in this discourse. The sufficiency thesis refers to the claim that virtuous activity is both necessary and sufficient for happiness.

tragedy has stolen his city and family. The main attraction of this view is that it captures our intuition that happiness is vulnerable to the world.

The traditional Aristotelian approach has long been the default for virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory, but Julia Annas argues that the Stoic approach is a viable alternative for present-day virtue ethicists, with certain advantages which have yet to be fully explored in the literature (1996; 2005; 2011). In her recent book, *Intelligent Virtue*, Annas advances the view that virtue and happiness involve how you live your life and not its circumstances. She claims it “is not a matter of the stuff you have, whether you are beautiful, healthy, powerful or rich” (2011, 129). Rather virtue and happiness consist in dealing well with whatever circumstances may occasion your life. For Annas, a Stoic approach has an advantage over an Aristotelian one because it can guide one about how to live in any context, regardless of circumstances. The virtuous person necessarily lives a happy life, even if she is impoverished, ugly, sick, and poor. It is impossible for the virtuous person to fail to flourish for reasons outside of her control. However, this immunity from factors also underlies an obvious disadvantage for the Stoic approach. It is intuitively implausible to claim that you can be happy in extremely unfavorable circumstances.

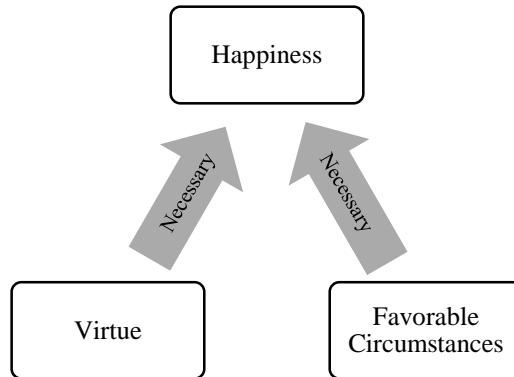
In order to express the general dispute between virtue ethical approaches, we can represent caricatures of both traditional views diagrammatically (Figures 1 and 2 below). To be clear, all views in this discourse agree that virtue is necessary for happiness. Also, the views described here are oversimplifications, given that Aristotelian and Stoic approaches are usually far more nuanced and that there are many different versions of each, which I will explore in the dissertation. Figure 1 depicts the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis that virtue is sufficient for living a happy life. So, for example, if we were to accept that Priam remains virtuous, on the Stoic approach, then it would follow that he must also be happy. Figure 2, by contrast, depicts the traditional Aristotelian necessity thesis. On this picture, virtue and some favorable circumstances are both necessary for happiness, but neither one of them is alone sufficient. The virtuous person needs favorable circumstances, just as the lucky person needs virtue, in order to be happy. It might be the case that virtuous activity and favorable circumstances are jointly sufficient for living a happy life, on an Aristotelian approach, as there is an open question whether anything else contributes to happiness.³

Figure 1: The Traditional Stoic Sufficiency Thesis



³ For example, we might think that health is another necessary condition for happiness. However, some might argue that any other ingredient could be attributed to virtuous activity or favorable circumstances. Living healthily might be attributed to temperance or to good luck.

Figure 2: The Traditional Aristotelian Necessity Thesis



Even at first pass, these figures raise questions. In terms of Figure 1, is it reasonable to claim that circumstances play no role whatsoever in virtue and happiness? This simplified view is open to the intuitive counterexamples. For example, imagine that your entire family dies from the 2014 West African Ebola Epidemic. Surely, you cannot be happy (i.e., flourish) after suffering such a devastating tragedy. It is also obvious to claim that circumstances such as having enough air to breathe and enough calories to think must be necessary for happiness. These considerations press Stoics to include some role for circumstances in the theory, but in a diminished way, which I explore in Chapter 2. There are also questions about the role of circumstances on Aristotelian accounts of virtue.⁴ What is relevant on the Aristotelian tradition? At first blush, we might speculate that it involves acquiring things such as money and material possessions. In addition to these tangible things, we might draw from ancient texts by adding items such as the role of other people, politics, culture, and so on.⁵ Even so, it is unclear how any of these things in the world could be necessary for happiness.

Given these questions, this dissertation explores the role circumstances play in accounts of happiness, since the way we describe that role underlies different models for virtue ethical theories. The aim is (1) to clarify disputes internal to eudaimonist virtue ethical theory about the role of favorable circumstances and (2) to defend a position on these issues, combining aspects of traditional Stoic and Aristotelian approaches, which I will describe below.

First, it is important to clarify the overarching dispute between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches. What is each approach and how do they treat favorable circumstances with respect to the rest of the theory? They offer very different answers to central questions which shape their respective accounts, and therefore these answers have wider implications in virtue ethicists. The shape of virtue and happiness could change drastically on the basis of the role of favorable circumstances play with respect to the rest of the theory. Even the list of virtues could change. So it is important to clarify the dispute, in order to even approach certain questions such as ones about the theory of virtue.

⁴ See, for example, Irwin (1988).

⁵ For example, Aristotle's virtues involve some tangible external goods such as wealth (EN.4.1-2: generosity and magnificence) and ones concerning honor (EN.4.3-4: *megalopsuchia* and an unnamed virtue).

Second, I will defend what I will call a nontraditional sufficiency thesis: *virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but some minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity*. This combines aspects of both traditional accounts and, as I will argue, captures something intuitively important from each. The compelling part of the Stoic approach is the assumption that virtuous activity guarantees happiness. As long as you exercise your virtue, that is all you need to be happy. This is why people living in unfavorable circumstances can still be happy, when they live their lives well. The paradigm example here is that Epictetus is able to be happy because he lives his life well, even though he is a slave living under oppressive conditions. For a more modern example, American fighter pilot James Stockdale is well-known in popular culture for his autobiographical story where he used Epictetus's Stoic philosophy to help him live well during his four years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam (1993). On the other hand, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis also captures the Aristotelian intuition that obviously happiness depends on the world. It is impossible to be happy in severely tragic circumstances such as the ones Priam suffered after the Trojan War. Although I agree with the Aristotelian tradition that favorable circumstances are necessary for happiness, I will argue that they are only necessary for happiness to the extent that they are necessary for virtuous activity and so virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness. The reason Priam loses his happiness is that his happiness consists in virtuous activity such as his political activities governing his city and his interpersonal activities loving his family. After the Trojan War, when the Achaeans have sacked Troy and taken his family, it is impossible for Priam to be happy. This is because it is impossible for him to engage in activities central to his happiness.

However, to be clear, whether Priam can be virtuous after the tragedy remains an open question. This is because the theory of virtue is unspecified. There is room for many different theories about what would qualify as virtuous activity and these differences do not map on neatly to a distinction between the two traditional approaches. For example, an Aristotelian could accept the possibility that Priam could still be virtuous and happy or the possibility that he could learn to be virtuous in a different way.⁶ The “virtue” parts of Figures 1 and 2 are theoretical black boxes. We cannot take it for granted that Priam's city and family are necessary for his virtuous activity, since we do not know what virtuous activity is; it would be possible for someone to argue for a theory of virtue under which having a relationship with one's city and family is not necessary for virtuous activity. Just the same, the reason the Priam example makes sense is that it is intuitive to think that his city and family are necessary. My aim in this dissertation is not to address theories of virtue, but rather to address the role of circumstances in terms of the relationship between the theory of virtue and happiness.

My nontraditional sufficiency thesis is neutral about virtuous activity. Within my view, there is room for virtue ethical theories that look more Aristotelian as well as ones that look more Stoic. Although I have more Aristotelian intuitions, I will not argue for them here; I think that my version of the sufficiency thesis will apply to both approaches the way I frame them. On any

⁶ For example, as Aristotle himself claims in his influential interpretation of the Priam case, although it is impossible for Priam to be happy, his virtue is able to “shine through” the tragedy (EN.1.10). This is a puzzling claim, which I will explore in the dissertation. (See especially Chapter 4.)

plausible, eudaimonistic virtue ethical, theory, virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and some favorable circumstances are necessary for that activity.

When I say I am neutral about a theory of virtue, I mean I am neutral within the domain of intellectualist, eudaimonist virtue ethical theories. In this respect, I am following others in this discourse who offer virtue ethical frameworks under which different theories of virtue might be plugged in. For example, Annas presents a general framework under which Hursthousean, Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic approaches can disagree. She states:

The account developed ... has been on a high level of generality ... I have tried to set up the framework within which these adjudications take place. The account has been definite, however, on virtue, its composition, and its structure. Central to it has been the idea that the kind of practical reasoning found in the development and exercise of practical reasoning found in the development and exercise of virtue is like the kind of reasoning we find in the development and exercise of practical expertise. (2011, 169)

These theories of virtue are intellectualist because they identify virtuous activity as an excellence in practical reasoning. This kind of intellectualist approach would exclude non-intellectualist theories of virtue, such as sentimentalist ones. It also excludes non-eudaimonist theories that do not define virtue in terms of happiness. Therefore, I use the word “neutral” instead of “agnostic” because I do not think that there is nothing known or can be known about a theory of virtue. Like others, I have eudaimonist and intellectualist commitments. At the same time, there are many different kinds of theories of virtue in this category. So, I am neutral about a theory of virtue, but technically not agnostic, since I only think of it in eudaimonist and intellectualist terms.

My primary goal in this introductory chapter is to motivate the project. Before I argue for my view, it is important to investigate the dispute between the two approaches, since the Neo-Stoic objection to the traditional Aristotelian approach has motivated renewed interest in the topic. In §2, I examine the complaint from Annas that renews interest in the ancient dispute for contemporary virtue ethics. Her main point is that if we think about what we want from a virtue ethical theory, then we should accept a Stoic approach to happiness because it is more palatable. Annas worries that the Aristotelian focus on favorable circumstances makes it elitist and relativistic. However, I argue that she fails to identify what is really at stake in the dispute between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches, since they share more common ground than one would first think. So, I examine these objections, as well as responses available to both approaches. In §3, I introduce my nontraditional sufficiency thesis. At this stage, I offer a guiding example and a rough sketch. I also offer a sketch of how I am going to argue for this thesis by describing the contents of the dissertation body chapters.

§2. What do we want from a Virtue Ethical Theory?

In this section, first, I will introduce the complaint and unpack it into two related issues for the Aristotelian tradition: elitism and relativism. These are classic objections to virtue ethics largely, according to Annas, because of Aristotle’s legacy and his focus on favorable

circumstances. Second, I will explain common virtue ethical responses to elitism and relativism. These were common objections to the resurgence of virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory and virtue ethicists offered response that sometimes cut across Aristotelian and Stoic traditions.

There is something compelling about the kind of virtue ethical theory Annas has in mind. For Annas, a Stoic theory is equally accessible to both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Even though Epictetus is enslaved in the most miserable circumstances, he can be just as virtuous and happy as Marcus Aurelius who is lucky enough to be the emperor of Rome. Although the Aristotelian approach has long been the default for virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory, Annas thinks that its focus on circumstances makes happiness inaccessible to people living in less fortunate circumstances such as Epictetus and that is a problem.

Probably the biggest advantage of the stronger [Stoic] view is its stronger claim to universality. Living virtuously is required for flourishing – and nobody will fail at this for reasons which are beyond their control or arbitrary. It is open to anyone to live virtuously given the circumstances of life which they have, and so the poor and ill can flourish as well as the rich and healthy. Epictetus the slave and Marcus Aurelius the emperor can both equally well try to flourish by living virtuously; indeed we know that the emperor found the slave's book helpful. It is one of the most attractive features of the Stoic version of virtue ethics that it is universal in this way, and thus appears more like ethical theories like Kant's with emphasis on the thought that living virtuously makes us members of a moral community in which everyone is an equal member no matter what the circumstances of their actual lives. (2005, 27)

For Annas, the Stoic approach makes virtue and happiness universally applicable to everyone. Her complaint is that an Aristotelian approach does not. This is because circumstances exclude some from achieving the goal of happiness. She asks whether it is “good enough for an ethical theory to tell us that virtue is the only way to flourish, but that we may fail to flourish because of factors about human nature which are not our fault and which our rationality is powerless to alter?” (2005, 20). On her view, it is reasonable to expect that the theory's demands will guarantee its goal of happiness. If they do not, the problem is that the theory places unfair demands on its practitioners. She also claims that “we expect that an ethical theory must be universal, by which I mean, fairly minimally, that it must be applicable equally to everyone, with no arbitrariness as to what beings are left outside it” (2005, 20-1). What Annas seems to have in mind is that Aristotle's ethical theory is somehow not equally applicable to everyone, since it arbitrarily excludes some people who are unlucky. The worry seems to be that his ethical theory only applies to those lucky enough to have the requisite circumstances for happiness. Even the most virtuous person may fail to flourish if her life is marred by bad luck.

Annas's complaint about the Aristotelian necessity of circumstances can be unpacked into two primary categories of criticism, elitism and relativism. There are also different versions of each objection that need to be clarified. Although the motivation for the Stoic approach is, at least in part, to assuage these worries about life's circumstances, the advantage is not clear. Annas suggests that these worries apply specially to the Aristotelian approach (1996, 243-247), but I think many apply similarly to both approaches.

Elitism

The elitism objection involves an underlying concern for universality. For Annas, a Stoic virtue ethical theory is accessible to everyone in the sense that there are no external constraints⁷ to virtue and happiness. It is true that the Stoic approach has a certain advantage in that the Aristotelian must accept some degree of elitism insofar as some circumstances outside of the agent's control is necessary for happiness. However, there are different kinds of elitism, and it is not clear that an Aristotelian approach is damned to elitism in the more pernicious sense. We can make a distinction between *essential elitism* about one's person, where only some kinds of people have the potential to flourish regardless of contingencies, and *moral luck elitism*, where contingencies may prevent some people from flourishing.⁸ Essential elitism is about the person, while moral luck elitism is about the world. For example, if a theory excludes people who are female, then the theory is essentially elitist, but if a theory excludes people who contract some infectious disease, then it is moral luck elitist.⁹ The Aristotelian approach seems only committed to elitism with respect to moral luck.¹⁰

In addition, there is a way in which both the Stoic and Aristotelian approaches might be essentially elitist with respect to rationality. The *intellectual elitism* objection is that virtue and happiness are only accessible to human beings with some minimum threshold of rationality. For example, Stoic and Aristotelian approaches preclude non-rational animals and humans with severe cognitive disabilities. In other situations, a person's environment may simply be deficient in opportunities for the development and exercise of the virtues. Annas uses the example that people living in extreme poverty are unlikely to be virtuous, though a deficit in external conditions does not imply a deficit in capacity, if those conditions were to obtain (2011, 31). So too, if someone is always on the brink of starvation, with only access to a limited amount of unhealthy food, it is unlikely that she will develop into a temperate person. If someone's parents

⁷ A reader might wonder about the role of "internal constraints" such as irrational impulses. This question depends on what we mean by "internal" and "external" constraints. I think that this distinction is unclear for Annas, given how she describes the difference. So, I cannot answer questions about the distinction between so-called internal and external dimensions until we know what those dimensions are. I develop this objection in Chapter 2. As I will explain in Chapter 3 (and develop in Chapter 4), my preferred meaning of "external" refers to outside of the power of choice. Therefore, an irrational impulse would be external insofar as it is outside of one's control. It would also be internal insofar that it is inside of one's control. For example, someone can make efforts to control her verbal tic. In this case, some aspects of the tic are under her control. However, not all aspects are under her control, since there the impulse of her tic is outside of her control (which, in turn, she has to make an effort to control).

⁸ The distinction is taken from Daniel C. Russell's discussion of elitism in Aristotle's ethical theory (2012). However, he defines the two kinds of elitism as primary (essential) and secondary (moral luck). In turn, his distinction comes from Warren (1977), who makes a similar distinction between forms of sexism in hiring practices.

⁹ On the traditional Aristotelian approach, given Aristotle's interpretation of the Priam example, someone is excluded on the basis of bad luck. This is moral luck elitism. On the traditional Stoic approach, given the assumption that Epictetus and James Stockdale remain virtuous and happy, they are not excluded. This is not elitist.

¹⁰ Russell argues that Aristotle proper may be committed to essential elitism because of specific claims about great-scaled virtues (EN.4.2-3), but that Neo-Aristotelians can still adopt Aristotle's general structure and read away the essentially elitist claims without sacrificing anything central to the approach.

trained her to nurture irrational fear and stifle confidence, she is unlikely to develop courage. And so on. As Julia Driver argues:

Virtue must be accessible – to those who are not wise but kind; to those who had the misfortune to grow up in repressive environments that warped their understanding, yet who are capable of showing the appropriate compassionate sort of responses to human suffering. (2001, 54)

For Driver, there is a class of intuitively virtuous people who lack access to the resources necessary for developing the proper intellectual dispositions for virtue. Intellectual elitism may bleed from essential into moral luck elitism in that flourishing is accessible only to people with the moral luck to have good parents and teachers of virtue, for example, to develop their rationality. In other words, elitism about someone's rational capacity to act virtuously could also be elitism about the circumstances of her upbringing. Intellectual elitism undermines the Stoic claim to universality, since a Stoic approach excludes people who are not intellectually elite.

A closely related worry is that rationality puts not only unfair, but also excessive psychological demands on its practitioners. Both Aristotelian and Stoic approaches are open to an *intellectual demandingness* objection, since they are both intellectualist in that virtuous activity is by definition an excellence of rational activity. This objection is related to elitist since not everyone is born with natural cognitive aptitude and an environment to morally develop that aptitude. For Driver, the constraints of the intellect, such as having the right knowledge and performing the right deliberative process, can be overly demanding. One of her paradigm examples is *Huckleberry Finn* (2001, 51-5). Huck clearly has the wrong beliefs about Jim's freedom. He does not view freedom as a moral value for Jim. In fact, Jim's freedom depends on what Huck takes to be morally wrong, a kind of theft of property. Huck therefore feels guilty not just for helping Jim, but also for not fulfilling his duty to turn Jim into the proper authorities. Huck has what the modern reader can see is mistaken conception about moral value. Driver's argument is that the intellectual component of virtue, which Huck lacks, sets the bar too high. She thinks Huck should qualify as virtuous because he was nonetheless disposed to assist Jim. Although Huck is a controversial example, Driver also argues for a class of "virtues of ignorance" including modesty, blind charity, trust, impulsive courage, and some forms of forgiveness. Her case is that these are virtues which require an epistemic defect, and therefore serve as intuitive counterexamples to intellectualist virtue ethical theories.

Relativism

Although elitism is her primary concern, a related worry is that the theory will bleed into some kind of relativism. For both the Aristotelian and Stoic traditions, virtue is embedded in naturalistic contexts.¹¹ The idea is that the virtues are robust character traits which must be

¹¹ There is, however, conceptual space for accounts of virtue that are not embedded in natural contexts. For example, for some Platonic or religious accounts of virtue may lie in abstract concepts that are held constant regardless of one's local contexts. For Aristotelian and Stoic approaches, the theory must be context-embedded given the shared commitment to naturalism. I address this issue in Chapter 2.

developed, at least in part, through moral education. Virtue ethicists generally share the view that moral education “always takes place in an embedded context” (Annas 2011, 21). Learning to be virtuous is contextual, not abstract. We are born into a certain family structure, go to and are shaped by a specific schools, perhaps church, work, sports, friends, and so on. The relativism question, according to Annas, asks “how people brought up to be virtuous in a given embedded context can come to be critical of that very context” (2011, 54).¹² For example, imagine two people who learn about courage, one in a war culture and the other in a pacifist one. Surely, their perspectives on courage will differ greatly. The worry is that since virtue depends on the agent’s circumstances, agents from different societies could have very different or even incompatible conceptions of virtue. For one, the proper reaction to insult might be violence, while, for the other, violence might be an overreaction to an insult.

The relativism objection applies to both traditions, but Annas suggests that the Aristotelian tradition seems especially vulnerable to the objection. She specifically makes reference to Aristotle’s ideas on slavery:

As far as most people were concerned [in Aristotle’s culture], there had always been slavery and there was no reason to think it would not always be there. Aristotle relies on this thought when he says that slavery is natural’ something so ubiquitous must have some basis in nature.

The Roman Stoics, however, came to disagree with Aristotle. Virtuous people, they hold, belong to the universal community of rational beings ... interacting as members of a community ... owner and slave realize that the barriers of between them are completely conventional. (2011, 58-9)

Like other critics of Aristotle, Annas attributes Aristotle’s vulnerability to relativism to his apparent bias for *endoxa*, “reputable opinions of the many or the wise” (1996, 243).¹³ Aristotle may have been overly impressed by his own local contexts, and so Aristotle’s critics may tend to see virtue ethical theories in the Aristotelian tradition as overly conservative (in that it is relative to Ancient Greek culture) or overly flexible and thereby relative to one’s own culture and contexts. For Annas, the Aristotelian approach is relativist because local circumstances play too much of a role in shaping what it means to be virtuous. Both traditions are based in conventional local contexts and both claim that the virtuous person’s rationality allows her to escape her local traditions. So, the difference between the two approaches with respect to the relativism objection consists in degree. The Stoic tradition has greater immunity, according to Annas, since it relies less on local traditions and more on the power of virtuous rationality to criticize those traditions.

¹² There is a sense in which any ethical theory could provide a basis for criticizing its local contexts, by criticizing those who do not act in accordance with the theory. However, the kind of criticism Annas and I have in mind here is in a sense “internal” to virtue ethical theory. The issue is whether the theory has the conceptual resources to explain how someone who adopts the values and norms of the theory, which are themselves context-embedded in the local, could be in a position to criticize those very norms and values. I thank Bill Talbott for pointing out this potential confusion that readers of Annas might have between so-called internal and external criticism of cultural contexts.

¹³ Also see Hardie (1980, 120), Gurthrie (1981, 370), and Urmson (1988, 62).

Therefore, it is important to note that the relativism concern is not merely that the local contexts will have too much influence on the development of virtue. Rather, it is a problem of negotiating two extremes. On the one hand, the local contexts may play too large of a role, and so undermine the efficacy of rationality. If rationality cannot genuinely criticize the local contexts, the theory seems to be grounded in little more than local norms (with superfluous virtue vocabulary). Different cultures would have very different or even incompatible accounts of the virtues. On the other, the account of rationality cannot transcend the world; it cannot be independent from time and space. Rather, it must be context-embedded. For both Aristotelians and Stoics, rationality must develop from local contexts, but also be powerful enough to criticize those contexts so as not to bleed into wholesale relativism. Thus, the objection seems to reveal a deeper worry about virtue ethical theories maintaining a balance between some universal standard for ethical evaluation, and flexibility of that evaluation.

The deeper worry is perhaps expressed most clearly by Gary Watson who argues that virtue ethical theories (based in rationality, defined as an excellence in human nature) are either morally indeterminate or question-begging. The theory is morally indeterminate if it is unable to say that being a good gangster is incompatible with being a good human being; it begs the question if it assumes that the two are incompatible (Watson 1990, 165-6). Rationality, as a theoretical mechanism, will either be too open ended and fail to give us the conclusions we want from a virtue ethical theory, or it will be overly conservative, in that it will make self-fulfilling assumptions about the nature of rationality.

§2.1 Common Ground between Approaches

Elitism

There is an obvious sense in which the Aristotelian approach yields elitist results in that it favors the lucky. But the approach is happy to accept this conclusion. If someone is unable to gain even a modest amount of favorable circumstances, say due to exceedingly impoverished circumstances, then she might be unable to exercise virtue and live a happy life. At the same time, it seems that the Stoic approach may be able to accept a similar line of reasoning, at least in the most extreme cases. Can the Stoic approach include *any* circumstances?

In response to Driver's objection of intellectual elitism, Annas claims:

We do not expect people raised on garbage dumps outside a Third World megalopolis to be kind and generous ... Their environment has obviously lacked the opportunities to learn and do these things. (2011, 31)

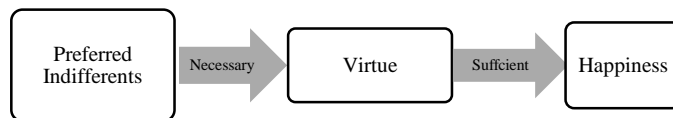
She also claims elsewhere,

Of course there are some situations where humans are so reduced by starvation that they do think of eating as the other animals do, but these are situations so desperate that considerations of living well have to recede. (2005, 23)

This suggests that some minimal conditions must obtain for considerations of living well to be applicable. Although Annas holds that properly living one's life is sufficient for virtue and happiness, she also seems to accept that some external opportunities are necessary for properly living one's life. Her considered position on moral luck elitism is not clear, but it seems at least possible that there is some common response open to the Stoic approach.

This version of the Stoic approach is puzzling. Why isn't Annas's Neo-Stoic view incoherent? On the one hand, virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness, so no circumstances are necessary; on the other, in severely impoverished circumstances, it is impossible for virtuous people to be happy, so virtue is not sufficient. Annas is aware of this tension and suggests that others can mine the ancient Stoic account of preferred indifferents to resolve it (1996, 240-241).¹⁴ For the Stoics, virtue is the only thing that is good; virtue and happiness are the same thing in this way, in terms of value. On the Stoic account of practical reasoning, virtue is rationally chosen. But then how do they account for the rational choice between more or less favorable circumstances (such as health over illness)? The idea is that goods are neither good nor bad, but indifferent. They are not rationally *chosen*, but instead naturally *selected*. On this picture, virtue and "preferred indifferents" are not the same kind of value and so cannot be compared; only virtue is good. Figure 3 below is a sketch of the Stoic approach to be developed. At least minimal preferred indifferents are necessary for virtue and virtue is sufficient for happiness. Even if circumstances, *qua* preferred indifferents, are not valuable, properly speaking, they still bear some sort of reduced value; for, if not, the Stoic approach would be committed to the *reductio* that, all things being equal, it is no better to be healthy than sick.

Figure 3: Another Stoic Approach



In addition, Aristotelian and Stoic approaches can criticize Driver's arguments directly. Recall that Driver's Huckleberry Finn example purports to show someone who falls well short of the intellectual requirements for virtuous activity, but is nonetheless virtuous. In response, both Hursthouse (1999, 151-3) and Annas (2011, 31) agree that Huck is not a good example of virtue. *Pace* Driver, it is not clear whether the intellectual standards for virtue are overly or appropriately high. Huck's virtuous activity seems morally deficient in some very serious ways. For example, is there something wrong with his belief that helping Jim escape is tantamount to stealing property? In this case, it seems that Huck's intellectual deficits are serious moral deficits; the belief that Jim is property instead of a person tarnishes the activity of helping Jim escape. If this is right, then Driver fails to offer a genuine counterexample. Her case against intellectualism in virtue ethics depends on intuitive counterexamples, like Huck. She also argues that there are many intuitively plausible cases of virtues that entail some sort of epistemic defect.

¹⁴ Annas points us to Becker (1998), which I examine in the next chapter.

Her most famed “virtue of ignorance” is modesty, which she thinks requires an *underestimation* of oneself (2001, 18).

Consider the character trait of modesty. Albert Einstein would fail to be modest about his intelligence, if he has an accurate self-estimation, since he is genuinely smarter than most people. The example is supposed to show that an underestimation of one’s worth is a necessary condition for modesty because if Einstein were to correctly estimate his worth, then it would be impossible for him to be modest. If someone asks him if he is the smartest person in the world (and he correctly thinks that he is), then he cannot be modest by saying, “I am the smartest person in the world.” That is not modest. He also cannot be modest by saying that “I am not the smartest person in the world” since he would be misrepresenting his assessment. That would be false modesty.

Driver’s critics may either reject that her virtues of ignorance are in fact virtues or they may argue that, when properly described, virtues like modesty are actually guided by rationality and entail no epistemic defect. For example, Einstein could de-emphasize his intelligence (Ridge 2000) or put it into the proper context of “aspirational standards” (Smith 2008), while still maintaining an accurate self-estimation. These are options for any intellectualist virtue ethical theory, Aristotelian or Stoic.

Although Annas objects that it lacks universality because it requires circumstances outside of the virtuous person’s control, the Aristotelian approach has an alternative claim to universality that might resemble the Stoic approach in some respects. The Stoic claim to universality deemphasizes (or, perhaps, eliminates) the role of circumstances. Supporters of the Aristotelian approach can also defend the role of circumstances as non-elitist. For example, Annas considers an argument, which she credits to both Rosalind Hursthouse and Stephen M. Gardiner:

Aristotelian forms of virtue ethics, it can be claimed, are universal in that it is true for everyone that living virtuously is necessary for flourishing; everyone has the same rationale for adopting the theory. The unlucky, it is true, may fail to flourish because of factors other than virtue, but even the unlucky are better off, if they live virtuously, than the non-virtuous or vicious; for, since virtue is necessary for happiness, these people do not flourish however lucky or unlucky they are. Thus the necessity thesis can make a reasonable demand of everyone. (2005, 21)¹⁵

Annas could have also attributed this view to Terrence Irwin. He claims,

Happy people can lose their happiness, but retain their virtue, and therefore will remain happier than they would be if they had retained the other goods without virtue. (2007, 214)

Yet, Annas is skeptical of this Aristotelian claim to universality for two reasons. First, she claims that the Aristotelian must argue “that the unlucky can flourish to the extent that they are virtuous” (2005, 21). How does virtue make an unlucky person live a better life? For Annas, it is

¹⁵ This view is a version of the traditional Aristotelian approach and is consistent with Figure 2.

unreasonable for a theory to demand virtuous activity, if there is no guarantee that an unlucky, but virtuous life, will be happy.¹⁶ For Annas, if an ethical theory asks you to be virtuous, then it is only fair for it to guarantee your happiness in return. So, in order to meet her concerns, she thinks it is incumbent on an Aristotelian approach to make this guarantee. Second, Annas questions whether the unlucky virtuous person is better off than the lucky non-virtuous person. Even if virtue is not sufficient for happiness, it must be “powerful enough to make you better off than the non-virtuous with external goods, even when you lack those external goods” (2005, 21). Recall the paradigm case of virtuous Priam who suffers unlucky circumstances. For Annas, in order to avoid elitism, the Aristotelian approach must be able to explain why Priam is happier than someone who lacks virtue but has good luck. Compare Priam to someone who lives a luxurious life without living virtuously. Annas suggests that the Aristotelian approach must accept that the non-virtuous, lucky person is happier and, therefore, the approach is elitist.

In response to Annas’s skepticism, the Aristotelian approach has further recourse. For her first worry, one might object that Annas is asking the Aristotelian approach to guarantee too much for its practitioners. Why must the theory guarantee that the virtuous person will be happy? Everyone shares the universal rationale to be virtuous, to be happier than they would be otherwise, regardless of whether being virtuous guarantees happiness. This is a kind of universality for the Aristotelian approach to claim. Furthermore, it is not clear that the Stoic approach can make a stronger claim to universality because it is not clear that it can guarantee happiness in extremely impoverished circumstances. According to Annas, in extreme examples, the Stoic approach might not guarantee happiness either.

The Aristotelian approach can claim that being virtuous makes you happier than you would be otherwise, even if being virtuous does not fully guarantee happiness. For example, there is a theme in ancient eudaimonism that living virtuously brings about better circumstances because it is a kind of reasoning that helps you deal with the world properly (e.g., see *Euthydemus* 278-382). This could be the case even if, for example, an agent is marred in one respect, such as bad health. Here, the unlucky but virtuous person would have skills for dealing well with her struggles and finding ways to live happier with the disease than she would have otherwise. By contrast, a non-virtuous person battling cancer would lack the skills to deal with circumstances. For example, the non-virtuous person might feel angry at the world and isolate herself into depression.

In addition, the Aristotelian approach can argue that virtue benefits the possessor by unifying her moral psychology. All things being equal, if someone’s life is marred by bad luck, she is happier if she is virtuous than if not. This is because the unlucky virtuous person’s moral psychology is not fragmented. By contrast, an unlucky non-virtuous person, say who lies and steals in the face of tragedy, will have a disharmonious psychology, and may for example feel the extra pains of guilt. For example, imagine that Priam were vicious. Wouldn’t he be unhappier

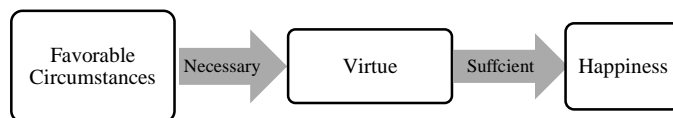
¹⁶ When commenting on this chapter’s exegesis of Annas’ argument, Gardiner’s verbal response is that it is reasonable for the guarantee to simply be that it is better to be virtuous than vicious or non-virtuous, not that an unlucky, but virtuous life, will be happy. Although I agree with Gardiner, I also respond by trying to explain how it might be better to be virtuous than vicious or non-virtuous.

than he would have been otherwise? If he cared only about being rich, powerful, and famous, rather than being virtuous, the tragedy would make him unhappier than it did in the story. This is a line of argument about virtue and a unified moral psychology is a common in virtue ethical literature and something Stoics would likely accept.¹⁷

In response to Annas’s second worry, it is not clear that the Aristotelian approach is committed to the claim that favorable circumstances provide an independent benefit to the virtuous person’s life. Rather, the necessity thesis only seems committed to the claim that circumstances are a necessary component of the virtuous person’s happiness. I think the more plausible interpretation is that the contribution of circumstances to happiness is dependent on being virtuous and therefore improves the virtuous person’s life, but not the non-virtuous person’s life. So the Aristotelian necessity thesis could argue both that happiness consists entirely in the exercise of virtue, but also that goods are necessary for being virtuous. This version of the Aristotelian necessity thesis is distinction from the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis because it claims that some favorable circumstances are necessary for being virtuous (even if being virtuous is sufficient for being happy).

By way of analogy, my preferred view about happiness is similar to the Kantian view that only the goodwill is unconditionally valuable, though other things may have conditional value. In addition to Kantian, this kind of view also has Socratic credentials. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates claims that the proper function of virtue is to use circumstances well, so those circumstances depends on virtue for their value (281e). A circumstance without a virtuous person’s activity cannot be valuable. This is because the non-virtuous person cannot use it well. Virtuous activity involves the proper use of circumstances. For example, if a non-virtuous person were to come into a large amount of money, say by winning the lottery, she might become overly miserly or decadent, which would make her unhappy. By contrast, the virtuous person would use the money well, say by using it for admirable causes. Like these descriptions of Kant and Socrates, an Aristotelian may hold that circumstances are only valuable in their relation to virtue.¹⁸ So this version of the Aristotelian approach has a very strong, somewhat Kantian, claim to universality. It is also compatible with an exegetically difficult claim Aristotle makes, that virtue –not fortune– controls happiness, but good fortune is necessary for happiness (EN.1.10.1100b8-11).¹⁹

Figure 4: Another Aristotelian Approach



¹⁷ See Annas (2011, 167-168); Stocker (1976).

¹⁸ Korsgaard (1986) identifies the same affinity between Kant and Aristotle’s claims about value, namely that they make similar distinctions between conditional and unconditional value.

¹⁹ See Irwin (2007, 144-145).

The line of argument discussed here is to be further explored in the dissertation, where I develop more nuanced versions of Figure 4.

At this point, the reader will notice that figures 3 and 4 are very similar. They both claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Also, they both claim that some favorable circumstances are necessary for virtue. If they are different, they are different in terms of how the Stoic approach accounts for preferred indifferents and how that might be different from the Aristotelian account of favorable circumstances. Given that two traditions are open to interpretations that blur the distinction, it is not clear how Annas can argue that one has an advantage over the other. Parsing out those issues is one of the main tasks of Chapter 2.

Relativism

The common response to the relativism objection is that while rationality is embedded in local contexts, it is also powerful enough to criticize and revise those contexts. Nussbaum (1993) and Annas both advance this kind of argument. Annas makes the analogy that learning to become virtuous is like joining a community of virtuous people. This is because people who come to have a certain virtue will “share certain reasons, feelings, and attitudes in a way that renders them distinctive” (2011, 55). So when someone develops a virtue, “we can see the person as now belonging to two communities” (2011, 55): her local community and the community of virtuous people formed by distinctive reasons, feelings, attitudes, and activities. And if the members of her local community are not virtuous, she may well detach herself from the community. This is how radical critical reflection of one’s local contexts is possible, and therefore why Annas’s account of virtue does not collapse into relativism. She claims there is nothing mysterious about criticizing one’s local contexts, as we all do it to some extent. The Aristotelian and Stoic approaches agree that rationality must be both context-embedded and strong enough to criticize our local contexts. Therefore, Annas appropriates the Neo-Aristotelian view that rationality is powerful enough to overcome natural constraints of the world such as impoverishment or oppressive sociopolitical norms (2011, 52-65).

The Aristotelian and Stoic approaches have a similar general response to the relativism objection, but their responses might differ in the details. Nussbaum has a seminal article advancing an Aristotelian response to relativism. The argument is similar to Annas’s in that she gains traction off the critical reflection of one’s local norms. However, Nussbaum’s account is different in that she holds the structure of the theory and the virtue vocabulary constant. Her account claims virtue is universal in the “features of humanness that lie beneath all local traditions” (1993, 705). There are spheres of human experience where it is possible to do well or err. These spheres of human experience are inescapable, regardless of local features, and are in that sense objective. For example, the sphere of temperance is inescapable because people in any culture must deal with gustatory and sexual desire. She claims that it is the task of practical ethics “to search for the best specification” from one’s local perspective (1993, 707). The spheres are constant, but the specification for filling in those spheres can vary greatly by local contexts. We may have radically different specifications of the same virtue, with different reasons,

feelings, attitudes, and activities, for example, Greek *megalopsuchia* versus Christian humility (Nussbaum 1993, 709).

While Nussbaum takes the spheres as basic and the specifications as open-ended, Annas's account seems to assume certain specifications. Her account takes the distinctive reasons, feelings, attitudes, and activities as basic. Annas may have a stronger response to relativism in that Nussbaum's account seems too open-ended, if putatively incompatible specifications of the same sphere qualify as virtuous. A Greek *megalopsuchos* and humble Christian are unlikely to share the same reasons, feelings, attitudes, and activities. Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists, such as Hursthouse, claim that the best way to hold the line between universality and flexibility to local contexts is to adopt a Neurathian procedure (1999, 165-6). The metaphor is the ship of Neurath, whose planks can be replaced one by one, just as we can replace our individual beliefs in our belief sets. Nussbaum has a similar procedure she calls "perceptive equilibrium," which is loosely analogous to John Rawls' reflective equilibrium in that it involves an oscillation in reflection between the principles of the theory and the moral particulars in one's local contexts (1990, 183). There is little point in imagining the objective commitment in a vacuum, outside of one's local perspective, since there is no view from nowhere, and so we must assume a perspective about how to fill in each sphere. On the Aristotelian approach, this perspective is embedded in the actual world's local contexts. The Stoic approach has similar commitments. But unlike Nussbaum's position, Annas's depends on a very abstract account of what the virtues essentially consist in – what the members of the virtuous communities share. The virtue vocabulary is not needed to make this move. For example, instead of thinking about abstract virtuous communities of distinctive reasons, feelings, attitudes, and activities, the critic of local contexts may think about some abstract principle that tells her slavery is wrong. Her account is Kantian in that what is shared between the members of the virtuous community is not tied to, but instead transcends, the actual world.²⁰ Virtuous people all share certain qualities, regardless of their spatial or temporal locations.

Aristotelian versus Stoic Approaches

In short, Annas frames the Stoic approach as an advantage over the Aristotelian one because of her worries concerning the circumstances of one's life. This worry can be unpacked into two main kinds of objection, elitism and relativism. Although she suggests that these objections are special to an Aristotelian approach, upon closer inspection, there are many versions of these objections, and it is not clear that the Stoic approach fares any better. For the elitism concern, there are three objections (moral luck elitism, essential elitism, and intellectual elitism). Although Annas suggests that the Aristotelian approach is guilty of moral luck elitism, the intellectual elitism objection shows that moral luck elitism applies to both approaches and there are overlapping responses to moral luck elitism. For relativism, the objection is actually

²⁰ There is a sense in which the Aristotelian approach might also be abstract, for example, in Nussbaum's spheres of human experience (1993, 705-70) or Hursthouse's naturalistic ends (1999, Chapter 9). However, these concepts are non-abstract in that they consist in the actual world and are embedded in local contexts. By contrast, Annas's description of what the members of the virtuous community share transcends space, time, and all local contexts.

about negotiating between two extremes and the Stoic approach appropriates the Aristotelian approach's strategy for negotiation. Given the way that Annas describes the Stoic approach, while it shares the same general strategy as the Aristotelian one, it errs towards an extreme because it seems to assume something universal about virtuous activity that cuts across all local contexts.

§3.1. A Nontraditional Sufficiency Thesis and Summary of Body Chapters

My aim in this dissertation is twofold. First, I will clarify the dispute between virtue ethicists about the role of circumstances in happiness. Second, I will argue for a nontraditional sufficiency thesis. In this section, I offer a paradigm example for and brief sketch of my case. Next, I summarize the content of the dissertation chapters.

Imagine that a tragic natural disaster or public health crisis has stolen your loved ones. This is what happened recently to [Gaye Dumbai](#), the subject of a *New York Times* profile, who lost thirteen family members to the Ebola epidemic of 2014 (Cooper, 2016). Is it possible for Mr. Dumbai be happy? On the traditional Stoic approach, happiness consists entirely in living virtuously (Figure 1). Virtuous activity is *sufficient* for happiness. So, favorable circumstances are unnecessary. It is possible for Mr. Dumbai to live a happy life even after losing so much to tragedy. This is because it is possible for him to behave virtuously; losing a family is not the sort of thing that can undermine virtuous activity. On the traditional Aristotelian approach, happiness consists in two things (Figure 2). Virtuous activity and some favorable circumstances are both *necessary* for happiness, but neither one of them is alone sufficient. It could be possible for Mr. Dumbai to behave virtuously (depending on the theory of virtue), but it is impossible for him to be happy, since his life was marred by tragedy.

However, I doubt it is possible for him to be virtuous in the first place, let alone happy. At the very least, it would be impossible on any theory of virtue that claims his family is necessary for his exercise of virtue (e.g., interpersonal virtues). My project is to argue for a *nontraditional sufficiency thesis*: virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and some circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. This view satisfies two intuitions from the ancient dispute that might at first seem in tension. Happiness depends on favorable circumstances, and virtuous activity guarantees happiness.

I will argue that this kind of activity depends on the world. Specifically, I will argue that virtuous activity depends on circumstances in as many as three possible ways, embodiment, embeddedness, and extension: virtuous activity depends on the body and its interactions with the world, it depends on specific contexts in the world, and aspects of the world are part of virtuous activity. The reason why Mr. Dumbai is unhappy is that he loses the ability to act virtuously with respect to his family. Without his family, the means to exercise some interpersonal virtues are now absent. For example, before the outbreak, he served as the “de facto [marriage] counselor” for his sister and her husband. He would spend hours on his now dormant mobile phone listening to their marital strife and sharing whatever relationship wisdom he had to offer to some of the

people he cared for most. Mr. Dumbai no longer has people with whom to share these kinds of relationships. His sister was to his interpersonal virtuous activity.

From the outset, I would like to make two quick clarifications. First, although some of my intuitions are more Stoic and others are more Aristotelian, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis will be neutral about the dispute between the two traditions. My thesis has elements of both traditions. It is similar to the traditional Aristotelian approach in that it says that favorable circumstances are necessary for happiness and it is similar to the traditional Stoic one in that it says that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness.

Second, I am actually neutral about whether Mr. Dumbai can engage in virtuous activity. This is because I am neutral about theories of virtue. My skepticism about his prospects for happiness is just my knee-jerk intuition based on the kinds of theories of virtue I find most plausible. Strictly speaking, in most examples, I do not know whether people can be virtuous on the basis of their circumstances, since the theory of virtue is unspecified. Whether Mr. Dumbai loses the ability to engage in certain kinds of virtuous activity depends on how we define virtuous activity, which, in turn, depends on our definition of virtue, and how we individuate and describe the virtues. It would be possible for a theory of virtue to claim that interpersonal relationships are irrelevant to virtuous activity. However, this kind of theory of virtue would be an outlier and it would be difficult for me to be sympathetic to it. In addition, it could be possible for Mr. Dumbai to regain the ability to engage in interpersonal virtuous activity by developing relationships with new people. This, again, would depend on the theory of virtue. Besides a commitment to eudaimonism and intellectualism, I am neutral with respect to a theory of virtue.

My nontraditional sufficiency thesis is situated in recent literature in virtue ethics on the role of circumstances in happiness. Below is a summary of each of the body chapters.

§3.2. Summary of Chapter 2

Until recently, the traditional Stoic approach was not taken seriously. It seems farfetched to claim that happiness is possible in the worst circumstances. Annas is an exception for suggesting the revival of the view in contemporary virtue ethics. In this chapter, I examine her distinction between the two approaches. This distinction is based off of the historical dispute between Aristotle and the Stoics. For Annas, this kind of distinction could help us develop a Neo-Stoic account, which she has not yet developed. So, I also explain the historical dispute and explore options for developing the two approaches on that basis.

To start, Annas often distinguishes between what she calls the “living” of one’s life (i.e., one’s exercise of virtue or, roughly, of skilled rationality) and its “materials” (i.e., the circumstances of one’s life, such as one’s family, society, and environment). For Annas, the traditional Aristotelian approach combines these two elements, while the Stoic one keeps them distinct and further claims that only the living of one’s life is relevant to virtue and happiness. That is, living one’s life well is sufficient for happiness, regardless of the circumstances (or “materials”) of one’s life. On these grounds, she favors the Stoic approach to happiness for

today's virtue ethics because it is universal in the sense that everyone can be virtuous and happy if they live their lives well. Nobody will fail to be happy due to circumstances outside of their control, since happiness consists of doing well in whatever circumstances might occur.

It is easy to object to Annas's Neo-Stoic account of happiness on the ground that she fails to draw a clear distinction between the two approaches. This is because the living of one's life obviously depends on its circumstances. For example, as Annas herself suggests, someone might find himself in conditions so impoverished that it is impossible to live virtuously and happily. So, why isn't Annas's Neo-Stoic view incoherent? On one hand, virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness, so no circumstances are necessary; on the other, in severely impoverished circumstances, it is impossible for virtuous people to be happy, so virtue is not sufficient. Annas is aware of this tension and suggests that others can mine the ancient Stoic account of preferred indifferents to resolve it. On this account, virtue is the only thing that is good (and vice is the only thing that is bad), properly speaking in terms of happiness, while everything else is indifferent, but indifferent things can be preferred or rejected on the basis of their natural advantage or disadvantage (DL. *Lives*, §102-6). For example, all things being equal, it is more advantageous to our nature to be well-fed than it is to be hungry, but it is still possible to be virtuous and happy when hungry, so being well-fed is a preferred indifferent, while being hungry is a rejected indifferent. Given the ancient account, it would be possible to live happily in the slums, since indifferent things do not make someone vicious or unhappy.

However, the historical account of preferred indifferents is unable to sustain Annas's distinction between the internal "living" and external "materials" of one's life.²¹ What is properly valuable for the ancient Stoics, virtue and happiness, depends on having the natural advantage of preferred indifferents (such as having enough food to avoid starvation). Although it is possible to be virtuous and happy in the slums without particular preferred indifferents, it is also possible for those impoverished circumstances prevent the exercise and development of living life well. For example, you could be too hungry to think. Certain external conditions must obtain for someone in order for someone to develop and maintain their activities of virtue and happiness.²² If someone grows up in severely impoverished slums, it could be impossible for her to develop

²¹ Also, it is unclear whether the historical Stoics maintained this distinction. The Stoics claim that preferred indifferents have a sort of value for their "contribution to the life in agreement" (DL. *Lives*, §105). In addition, Arius Didymus claims that preferred indifferents are "fulfilling" of happiness (AD.II.5g). See Russell (183) for a useful discussion. I address this in Chapters 2 and 3. For example, certain emotional and affective states could be preferred indifferents in the sense that they are not necessary for happiness. According to Russell, this kind of preferred indifferent could become a part of one's happiness, which, he takes it, is a subversive reading of the Stoic tradition. So, for Russell, it is not clear that the historical Stoics thought there was a good distinction between the natural advantage value of preferred indifferents and the proper value of virtuous activity. In addition, it is not clear what the distinction is supposed to be between "internal" and "external" and whether this distinction maps onto the Stoic distinction between the materials and living of one's life, which Annas embraces. As Russell will argue and I will explain, external circumstances are external in that they are at least partially outside of one's power of choice. On this definition, all preferred indifferents must be external in this sense.

²² The Stoics claim that like animals acting on impulse humans first learn to prefer indifferents on the basis of their natural advantage and then, on that ground, "reason supervenes on impulse as a craftsman" (DL. *Lives*, VII.86). The idea seems to be that practical wisdom to be virtuous will develop out of the impulse to select preferred indifferents. Outside of historical exegesis, from an intuitive perspective it seems that some preferred indifferents are necessary for the development of virtue, including the necessities for biological life, minimal health, and moral education.

generosity. If hunger tempts someone to lie and steal to avoid starvation, it could be impossible for her to maintain her living honestly. Therefore, the distinction Annas attempts to make is dubious because it is unclear how circumstances are unnecessary on her Neo-Stoic approach.

§3.3. Summary of Chapter 3

In addition to Annas, Daniel C. Russell also takes a Neo-Stoic account of happiness seriously, but ultimately favors a Neo-Aristotelian one.²³ First, I explain Russell's reframing of the traditional dispute between Aristotle and the Stoics, as well as his favored view. Second, I criticize his account on the grounds that the way he draws the distinction is unclear.

Russell's major insight is to reframe the traditional distinction on the basis of competing conceptions of the self. In this context, the "self" refers to *prohairesis* or, roughly, the power of choice to engage in activities. Russell's updated version of the Aristotelian approach claims that the self *embodies* circumstances, while his updated Stoic self is *formalized* in that it remains distinct from circumstances. Although Russell follows Aristotle, who uses the case of Priam (EN.1.9-10), we can use the case of Mr. Dumbai to explain the distinction. Put yourself in the shoes of an Ebola survivor who lost his family to the outbreak. On Russell's *embodied* Neo-Aristotelian approach, you are unhappy because you have lost important parts of yourself. You can no longer engage in the same activities that made you virtuous and happy before the tragedy. *That* happiness is gone. Although it is possible on Russell's account for you to develop happiness again by engaging in new activities, it is also possible that you will never have the opportunity again, for example, if you die from disease or starvation. By contrast, on Russell's *formalized* Neo-Stoic account, you can be happy living after the Ebola outbreak tragedies because you do not lose a part of yourself. You are separate from your circumstances. Your virtue and happiness consist in your power of choice.

In addition to two competing conceptions of the self, Russell's Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Stoic approaches are marked by necessity and sufficiency theses. His version of embodied virtuous activity is necessary, but not sufficient, for embodied happiness. Russell leaves open the possibility that a circumstance can be embodied by one's happiness and not her virtuous activity. This idea is confusing. For example, imagine what you are going to eat for dinner tonight. This is an example of something that is embodied by virtuous activity on Russell's account, since eating food is a central part of temperate activity. Yet, he also suggests that something like your dinner could be part of your happiness and not itself part of your virtuous activity. Although Russell does not explain what he means, a charitable interpretation is that he thinks something like a delicious meal could be part of one's happiness without necessarily being part of one's virtuous activity (e.g., temperance). It might be possible to be temperate eating meager and unappealing meals, without also being happy. Russell's conception of Neo-Aristotelian happiness seems to include a non-virtuous component from favorable circumstances. There must be some secret ingredient to happiness, which Russell leaves unspecified, necessary for happiness. By contrast, on his updated Stoic account, virtuous activity that has the right formal structure is sufficient for

²³ Russell, Daniel. *Happiness for Humans*. Oxford University Press (2013).

happiness. This reflects Annas's Stoic view that "living" is sufficient. Russell accepts but does not argue for his version of Neo-Aristotelian happiness.²⁴

I am sympathetic to Russell's strategy of drawing the distinction on the basis of how one's activities are connected to the world. However, it is unclear what he means by "embodied" activity and this nebulosity blurs the distinction between his two approaches. Sometimes he uses "embodied" to refer to how the self depends on the body (207-213), at others to the "indexical" relation of the self's activities in reference to specific contexts, and others to the particular objects in one's activities becoming constitutive of the self's activity (e.g., 199.ff). For one, the meaning of "embodiment" seems to change for Russell, which makes his Neo-Aristotelian approach hard to discern. For another, it is unclear how the formalized activities grounding his Neo-Stoic account "remain distinct" from the world. If formalized activities are *disembodied* in all of the same ways he claims Neo-Aristotelian ones could be embodied, then Russell's Neo-Stoic account seems vulnerable to obvious counterexamples. As we saw with Annas's distinction, it is unclear how you can be happy when you do not have enough food to think.

§3.4. Summary of Chapter 4

The difficulty with the way Annas and Russell attempt to draw a Neo-Aristotelian vs. Neo-Stoic approach lies in how the Neo-Stoic approach could claim that circumstances are unnecessary for happiness. In this section, I propose a framework to draw the distinction and defend my non-traditional sufficiency thesis. On my proposal, circumstances are necessary for the Neo-Stoic approach, but they are necessary in a different way. I propose a "3Es framework" to describe the role of circumstances as embodied, embedded, and extended: (1E) virtuous activity and happiness depend on the body and its interactions with the world; (2E) they depend on specific contexts in the world; and (3E) aspects of the world are part of virtuous activity and happiness. The paradigm example I suggest to flesh out the 3Es framework is Aristotle's case of Milo (EN.2.6). This is a good example because it shows that 1E and 2E are uncontroversial. To be clear, I think that, if pressed, Annas and Russell would probably accept 1E and 2E for any plausible virtue ethical theory, regardless of which tradition that theory is labelled. There is no deep disagreement in virtue ethics over the first two theses.

First, Milo's temperance and happiness depends on his body: sense perception, gustatory system, physical fitness, exercise regimen, and so on. For example, Milo uses sense perception (EN.6.8) to determine that he should eat *this* particular food (EN.6.7). Like Milo, we can speculate that Mr. Dumbai's activities before the Ebola outbreak were embodied. For example, he used his auditory system to hear his sister and his vocal system to talk to her on the phone. He needs to hear the inflection in her voice figure out what she means when she describes her marital problems.

²⁴ The ground for his acceptance is unclear. Russell claims, "It is a choice I have made with some faith and much trepidation, which is I think the most that anyone can do here" (257).

Second, Milo's activities are also context-embedded, for example, in his development as a wrestler, his physical training, his available food options, and so on. The main takeaway from Aristotle's discussion is that Milo's temperance is "relative to" Milo because wrestling increases his appetite (EN.2.6). So too, your temperance is relative to you. Since you do not expend Herculean amounts of energy wrestling, you do not need to eat Herculean amounts of food. Again, like Milo, it seems that Mr. Dumbai's activities are context-embedded. He engages in interpersonal virtues, advising his sister, because of his sister's marital strife with her husband. If they did not have this marital strife, then he would care for his sister differently.

Third, the 3E thesis is more controversial. It is not widely accepted among virtue ethicists. To start, Aristotle suggests that Milo uses his perceptual abilities of his contexts to choose to eat *this* particular white meat Milo eats (EN.6.7). This passage is exegetically controversial, since Aristotle does not clarify why *this* particular is important for Milo's virtue and happiness. Perhaps Aristotle should have said that particular objects can become constitutive of his virtue and happiness. 3E claims that *this* particular becomes constitutive of his temperate and happy activities. We can depart from Aristotle's Milo example and imagine a similar character living in other contexts. On 3E, when someone falls in love and grows a family, those people become a part of his exercise of interpersonal virtues and of his happiness. Although they are external to his body, they are part of how he lives his life, just as your career and loved ones are part of your activities. For Mr. Dumbai, his sister seems to be a part of his activity. She plays a central role in the way he lives his life. If an account were to reject 3E, then the particular food and people in someone's life are not part of his activity, even if those things play a role in shaping the contexts for his activity.

What does my 3Es framework add to the discourse? One upshot is that this framework can hold the distinction between two approaches by making sense of the role of circumstances for a Neo-Stoic account. If 1-2E, then Annas's proposed Neo-Stoic vs. Neo-Aristotelian distinction (based on internal vs. external) is dubious. I claim that 1-2E is indubitably the case for Neo-Stoics and Neo-Aristotelians alike. Annas is committed to the living of one's life being embodied and are embedded in contexts. For example, the kind of disposition Milo must have with respect to his appetites depends on his body burning calories wrestling.²⁵ So, satisfying his Herculean appetite is appropriate for his temperance and happiness. But if Milo were to live in an extremely impoverished megalopolis, it may be hard to find healthy food to eat. How he lives his life depends on the availability of food, as well as other factors such as his physical training. This sort of embodiment and embeddedness are essential to Annas's Neo-Stoic account. However, her account rejects 3E because it claims that no particular circumstances are necessary for happiness.

I propose a distinction where the Neo-Stoic approach holds 1-2E, while the Neo-Aristotelian holds 1-3E. Perhaps my proposed distinction is a very charitable interpretation of Russell's distinction, since it clarifies the role of circumstances for a Neo-Stoic account. Embodiment and embeddedness are crucial for the development and maintenance of virtue on

²⁵ In some cases, the historical Stoics also seemed to believe in 1E. For example, they claimed that the virtuous person will commit suicide when his body is maimed or diseased (DL, *Lives*, 130).

either approach. On my proposed distinction, a Neo-Stoic claims that Milo's temperance and happiness depend on his body and on worldly contexts. However, what distinguishes the Neo-Aristotelian approach is that some things in Milo's world become part of his virtuous activity and happiness. When Milo falls in love and grows a family, for a Neo-Aristotelian, those people become a part of his exercise of interpersonal virtues and of his living happily. *This* particular food (EN.6.7) becomes a part of his temperance, just as *this* relationship becomes a part of his happiness. By contrast, on my Neo-Stoic approach, *these* particulars are not part of Milo's virtue and happiness. They merely provide contexts to shape how he lives his life. When tragedy takes away his relationships, my Neo-Aristotelian account claims that Milo's particular virtuous activity and happiness would no longer exist. My Neo-Stoic one claims that he can still be virtuous and happy without this particular relationship, so long as he has the minimal circumstances necessary to live virtuously and happily.

Although my 3E proposal could be seen as fleshing out what Russell, interpreted charitably, means by "embodied" virtuous activity and happiness, I disagree with the way he uses his insight in terms of his virtue ethical theory. Within my 3E definition of Neo-Aristotelian accounts of happiness, there is room for both necessity and sufficiency theses. However, I argue that if 1-3E, then a sufficiency thesis is more plausible than a necessity one. Virtuous and happy activities are embodied, embedded, and extended. Yet, Russell leaves open the possibility that virtuous activity and happiness can "embody" different circumstances. For Russell, enjoying a meal could be a part of Milo's living temperately or part of his living happily. So, it is possible for something like food to contribute to Milo's happiness without it also contributing to his temperance.

I object that separating circumstances' contribution to happiness from virtuous activity makes virtuous motivation mysterious. For Russell it is possible that the virtuous person would have to choose between virtue and happiness when asking the question, what should you have for dinner? For example, you could eat a healthy meal that contributes to your temperance and therefore also contributes to your happiness. Or, you could eat a delicious meal that would contribute to your happiness and not to your temperance. (Pick your favorite temperate and delicious foods to fill in the example.) In such cases, someone could either act non-virtuously, to aim at a circumstance relevant to happiness (e.g., a delicious meal), or act virtuously (i.e., temperately) and not aim at that circumstance. If virtuous activity for its own sake motivates you to sacrifice his happiness, then that motivational authority is mysterious. You did not choose to be temperate in order to be happy. In response to the Immoralist's Challenge ("why be virtuous?"),²⁶ Russell cannot say the answer is "because it will make you happy" since the delicious meal is a more direct route to happiness.

§3.5. Summary of Chapter 5

Although my view is that virtue is sufficient for happiness, I also argue that the virtuous person must have a minimum threshold of circumstances in order for virtuous activity to be

²⁶ See Plato's *Republic II*.

possible on any reasonable approach to happiness. By contrast, Russell suggests that even on his Neo-Aristotelian account the virtuous person could, in principle, embody any circumstances in order to live virtuously and happily.²⁷ Through examining commonsense examples of how circumstances could undermine happiness, I propose a minimum threshold. The virtuous person must have the minimum necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and some moral education to be virtuous. This is because it is impossible to be able to engage in the kinds of activities that ground virtue and happiness without these bare minimums. For example, if you go hungry, it could be impossible for you to be virtuous or happy. However, it could nonetheless be possible for you to be happy struggling to find enough food living in the slums. The three categories I identify are vague at this point, but I will explain them more fully in the chapter and it is easy to supply obvious examples. If someone does not have enough air to breathe, then she does not have the necessities for maintaining her biological life, if she does not have the ability to mentally connect concepts, then she does not have cognitive ability, and if she does not have minimal resources to learn to be virtuous, then she does not have moral education.

§3.5. Summary of Chapter 6

I conclude the dissertation by assessing the major views about the role of favorable circumstances in virtuous activity and happiness in terms of the two main concerns which motivate the dispute: elitism and relativism. The major views are the ones that fall under Annas's "living" versus "materials" distinction, Russell's "formalized" versus "embodied" distinction, and my 1-2E versus 1-3E distinction. As I argue throughout the dissertation, Annas and Russell fail in their attempt to maintain a distinction between two approaches because it is unclear how their more Stoic approach can claim that favorable circumstances are unnecessary for happiness.²⁸ So, it seems that their versions of a Stoic approach are open to objections based on the necessity of external circumstances.

Both of the views on my distinction satisfy my non-traditional sufficiency thesis. They both agree that virtuous activity guarantees happiness and that favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity, but disagree about how they are necessary. The disagreement is whether favorable circumstances are part of virtuous activity. In either case, the view captures the intuitive universality of the Stoic approach. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius can both be happy, assuming that they can both engage in virtuous activity. There is no secret ingredient that they need to go out and find in the world to make a part of happiness. My nontraditional

²⁷ The evidence is that for Russell the only explicit way in which circumstances can undermine virtuous activity and happiness is through loss. He makes no remarks about circumstances that cannot be embodied. I discuss this in greater detail in the chapter. Also, see Kraut (2013) for this interpretation of Russell. Kraut, however, has different qualms with Russell, which I do not address.

²⁸ To be clear, Russell argues in favor of two distinct approaches. One approach is a modified version of the Aristotelian approach, which he identifies as embodied. The other approach he argues in favor of is his modified version of the traditional Stoic approach, which he describes as formalized. Although Russell argues in favor of both approaches and, ultimately, favors his updated version of the Aristotelian approach, he does not argue for it over the Stoic approach. He thinks that the Stoic approach is just as compelling.

sufficiency thesis also captures the obviously true claim that happiness depends on the world. In extremely bad circumstances, virtuous activity and therefore happiness can become impossible.

Chapter Two

Annas's Framing and the Traditional Dispute:

Living versus Materials

And the poets are brought forward as witness to all these accounts. Some harp on the ease of vice as follows:

Vice in abundance is easy to get;

The road is smooth and begins beside you,

But the gods have put sweat between us and virtue,

*and a road that is long, rough, and steep.*²⁹

§1. Introduction: Annas and the Traditional Dispute

Chapter 1 argued that there is need for clarification in the traditional debate between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches. The goal of this chapter is to map the conceptual landscape between the two traditions and, in so doing, unpack Annas's distinction. She draws from the historical traditions in order to argue for a Stoic approach. However, her preferred approach is underdeveloped by her own lights. Her goal is to highlight a tension and draw a basic distinction to help us think about that tension, though the distinction needs to be filled-in by looking back at the historical antecedents of these views. The Aristotelian versus Stoic distinction is a recurring theme in her work, which she often puts in terms of the "material" of one's life contrasted with the "living" of one's life. On the one hand, she claims the Aristotelian approach identifies living a virtuous life "in terms of a particular set of circumstances" (2011, 115), which locates virtue in "what others regard as the material for virtues" (1996, 244). On the other hand, she claims that the Stoic approach makes no essential reference to the circumstances or materials for virtuous activity. As Annas puts it:

I put it in terms of material because of the usefulness here of a metaphor which is very common in ancient thinking on this topic. My practical rationality is seen as a skill or expertise which gets to work on the circumstances of my life, including of course the rest of my human nature, and makes something of it, in the way that a craftsperson makes an object from raw materials... I can try to turn my life from a mass of materials which are formless in the sense that I haven't given them form, into a product of rational thought, unified by my trying to live by certain kinds of reason and make myself into a certain kind of person, a life which I am living, rather than just taking for granted. (2005, 22)

²⁹ Glaucon from Plato's *Republic*, Book II, 364c-d, referencing Hediod's *Works and Days*.

In contrast to the material of one's life, the living of one's life is the practical rationality which gives form to circumstances, just as the sculptor gives shape to the marble. Annas identifies virtuous activity as an exercise of such practical rationality, which, she claims, is analogous to a skill, and is active and developmental by being responsive to one's circumstances (2011, 8). Therefore, she holds that the primary difference between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches lies in what she describes as a metaphysical dispute about the concept of morality, namely, whether circumstances are normatively relevant for virtuous activity and happiness. Is the living of one's life all that matters or are the materials also relevant?

As I addressed in Chapter 1, the obvious criticism of the Stoic approach is that certain materials are necessary for the living of one's life. Annas is aware of the obvious criticism and claims that the view can be revived with philosophical efforts to make the ancient Stoic account of preferred indifferents relevant to present-day virtue ethics. Therefore, I review the traditional accounts from ancient times and, while I find it plausible in many ways, it is unable to answer the obvious criticism for Annas. Even if "preferred indifferents" are not "rationally chosen" by the virtuous person, as ancient Stoicism suggests, it seems that minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for the exercise of rationality and virtue in the first place. First, I review historical Aristotle's approach to incorporating circumstances into his virtue ethical theory. Second, I review the historical Stoic's approach to circumstances. Third, I explore how they are different and how they overlap.

By reviewing the traditional approaches, I suggest that they present us with diverse options for developing accounts of how circumstances can be relevant to the theory. The ancient dispute offers a constellation of possibilities for different virtue ethical theories. Central to both approaches is the idea of acting for the sake of the fine (*ton kalon*) or, in other words, for the sake of virtue itself. Aiming at the fine is the way that skilled rationality regulates circumstances. Aristotle's strategy for incorporating circumstances is to align certain ones with the fine and, in so doing, make circumstances constitutive of virtue and happiness. The Stoics' strategy is to distinguish the fine from circumstances, such that they cannot be part of happiness, *per se*, but, at the same time, it can be rational to prefer good circumstances for their natural advantage. Nonetheless, the literature review shows that these two uses of the fine overlap and underlie different ways circumstances can be valuable in a virtue ethical theory. I identify different models for how circumstances could be connected to virtue and happiness. Yet, I do not explore them in this chapter. Instead, my reason for outlining the possibilities is to show how they can be faithfully applied to either tradition. In any case, the materials of life are necessary for the living of life.

§2. The Aristotelian Approach to Circumstances

Aristotle's virtuous person acts for the sake of the fine, or *ton kalon*, which regulates the role of goods in a happy life. Annas describes this as "a distinctive aim of action: the good person tends to go right, and the bad person to go wrong" (1996, 241). In the ancient world, whether an action is fine is an indicator for whether it is virtuous. The idea is that actions done

for the sake of virtue are fine and are also done for the sake of the fine. So the virtuous person has a distinct aim, which the non-virtuous person lacks even if the non-virtuous person so happens to do the right thing for the sake of something else such as her inclination.

Moreover, Aristotle intends for his account of *eudaimonia* to align with our commonsense understanding of happiness. So, he uses a dialectical method for constructing his virtues, which draws from *endoxa* “reputable opinions of the many or the wise” (Annas 1996, 243). According to these commonsense views, there is no sharp distinction between moral and non-moral aspects of one’s life. Appropriating the commonsense view, Aristotle’s theory requires some degree of “external goods and worldly success” (Annas 1996, 240). Therefore, we can describe the Aristotelian approach as involving what the Stoics might think of as distinct kinds of reasoning for two different ends: the fine and favorable circumstances. These two kinds of reasoning come together, since the virtuous person must deliberate about her life as a whole in order to figure out how to aim at both ends at the same time. To illustrate, Aristotle’s magnificent person must aim at both the fine as well as proper displays of wealth, while a non-virtuous person may fail to be magnificent if she only aims at “for example, a mere display of wealth” (Annas 1996, 243).³⁰ The non-virtuous person fails to aim at the fine.

According to Annas, bringing two kinds of reasoning together depends on a broader Aristotelian commitment about the metaphysics of normativity, namely, that morality is part of the actual world. Since the Aristotelian virtuous person must aim at both the fine and favorable circumstances, Annas suggests that Aristotle’s concerns about morality are fundamentally about the material of one’s life. Annas claims:

Aristotle takes morality to be a part of the world ... He holds a view of the world in which there are no deep problems of principle as to how morality fits into the world and is explained as part of the world. (1996, 247)

The thought here is that Aristotle’s descriptions of individual virtues merely mark out ways morality can be realized in the actual world, to excel in an area of human life. For example, public spending does not pick out a specific moral concern, but merely one possible set of circumstances in which someone could exercise virtue. This is why Annas claims that Aristotle identifies virtue as “what others regard as the material for virtues: dispositions for dealing with conventionally demarcated areas of life” (1996, 244).

One of the main reasons Aristotle locates morality in the actual world is that the virtuous person needs certain conditions to obtain over the course of her life in order to achieve the fine. Recall Aristotle’s claim that the happy life must be complete, which takes time (EN.1098a). In light of this requirement on happiness, Irwin states that

³⁰ A reader unfamiliar with Aristotle might ask, could a relatively impoverished person likewise be magnificent for Aristotle (by aiming at proper displays of whatever “wealth” she has)? On a strict reading of Aristotle, she cannot be virtuous because she must have lavish wealth. However, a relatively impoverished person can be generous by aiming at a proper display of whatever property she has. The difference between magnificence (EN.4.2) and generosity (EN.4.1) seems to be a matter of degree. For an illuminating discussion of this issue in Aristotle’s *EN*, see Irwin (1988).

Aristotle introduces this temporal dimension of a complete life because he recognizes a wider role for external conditions that are not in the agent's control. External conditions present the circumstances in which virtuous action results in happiness. (2007, 144)

To live a happy life, the virtuous person must not only aim at the fine, as such, but also at the circumstances that underlie her activity. The idea is that the virtuous person needs a "complete" chunk of time to carry out the projects that are important to her overall life plan, and harmonize those external conditions with her virtuous activity. This deliberative process requires, as Annas suggests, that the virtuous person aim her actions at both the fine and at circumstances. Irwin adds that one reason Aristotle requires a complete life for happiness is that time is an external factor which influences whether the virtuous person can achieve "fine things" (EN.1101a13). So, this is one way that the virtuous person can harmonize what might at first seem to be competing aims: she aims at the circumstances that would give her enough time to perform virtuous activities. If she does not aim at such circumstances, she might never have the opportunity to be virtuous. Her life could be cut short before she ever has the opportunity to behave virtuously.

Furthermore, the theme of locating morality in the actual world is supported by the tradition of Aristotelian naturalism. According to Irwin, Aristotle's naturalism

derives conclusions about moral virtues from facts about human nature, because it claims that naturalistic judgments about human nature go beyond medical aspects of human nature and give a sufficient basis for moral judgment. (2007, 142)

For Irwin, Aristotle's naturalism is confirmed by his remark that a happy life must be complete and therefore entail some circumstances such as requisite time (2007, 143). On the basis of circumstances like these, Annas claims that Aristotelian naturalism "allows for considerable variation in the lifestyles within which we develop the virtues" (2005, 16). For example, it is possible to live a good life as a celibate person, because there are many ways to contribute to the functioning of the social group other than procreation. Naturalism is important because it is the framework through which rationality makes aiming at certain circumstances virtuous for their own sake. So the Aristotelian strategy of aligning certain circumstances with the fine should be interpreted within its naturalistic framework.

In order to get a clearer idea of Aristotelian naturalism, we may look to Hursthouse who moves past historical exegesis to develop Aristotelian naturalism for present-day virtue ethical theory. She draws from Anscombe, Geach, and most prominently, Phillipa Foot to describe naturalism for her version of the Aristotelian approach. To start, she claims that "good" is an attributive adjective that describes the world by attributing value to something with respect to its worldly context (1999, 194-5). So, describing something as "good" is not purely normative, but also a descriptive claim. For example, X cannot be good without qualification, but only vis-à-vis some relevant description about the world. That is, things are good "advisedly" (1999, 195). For example, a plant or a knife is good with respect to some relevant context such as decorating an apartment or cutting a loaf of bread. On this basis, we may evaluate members of a natural kind *qua* member of that natural kind. For example, a dead tree is a bad tree, *qua* tree, since it does not photosynthesize.

In this way, normativity goes “all the way down” in Aristotelian naturalism. Advisedly evaluative claims can be derived from their naturalistic contexts. For example, a wolf who free rides on the accomplishments of the other wolves in her pack, such as eating without hunting, is a bad wolf. Hursthouse claims that “the structure of our ethical evaluations of ourselves ... resemble that of a sophisticated social animal with some differences necessitated by our being not only social but also rational” (1999, 206). Virtuous human lives strive toward their naturalistic ends. The main takeaway from Hursthouse’s claims about Aristotelian naturalism is that because we are rational animals, we can use reason to obtain our naturalistic ends in a rational way. Pursuing these naturalistic ends in the actual world is related to harmonizing the aim of the fine with external considerations, since the virtuous person must harmonize her human nature, and the other “material” of her life, with the living of her life.

But what material is relevant on an Aristotelian approach? Which circumstances matter? It is worth noting that although the approach depends in some way on circumstances, these are not just the tangible external things that may first come to mind, such as money and material possessions. As I noted previously, something is external if it is outside of the power of choice. This includes things like emotions, bodies, and tangible goods like money.³¹ What is important is that the virtuous person’s activity is related to her circumstances in the right way. That is to say, her aim of anything external must align with her aim of the fine. As Irwin describes:

[The vicious person] overlooks the possibility of the full application of practical reason to his choice of ends ... The virtuous person, by contrast, believes that the discovery of the fine is the proper function of practical reason. (2007, 191)

The proper function of practical reason is to aim at the fine; it is not to aim at favorable circumstances. What goes wrong with the vicious person is that she may aim, for example, at some sort of favorable circumstance, such as amassing riches, instead of at the fine. In this example, there is misalignment between the materials and living of one’s life. Therefore, on the Aristotelian approach, any relevance of circumstances to the theory is constrained by considerations of the fine.

Although the fine is not a term used in present-day approaches to virtue ethical theory, the idea is still relevant. According to Annas, the relevance of aiming at the fine is that “the virtuous person does the virtuous action for its own sake” (1996, 242; referencing EN.1105 a 26-34 and 1144a17-20) and not merely for favorable circumstances. Irwin fleshes this idea out as involving both an aesthetic appreciation and an appreciation for the common good, which Aristotle never fully explains. Although “*kalon*” is often translated as “fine”, it might also be interpreted as “beautiful”. As Irwin notes, this motivates Henry Sidgwick to misinterpret Aristotle as an aesthetic intuitionist, which Irwin claims is misleading because Aristotle connects

³¹ Although we might control some aspects, surely others are out of our control. For example, you are in control of some aspects of your body, but not others. You cannot change the body you are born into, but by eating, exercising, having elective surgery, and so on, you can control certain aspects of your body.

the fine with rationality (2007, 206).³² Further, aiming at the fine “promotes the common good,” which Irwin interprets as a kind of external consideration that constrains all of Aristotle’s virtues (2007, 206, referencing EN.1169a6-11). A fine action must be intrinsically good and, in that way, praiseworthy, which goes beyond mere aesthetic appreciation (Irwin 2007, 207). To make this point, Irwin draws from Aristotle’s discussion of justice (EN.5):

The virtuous person finds the mean for each virtue by finding what is fine, and so by finding what promotes the common good... To claim that an action is just is to claim that it promotes happiness for the political community. To claim that it is fine is to claim that it is intrinsically good and praiseworthy. The basis for both of these claims is the claim that the action promotes the common good. (2007, 209)

The implication is that virtuous activity, or excellence in practical reason, always involves a concern for the common good. At the same time, Irwin agrees with Annas that it is unfortunate that Aristotle does not develop the account of the fine much further. From the discussion of courage (EN.3), the virtuous person is generally concerned with collective interests, but not by performing some calculus to maximize an aggregate good. Hence, Irwin claims that “Aristotle does not interpret the common good in strictly utilitarian terms” (2007, 210), though its exact meaning is underdetermined by the text. While Irwin only gives an initial outline for aligning the fine with external considerations, his efforts show possible ways in which the relevance of circumstances is constrained.

Given that aiming at the fine involves circumstances, what then does it mean to say that there are “two kinds” of reasoning? We have here a complicated set of overlapping concepts. On the one hand, it seems that the normative relevance of circumstances is constrained by the fine. In other words, the virtuous person should only aim at circumstances when so doing is compatible with aiming at virtuous activity for its own sake. For example, the virtuous should not pursue financial wealth in an unvirtuous way, though, in some cases, financial wealth is compatible with virtuous activity, say, for certain displays of generosity. On the other hand, the way the fine determines the relevance of circumstances is also further constrained by the common good. That is, aiming at virtuous activity for its own sake is only possible when so doing does not violate the common good. The virtuous person should not aim at any circumstance that conflicts with the common good, since so doing would also conflict with the fine. For example, the virtuous person would not finance a large construction project that would hurt the local infrastructure. Although there are two identifiable kinds of reasoning, one aimed at circumstances and the other at the fine, these kinds of reasoning overlap and mutually constrain one another. The normative relevance of circumstances is constrained by the fine, which is, in turn, constrained by the common good.

As we can already see, Aristotle’s virtues all share a general sociopolitical aspect in that virtuous acts aimed at the fine take the common good into account. As Irwin claims, when “Aristotle says that fine and just things are the subject-matter of political science, he assumes”

³² Note there is also conceptual space for aesthetic rationalist intuitionism; on this view, we might have an intuitive aesthetic appreciation of normativity, where the intuition is, for example, inferentially mediated by subpersonal processes.

that promoting the common good is the basis for calling certain actions fine (2007, 209 referencing EN.1094b14). According to Irwin, temperance is not merely a self-regarding virtue; it is constrained by the fine because even the virtuous person's temperate actions take the common good into account. For example, the virtuous person would not consume food that she doesn't need when others go hungry. By contrast the intemperate person disregards the common good. She acts to please her bodily appetites, which Irwin claims, "conflict with pursuit of the virtues and the common good" (2007, 211). The intemperate person may pursue contested public goods (EN.1168b15-9), while the temperate person aligns even her bodily appetites with the fine. For Irwin, the idea then is that a temperate disposition towards a naturally demarcated area of life, concerned with bodily pleasures and appetites, which might seem self-regarding, is actually constrained by considerations of not free-riding in a collective action problem. So too, Aristotle describes courage as occupying a sphere concerning emotions, fear and confidence (EN.3.6), toward which the courageous person must be properly disposed out of a concern for the common good. Just like the temperate person's dispositions towards eating, drinking and having sex, the courageous person's dispositions towards fear and confidence are not entirely self-regarding.

When Aristotle discusses generosity and magnificence, the virtues concerned with tangible gifts of fortune, he explicitly addresses how concern of the fine controls the way the virtuous person treats her circumstances. Recall that this is where Aristotle's discussion of circumstances seems to leave him most open to criticism, since it highlights the theory's dependence on what may seem to be morally unimportant circumstances such as wealth. Generosity is Aristotle's virtue concerned with the proper management of ordinary possessions (EN.4.1), and magnificence of lavish extraordinary wealth (EN.4.2). Yet, the virtuous person's concern for the management of the tangible things that belong to her is constrained by consideration of the common good. The magnificent person uses her wealth in ways that do not conflict with the common good (Irwin 207, 212). On this line of reasoning, virtuous person does not aim directly at favorable circumstances like wealth, *per se*, but rather when she finds herself wealthy, she aims at the fine from that context.

Like magnificence, Aristotle's account of magnanimity (EN.4.3) is another lightning rod for criticism for its focus on circumstances. It is also a very confusing virtue with no shortage of scholarly controversy. Aristotle claims that honor, in a qualified sense, is the primary object of magnanimity because it is the greatest external circumstance (EN.1123b34-35). In light of this focus on honor, the magnanimous person invites criticism because he is thought to be arrogant (EN.1124a18-20); also, he looks down on others (EN.1124b5-25) and is characterized by slow movement and a deep and deliberate voice (EN.1125a12-16). On first blush, these features of the magnanimous person make his focus on honor sound silly. At the same time, the magnanimous person does not care for all honors. Only honors accorded by persons of worth will give him pleasure because he does not care for honors given indiscriminately (EN.1124a5-10). The magnanimous person is not concerned with honor *qua* honor, then, and he regards it as of little importance (EN.1124a15-20). Rather, Aristotle states that the magnanimous person must be indifferent to fortune and self-sufficient (EN.1177a27-b1, EN.1199b18-33). However, gifts of fortune, such as noble birth, wealth, and power contribute to the virtue of magnanimity (EN.1124a20-24).

Why did Aristotle propose a virtue of magnanimity? Irwin claims:

Aristotle argues that virtue is dominant over all external goods; though happiness is vulnerable to fortune, virtue is not. Happy people can lose their happiness, but retain their virtue, and therefore will remain happier than they would be if they had retained the other goods without virtue. The virtue we need for facing these vicissitudes of fortune is magnanimity, because it relies on a correct estimate of the supreme value of virtue. The magnanimous person takes a ‘moderate’ (*metrios*) attitude to all external goods, so that he is neither overjoyed by good fortune nor excessively grieved by misfortune. (2007, 214)

Irwin’s interpretation of Aristotle is that the virtuous person needs a kind of virtue, which we might call a “meta” virtue, for aligning her circumstances with the fine. Through magnanimity, we can see how the virtuous person’s two modes of reasoning come together in the case of a circumstance like being honored. Receiving respect from others is a kind of circumstance, but the magnanimous person values this not for its own sake. At the same time, he recognizes that favorable circumstances hold some value, for example, they can be instrumentally valuable for the exercise of virtue.³³ With this same sort of strategy, the magnanimous person can assess the value of any circumstance in terms of the fine. He will appreciate circumstances and not sacrifice the supremacy of virtue, but rather “use them to become more virtuous” (Irwin 2007, 214). Given the magnanimous person’s reasons for valuing honor, Irwin concludes that any concern for the world is regulated by a concern for the fine.

Along the same lines, several commentators on Aristotle argue that magnanimity is a kind of meta-virtue. Roger Crisp interprets it as:

What Aristotle probably has in mind is the way in which greatness of soul [magnanimity] “supervenes” or “sits on top” of the other virtues ... if I am aware of my worth, then greatness of soul has emerged out of my possession of these other virtues, and adds further luster to my moral character and worthiness of honor. (2006, 167)

Like Crisp, Eckart Schütrumpf interprets it as implying an “endowment” or “fulfillment” of full virtue; “From this one central quality in a person’s character all of the other virtues automatically follow. The one cannot exist without the rest” (1989, 12-15). Similarly, Michael Pakaluk understands magnanimity to be an “attitude of idealistic moral aspiration, implying the capacity to dismiss competing goods as of no account” (2004, 245). It is the *kosmos* because it is the “governor or ‘organizing principle’ or ‘regulating force’ ... overseeing and encouraging the development of the other virtues” (Pakaluk 2004, 259-60). The idea is that the magnanimous person has the skill of adjudicating when circumstances are fine and therefore contribute to his virtuous activity. This is why Aristotle specially describes magnanimity in terms of the fine (*kalokagathia*, EN.4.3). We might compare the character trait of magnanimity to the drive or dedication an excellent craftsman has qua excellent craftsman, such as a musician or artist, due

³³ Irwin’s view on Aristotle is that circumstances are valuable because they are sometimes necessary conditions for virtuous activity and therefore instrumentally valuable, but not intrinsically valuable. That is, Irwin does not think that circumstances make an independent contribution to the virtuous person’s happiness.

to the expert's aspiration to focus on excellent activity and, as such, only focus on external factors which contribute to that activity.

It is important to remember that Aristotle's virtues of magnificence and magnanimity are incredibly controversial, both as a matter of historical exegesis (Irwin 1988) and present-day virtue ethical theory (Annas 1996). However, for our purposes, the main reason to look at Aristotle's virtues is to get a fuller idea of the Aristotelian connection between what Annas refers to as the "materials" and "living" of one's life. It would be an uncharitable mistake to assume that the only kind of circumstance that matters on this approach is a tangible circumstance, such as money, or that the virtuous person values such things as money simply for their own sake. On the traditional Aristotelian approach, circumstances are only relevant to happiness when they are constrained by the fine. So, cases where it might seem that Aristotle think circumstances are important for happiness, such as having a lot of money (magnificence) or honor (magnanimity), are misleading.

In summary, on the Aristotelian approach there is no firm distinction between the materials and living of one's life, since the virtuous person must aim at both external considerations and at the fine, that is, at virtue for its own sake. This idea of combining external and fine considerations for virtuous activity opens the door for robust connections for the Aristotelian tradition between the materials and living of one's life.

So, which circumstances are valuable for an Aristotelian? Traditionally, these circumstances include tangible goods (EN.4.1-2), as well as aspects of one's human nature, including certain appetites (EN.3.10) and emotions (EN.3.6). Furthermore, they involve the honor, or respect, which might be received from other people in the virtuous person's life (EN.4.3), as well as, friendships and other interpersonal relationships (EN.8-9). As Irwin notes, Aristotle's account of friendship includes within its sphere considerations of justice (Irwin 2007, 216, referencing EN.8.1.11155). And, for Irwin, justice, like all of Aristotle's virtues, is constrained by the common good; he claims that "the virtuous person aims at the promotion of the common good, and chooses actions for that reason" (2007, 215). So, in addition to honor and interpersonal relationships, broader sociopolitical concerns are relevant to all circumstances. This list offers a more nuanced picture, which is a far departure from the caricature picture of the Aristotelian approach that you need to be rich to be happy. Given that the relevance of circumstances, for the virtuous person, is constrained by the fine (and, in turn, the common good), the range of normatively relevant circumstances is quite large.

§3. The Stoic Approach to Circumstances

Annas characterizes the Stoic approach as making a sharp divide between the materials and living of one's life, or between the circumstances of life and the practical rationality which shapes those circumstances. Common ground for Aristotelian and Stoic approaches lies in the Socratic tradition, which offers a preliminary examination of these concepts in the virtuous person's happiness (*Euthydemus* 278-81). While Aristotle combined these two concepts in his account of happiness, the Stoics kept them distinct. We might think that this is, in part, because

Aristotle latched onto one aspect of Socratic eudaimonism, that virtuous activity involves using things well. For example, the virtuous person might need enough time or money to perform virtuous activity and so those circumstances could be used for the sake of virtue. However, Annas notes that we may also interpret Socrates as demarcating kinds of value, in terms of different kinds of reasoning, which the Stoics later developed and defended against the Aristotelian tradition (1996, 240). Given that a function of virtue is to use one's circumstances well, Socrates claims that other goods are not really good or bad, since virtue is the only good (*Euthydemus*, 281e). This reflects the Stoic idea that the only thing that is valuable is the living of one's life and not its materials. According to Annas, the Stoics likely saw a greater need (than Aristotle) to distinguish the living of one's life from its materials and so this distinction structures their tradition (1996, 249).

Annas describes virtue as a kind of exercise of skill. She claims that on the Stoic approach, "the skillful person achieves the end appropriate to his skill, and this is done in acting virtuously, doing the right thing for the right reason" (Annas 1996, 245). Rational activity is like a skill for living one's life, where "reason supervenes on impulse as a craftsman" (DL.VII.86). We can see how this general account of virtue, as skills-based and aimed at some end, fits into the naturalistic tradition of teleology. On this picture, the proper goal (*telos*) of human life is happiness (*eudaimonia*), but the account of happiness differs from the Aristotelian approach.³⁴ Zeno describes it as "a good flow of life" (AD, 63A) or "living in agreement," and Cleanthes as "living in agreement with nature" (AD, 63B). According to Inwood, the Stoic goal of life involves consistency (*homologia*), which we might think of as a "smooth flowing" life (1985, 105). The important idea for our purposes is that a smooth flowing life is governed by right reason, not by circumstances. As Diogenes explains,

For our natures are parts of the nature of the universe. Therefore, the goal becomes "to live consistently with nature," i.e., according to one's own nature and that of the universe..., which is right reason, penetrating all things.... (DL. II.94.)

The Stoic view is that virtue is the only good is that a virtuous life needs to be "consistent" in terms of only aiming at one end, happiness, whereas Aristotle asks the virtuous person to bring her external and virtuous ends together. Irwin argues that the main basis for the Stoic's argument that practical reason, of which virtue is an exercise, cannot be instrumental for other goods is that such an account would be inconsistent (2007, 316). This is because valuing circumstances, even instrumentally, is inconsistent. And an inconsistent life is unhappy. In order to be consistent, in this sense, you should only value virtuous activity for its own sake. Valuing anything else could, in some circumstance, come into conflict with virtuous activity. For example, while money can be instrumental for other things, such as food, it is not always instrumental (say, in case of a famine). Money might fail to be instrumental for food and so cause unhappiness in light of that failure. In this case, the inconsistency is that someone values happiness, but also values money which makes her unhappy (when she fails to get money). For the Stoics, the exercise of reason itself, not any outcome of its use, determines the value of human activity. If that activity is consistent, it is good, since happiness is constrained by consistency. The virtuous person learns

³⁴ See Inwood (1985), Chapter One, *the Aristotelian Background*, 9-17.

to value virtuous activity for its own sake, by learning that consistency is a constraint on happiness.

In order to understand the ancient Stoic approach, Lawrence Becker suggests using familiar ethical terms of Kantian “heteronomy” and “autonomy” to describe the Stoic approach (Becker 1998, 59-68).³⁵ In the Kantian tradition an autonomous norm is a law that the agent makes for herself through the power of reason, whereas a heteronomous one is made on the basis of factors external to her reason such as on the basis of her appetites. For the Stoics, one first develops heteronomous norms for her action; the norm is heteronomous in that its basis lies in some factor external to herself. For example, money making would be one possible external circumstance that might result from practical reason. Indeed, making money might afford someone the ability to purchase food and other tangible goods.

According to Becker, the Stoic rationale against heteronomy and for autonomy is similar to the classical Kantian view. Since heteronomous factors are based on circumstances, they are contingent and outside of the agent’s control, therefore threatening the consistency of the virtuous life. Just as it is inconsistent with reason, in Kantian terms, to rely on inclination or sympathy, it is inconsistent for Stoics to value anything external, outside of one’s control. The argument that heteronomy sacrifices consistency is based on Stoic moral psychology. The principles under which the virtuous person acts must be in agreement with one another. This is necessary for the virtuous person to be free from the fear, regret, and disappointment, which may undermine her activities and happiness. If a person were to value the acquisition of wealth for its own sake, tragedy may not only stifle that end, but also prevent her from engaging in other virtuous activities. At some point, aiming at *this* object of success or *this* gift of fortune, will conflict with principles of virtuous activity, since her success and fortune are not in her control. To be clear, the inconsistency is between aiming at a heteronomous end and living virtuously and happy. Heteronomous ends can come into conflict with the autonomous norms that structure what it means to live virtuously and happily. So, the only way to live life consistently in this sense is by living by autonomous norms instead of by heteronomous ones. As someone learns to be virtuous, her “heteronomous norms are . . . replaced by autonomous ones” (Becker 1998, 59). The virtuous person learns to assign a different kind of value to the exercise of her practical reason by learning to value the consistent life.

Happiness on the Stoic approach is free from contingency in the sense that the world cannot disrupt the consistency of the virtuous life. This is why the virtuous person structures her norms without reference to anything that depends on the actual world, since its contingent nature risks a disruption in the consistent, happy life. Irwin describes the Stoic argument: “It would be irrational for me to give up the exercise of reason for the sake of some specific objective” (2007, 317). The thought here is Kantian, in that the Stoic virtuous person recognizes that she is an essentially rational being and so sacrificing that rationality for something heteronomous is an oddly inconsistent way to live. The Stoic person, in principle, will not value material wealth for its own sake, since its nature is heteronomous, but she will still believe, all things being equal, it

³⁵ For a detailed exegetical account of how the Stoics start with natural advantage and end with virtue, see Inwood (1985), Chapter 6, *Moral Evolution*, 182-215.

is better to be full than it is to be hungry (due to the natural advantage of satiating one's physical appetite to eat) and so will continue to pursue natural advantage so long as it does not conflict with a consistent life.

According to Irwin, the main Stoic argument for the conclusion that virtue is the only thing that is valuable depends on the Aristotelian idea of the fine. He claims, "Latin sources use *honestum* to render the Greek *kalon*, often rendered 'noble' or 'fine'" (Irwin 2007, 319, referencing DL.VII.100, Cic.F.ii.27). As such, virtuous actions must be aimed at the fine, in order to be aimed at the goal of happiness. The happy life is the one lived by a set of autonomous norms, free from contingent factors. Irwin claims that for the Stoics, any "conception of the final good that leaves out fineness demotes the virtues to a purely instrumental status that conflicts with the outlook of the virtuous person" (Irwin 2007, 319, referencing Cic.F.ii.35). The Stoic final goal of human life is happiness for which virtuous activity is sufficient. In this way, virtue is the one and only good with respect to the virtuous person's happiness, since living happily consists in virtuous activity. If virtue were not the only good, with respect to happiness, then the virtuous person's life would risk inconsistency. Irwin claims that if someone "cares about any other goods as parts of happiness, we will be tempted to sacrifice virtuous action to these other goods" (Irwin 2007, 322). The idea is that the only way to live a consistent, happy life, and in so doing exercise "different recognized virtues" such as courage and temperance, the virtuous person must only aim at the fine, and not at any kind of natural advantage. Inevitably, the virtuous person might have to choose between virtuous activity and circumstances, and if both are valuable, the virtuous person would be hard-pressed to make the set of norms on which she acts consistent.

At this point, an Aristotelian objector might point out that the Stoic argument here merely shows that virtue is supremely valuable, though other things may still be good and depend on virtue for their value. If this is the case, then the Stoic position fails to distinguish itself from the Aristotelian one; "Aristotelian" and "Stoic" are just two different labels for structurally similar approaches. In order to distinguish the Stoic approach, what is called for is additional argument that all other putative goods hold no value. Rather, they are what the Stoics call "indifferent" (*adiaphora*). The idea behind this concept is that everything besides virtue, such as "health, wealth, reputation, pleasure and pain, and life and death" are indifferent in the sense that these things cannot distinguish a good virtuous and happy person from a non-virtuous and non-happy person (DL.VII.102-7). This concept of indifference is at the heart of the Stoic approach, as popularly interpreted. The Stoic virtuous person adopts an attitude of indifference towards external things, not in her control, so "once we see that externals do not matter, they no longer rouse disturbing emotions in us" (Irwin 2007, 324). This is why a virtuous Stoic can remain happy in the face of tragedy.

Yet, it would be an uncharitable mistake to assume that the virtuous Stoic person lacks any rationale for preferring circumstances. It would be ridiculous to say that, all things being equal, the virtuous person has no reason for preferring, for example, health over illness or life over death. In order to address this concern, the Stoics develop an account of "preferred indifferents" (DL.VII.104-6, Cic.F.iii.50). This account arises from Stoic views on naturalism

and moral development. We start with heteronomous norms to achieve natural advantages (which are later replaced with autonomous ones). On the one hand, virtuous activity is rationally “chosen” (*haireson*), based on considerations of the fine, whereas preferred indifferents are naturally “selected” or “preferred” (*proegmena*), on the basis of their external advantage. At the same time, only virtuous activity holds value, properly speaking, even if there is some other rationale for preferring something indifferent with respect to value.

In order to develop this account, the Stoics distinguish between “pure” and “preferred” indifferents. Pure indifferents lack the natural advantages of preferred indifferents; for example, “whether the number of stars in the sky is odd or even” is purely indifferent (Inwood 1985, 198). By contrast, natural advantages are preferred (Cic.F.iii.51-2). So there is natural reason to prefer health and life over illness and death. Inwood describes this concept as, “things which are indifferent only in the sense that they do not contribute to happiness and may be used badly since *per se* they do not do moral benefit or harm” (1985, 198). Although preferred, normatively speaking, acting for natural advantage is in itself “neither required, prohibited, advisable, or inadvisable” (Becker 1998, 37 and 162). On this view, while virtue is the only value, properly speaking (with respect to happiness), there is another “lower sort of value which determines a more rudimentary notion of the natural life, which could be shared by animals” (Inwood 1985, 198). In the context of the broader Aristotelian versus Stoic debate, it is important to remember that circumstances, in terms of natural advantage, are not purely indifferent on the Stoic approach, but rather hold some lower sense of value, which avoids *reductio* criticisms that all other things being equal there is no reason to prefer good circumstances, such as health, over bad ones, such as illness.

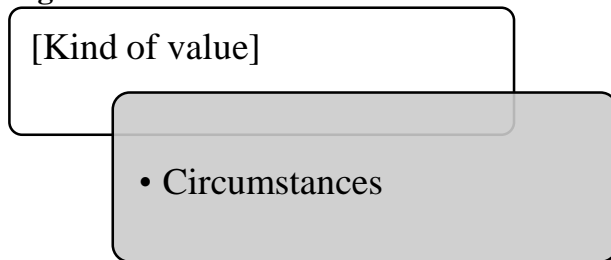
§4. Possible Eudaimonist Models for Valuing Circumstances

The distinction between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches does not lie in an internal versus external distinction (in terms of living versus materials for living) the way Annas suggests. Both traditions have both so-called internal and external aspects. Although it is not clear where the two approaches diverge, we have not taken a step backwards in developing virtue ethical theory. What we are left with is a variety of possibilities for how the role of circumstances could be developed, which I describe below.

In the absence of a clear distinction between the two approaches, I argue that there is rather a spectrum of views where supposedly Aristotelian and Stoic approaches often overlap. In order to move the debate forward, I develop analytical models to map the conceptual landscape of this spectrum, underlying diverse possibilities for virtue ethical theories. Although these models are generated, in part, through reviewing the historical exegesis, they also aim to offer a more comprehensive framework for the set of possibilities. The models themselves, while an interesting digression worth further exploration, are not themselves important for the overall argument of my dissertation. I use the models to show that Annas cannot sustain her distinction by depending on the ancient account of preferred indifferents.

I take this theoretical framework to be in the domain of naturalistic, intellectualist approaches to virtue ethical theory, where virtue and happiness are structured by practical wisdom, an excellence of human nature. There are two important dimensions to this theoretical framework: the value of circumstances and how that value is connected to virtuous activity and happiness, whereas, in this framework, virtuous activity and happiness belong to the category of intrinsic moral value. My strategy is to first describe two different models for the value for circumstances (*nil*, *naturalistic*) and then describe five different models for how those circumstances are related to virtuous activity and happiness (disconnection, permeation, causation, supervenience, and constitution). Therefore, this theoretical framework is modularized in that one model for the value of circumstances could be connected to the rest of the theory in different ways and, conversely, a model for the connective could involve different kinds of values.

Figure 1.



Kind of value:

Nil

Naturalistic

Within this framework, I identify two ways to describe the value of circumstances. There are overlapping boxes in this figure to represent a category of value and something that could be placed inside of that category of value. There are two categories of value in this discourse and my analysis places circumstances inside of those two conceptual possibilities. The first possibility is that the value of circumstances is *nil*. This would reflect, for example, the caricature Stoic position that circumstances hold no value; it makes no difference to the virtuous person's life whether she is healthy or unhealthy. The second possibility is that the value of circumstances is *naturalistic*. By contrast, Plato's forms are non-naturalistic because they exist outside of space and time, that is, outside of the actual world. To be clear, given this framework's broader commitment to naturalism, if circumstances are valuable, then must be naturalistically valuable.³⁶ Therefore, naturalistic value is the more general category in which all of the other

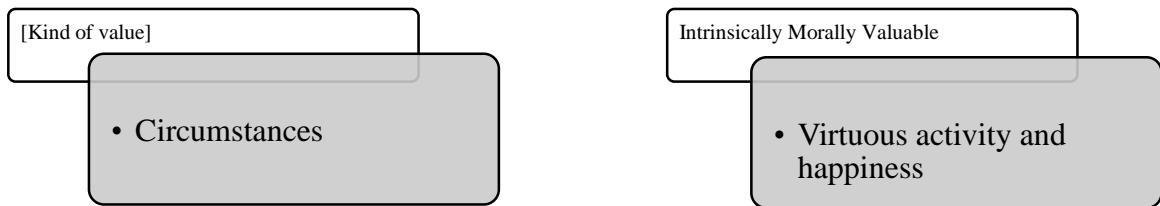
³⁶ A more radical possibility is that the Stoic approach could give up the wholesale commitment to naturalism. This kind of model would be similar to dualism in the philosophy of mind, where one level consists in the actual world, and the other in the non-natural world. We might think that when the Stoic person becomes virtuous, the reason that her virtuous activity obscures and destroys natural advantage is that virtue is at odds with her naturalistic bases. For example, recall the way Becker describes the virtuous person's moral education as starting from heteronomous norms of action, based on natural advantage, which are later replaced by autonomous norms for action, based on consistency of agency (1998, 59-68). In addition, in order to respond to the objection that virtue's naturalistic bases make it relativistic, Annas argues that we should think of virtuous people as forming a community, outside of any particular place or time, who will "share certain reasons, feelings, and attitudes in a way that renders them distinctive" (2011, 55). She claims that her version of Stoicism is Kantian in that it agrees that Aristotelian

kinds of value here are described. Under the heading of naturalistic value, there can be other types of value such as instrumental. Each of the following diagrams will make use of the overlapping boxes in the first figure, since on each of those models the value of circumstances could be nil or naturalistic.

Next, I describe five models for how the value of circumstances value could be connected to the rest of the theory, that is, to virtuous activity and happiness. These models are modular in that more than one kind of value may be plugged into each. So, each of the following models is represented by a figure which make use of the diagram in Figure 1. With respect to the kind of value circumstances falls into, each of the following models describes different connectives for how that kind of value could be related to virtuous activity and happiness. In this discourse, virtuous activity and happiness falls into the category of intrinsic moral value. This is also represented in each figure. So, I explain each model as well as why it might have both Aristotelian and Stoic credentials.

The first model, disconnection, is the one model that, on first blush, seems to permit Annas’s version of the Stoic account that claims circumstances are unnecessary. However, as I will argue, even on this model, some minimally favorable circumstances seem necessary for virtuous activity and happiness. In each of the following models (permeation, causation, supervenience, and constitution), it will be clear that minimally favorable circumstances are necessary.

Figure 2. Disconnection



The first possibility for the relationship between the value of circumstances and the rest of the model is *disconnection*. Regardless of how we describe the value of circumstances, it is not necessary that they bear any connection to virtuous activity and happiness. On this model, the value of circumstances could be *nil* or it could be valuable in some naturalistic way. If circumstances are valueless, then there is just one domain of value, virtuous activity and happiness, and the rest is normatively irrelevant. This picture would resemble the caricature account of the Stoic approach, where it makes no difference to the virtuous person if she is healthy or sick, if she is physically comfortable or being water-boarded, and so on. As Irwin

naturalism lacks “a special kind of motivational authority” for virtuous activity (1996, 252). Here, her Stoic account seems to be Kantian in the sense that its normative force, what is shared between virtuous people in a virtuous community, is not tied to, but instead transcends, the actual world. The worry about sacrificing the commitment to naturalism, in order to describe intrinsic moral value, is that virtuous activity and happiness could still have a naturalistic basis, even if disconnected from external circumstances. For example, Annas claims that the Stoic affinity to Kant need not be non-empirical (1996, 252). That is, there might be a naturalistic explanation for the shared reasons, feelings, and attitudes of virtuous people.

claims, for the Stoics, circumstances “are indifferent ... since they are neither parts of happiness nor instrumental” to happiness (2007, 325).

On first blush, this is the only version of a model that seems possibly consistent with Annas’s version of the Stoic approach. However, it is too extreme for most with Stoic sympathies to accept. As Irwin claims,

Since natural advantages are to be preferred, they also have value. Though they are not the objects of choice (in the strict sense ...), they are objects of appropriate selection; hence, they have either non-instrumental value or instrumental selective value... This clarification of the Stoic claims about indifferents suggests that preferred and non-preferred indifferents matter, and that the virtuous person has good reason to be concerned with them. (2007, 326)

Even for the Stoics, all things being equal, it is better to be healthy than sick. Although health is not valuable in terms of happiness, since it is possible to be happy without being healthy, it seems that health has a kind of non-instrumental (naturalistic) value because it is better to be healthy than sick, all things being equal. So too, some circumstances must be at least instrumentally valuable for virtuous activity and happiness. For example, having enough air to breathe and enough calories to perform cognitive function seem to be necessary instruments for acting virtuously. Surely, there must be some instrumental value in this sense. Therefore, it seems as if the simple sufficiency thesis that Annas expresses, the “living” well is sufficient for happiness and favorable “materials” are unnecessary, is a nonstarter.

In contrast to this monistic picture, there may be two domains of value. In that case, the structure here would resemble parallelism in the philosophy of mind, where there is no interaction between the two domains. It may even be the case that the two domains of value are perfectly coordinated, though they bear no direct connection. By way of analogy, Leibniz’s theory of pre-established harmony suggests that God coordinates these two domains, which then run parallel to one another without any interaction (see *The Monadology*).

The option in Figure 2 is compatible with a Stoic account of preferred indifferents which treats the world as genuinely valuable, in terms of naturalism. It seems that the Stoics supported a *naturalistic* account of value because, as Irwin notes, their virtuous person “tries to raise the level of preferred indifferents, as long as this is consistent with the demands of virtue, and tries to avoid a major loss of preferred indifferents, within the constraints imposed by virtue” (Irwin 2007, 331). So, there could be a domain of value which does not interact with the domain of intrinsic moral value. The natural advantage of circumstances confers naturalistic value, but is nonetheless disconnected from virtuous activity and happiness. Given this dualistic parallelism, it might also be the case that there are two categories of *intrinsic* value. External things can be valuable for their own sake of their natural advantage, even if virtuous activity and happiness are also valuable for their own sake. So, external things, while valuable in a way, are indifferent to the virtuous person’s happiness. In support of this line of reason, Seneca also seems to claim that some circumstances even hold some sort of intrinsic value for their natural advantage (Sen.VN.22.4, EP.92.11). By way of illustration, the Stoics believe that some circumstances can

be so tragic that it is rational for the virtuous person to commit suicide (DL.vii.130). It follows on this interpretation that there is an identifiable value here, which could in extreme cases override virtuous activity, even if it is not directly relevant to the virtuous person’s happiness. Given this tension, Inwood claims that there are two kinds of values for the Stoic, one is “moral value,” while the other is “more rudimentary” based on “natural advantage” (Inwood 1985, 198).

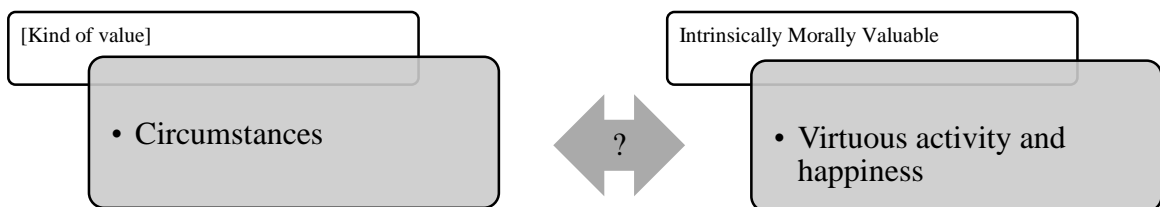
Therefore, this picture suggests a kind of dualism about value, with different options for describing the naturalistic value of circumstances. For example, Irwin describes one possible option, that is, the Stoic value of natural advantage “must be obscured and destroyed and must perish because of the brilliance and greatness of virtue” (2007, 332). The idea seems to be that the Stoic virtuous person always pursues external advantage, and avoids disadvantage, whenever doing so is compatible with her virtuous activity, but, at the same time, as she develops her virtue she starts to care less about circumstances. The relationship between the two domains of value on the Stoic approach, and what they amount to, is exegetically unclear. How do the two dimensions of value interact in cases of putative conflict, for example, when circumstances are so tragic suicide becomes rational?

In order to maintain that there are two domains of value, there is recourse in offering more nuanced accounts of the naturalism, for example, a two-tiered approach. The autonomous norms of virtuous activity, which the virtuous person learns to adopt, could be naturalistic. Those norms need not transcend the world. Rather, the Stoics could appeal to “broader principles of rational teleology” (Inwood 1985, 199) to explain how autonomous norms destroy and replace heteronomous ones. Inwood claims:

It would seem that the Stoics do not want to say that normative value judgments are grounded in facts ... nor that we are attracted to things principally on the basis of their normative ethical value. They do not aim to deduce ethical facts from psychological ones, nor vice versa. Both are deduced from the concept of nature. (1985, 199)

The model represented in Figure 2 is compatible with Aristotelian naturalism. The virtuous person has good prudential reason to pursue the natural advantages of circumstances, but also “broader principles of rational teleology” which guides all of her actions. For Irwin, although virtuous person’s circumstances “may make it possible or impossible to achieve happiness, Aristotle does not believe that happiness consists, even in part, in the possession of external advantages” (2007, 144).

Figure 3. Permeation

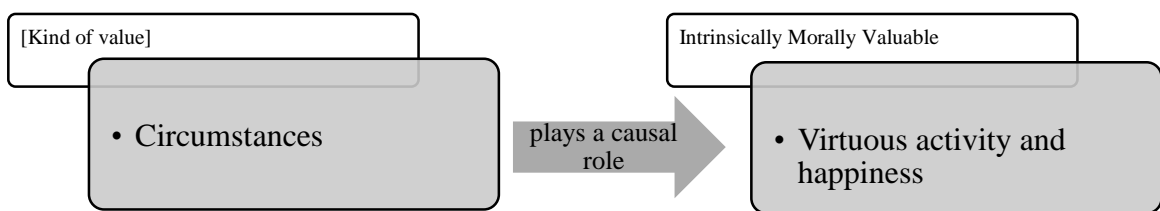


The second model for describing the relationship between the value of circumstances and intrinsic moral value is *permeation*. On this model, the line between the two domains of value is

permeable in that things in one category can bleed into the other and vice versa. I put a question mark inside of the double-arrow connective to represent that the mechanism for how the categories bleed into one another is open to question. The mechanism is unspecified. The two domains of value interact with one another in some unspecified way. By way of analogy, this model could resemble a kind of interactionism in the philosophy of mind. But the mechanism for interaction is unspecified. For example, the value of circumstances could be *nil*, properly speaking, but some circumstances could occasionally become intrinsically morally valuable by becoming *constitutive* of virtuous activity and happiness. Alternatively, circumstances could bear some naturalistic value, but bleed into another kind of naturalistic value, on a two-tiered system of naturalistic value. The connective between the two domains of value is unspecified on this model, since there are different possibilities. The important thing, however, is that these are possibilities for describing how certain circumstances can become a necessary for virtuous activity and happiness. For example, certain emotional or affective states could become constitutive of virtuous activity and happiness.

This model of permeation has Aristotelian credentials because circumstances can become valuable by being constrained by the fine. Yet, this model also has Stoic credentials. Russell claims that, “Surprisingly, the difference between Stoics and Aristotelians doesn’t really lie” in the claim that external things are not, by themselves, constitutive of happiness (2013, 183). Aristotle agrees that the value of circumstances depends on the right rational activity. Furthermore, Russell argues that the Stoics agree with Aristotle that circumstances can be morally valuable, over and above their natural advantage, when they “participate” in virtuous activity. For example, certain emotions, which are connected to rationality, are goods that fulfill happiness (AD.II.5g). If this is right, it means that the Stoic line between natural and moral value “is actually permeable” (2013, 184). Hence, Russell concludes the Stoic position holds that a circumstance “can become part of virtue, *if* it can become part of virtuous activity” (2013, 188). Although Russell concedes that his argument is controversial as a matter of historical exegesis, it makes sense for the line to be permeable, given the broader Stoic commitments about naturalism, since rationality and the emotions are tightly connected aspects of human nature.

Figure 4. Causation



The next model for describing the relationship between the value of circumstances and intrinsic moral value is *causation*. At first blush, someone might wonder why I describe minimally favorable circumstances as things that play causally relevant roles instead of something like background conditions, preconditions, or the absence of potential defeaters. This is because the notion of causation I have in mind is capacious. Consider James Woodward’s interventionist account:

X is a cause of Y if and only if there are circumstances in which a possible intervention on X can be a possible intervention on Y. (Woodward 2003; Woodward & Hitchcock 2003)

Woodward develops this interventionist framework within the context of manipulability theories of causation, which, broadly speaking, hold that causes are handles or devices for manipulating effects. X is a cause of Y because an intervention can change X in order to change Y.

Woodward's account of interventions explicitly is causal, since language is insufficient. An intervention is a change in the value of X. It is a causal factor. For example, farming of a certain kind of crop in one part of the world is a cause of the price someone pays at a grocery store for that product weeks later in another part of the world. This is because a change in the farming, such as a drought and subsequent shortage, can play a causal role in how much grocery stores charge for that product. On this account, an intervention on X must only be logically possible, not actual. The farming of the crop is a causal factor, regardless of whether a shortage occurs.

On interventionist causation, what we might think of as background conditions or the absence of potential defeaters could qualify as causal factors. For example, your parents meeting is a causal factor for your existence, since preventing your parents from meeting would prevent you from coming into the world. On this model, certain causal factors can be necessary instruments for virtuous activity and happiness. Your parents meeting is a necessary instrument for your coming into existence. So too, certain things like having some access to moral education, can be necessary for virtuous activity.

Granted, the picture I am painting here is an oversimplification of one possible approach to causation. Yet, my goal here is just to show that we can conceive of causation broadly to include things that we might think of as background conditions. Just the same, my causation model for the value of circumstances does not hang on this interventionist framework. If I should be thinking about causation more narrowly, then the scope of circumstances that can become valuable on this model would be narrower.

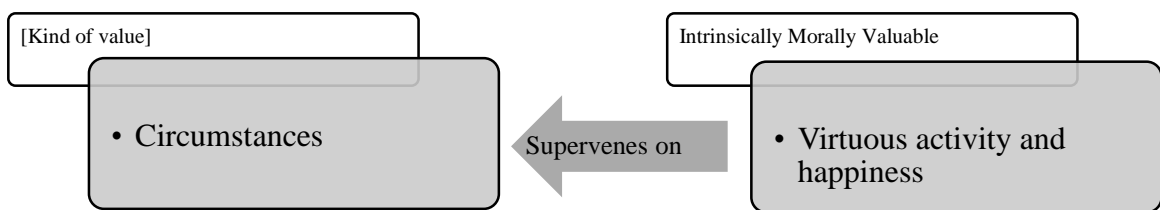
On this model, some circumstances play a causal role in virtuous activity and happiness. Again, note that this could be the case whether circumstances are themselves valueless or somehow valuable. Perhaps the most intuitive way to describe this model is that a circumstance can be instrumentally valuable when it is means to virtuous activity and happiness. For example, financial success might be causally necessary for some exercises of the virtuous person's generosity, or even help motivate the virtuous person to be generous. Further, this model also intends to capture looser ways in which circumstances could play a causal role in virtuous activity and happiness. For example, consider the Stoic position that in order to become virtuous, by learning autonomous norms, one must first become skilled at deliberating about worldly success, by learning heteronomous norms. The heteronomous norms are not a direct means to autonomous ones, but by excelling in the domain of circumstances, the virtuous person learns to assign supreme value to what she can control by replacing heteronomous norms with autonomous ones. Here, it seems that the heteronomous norms play a role in the virtuous person's moral education, though heteronomy is not itself a means to autonomy.

One rationale for this model lies in the Socratic idea that circumstances themselves are not constitutive of happiness, but the virtuous use of those circumstances is (*Euthydemus* 278-81). Since Aristotle suggests that circumstances are necessary for (but not themselves a part of) happiness, Irwin proposes that the most palatable interpretation is that there is some minimum threshold necessary for virtue:

Probably Aristotle means that if we assume a level of external goods that can reasonably be assumed, the most important condition –the one that in these conditions determines whether we are happy or not– is virtuous activity. If the roads are not in such a hazardous condition that a driver’s skill and care make no difference, we can reasonably say that the driver’s skill and care determine safety. (2007, 145)

Here, the idea is that some minimum threshold of favorable circumstances plays a causal role in the virtuous person’s activity and happiness. The threshold could involve circumstances as basic as having enough food to live, not having to always worry about physical survival, and so on. These kinds of conditions seem to play a role in that they are causally necessary for virtuous activity and happiness. If someone lives in a dire post-apocalyptic science fiction scenario, she will probably lack the opportunity to develop into a virtuous and happy person. This is simply because she might not have the minimal circumstances needed to develop her rationality, let alone survive in this cruel world. Note that there are similar Stoic credentials. As I argued, on either approach, we might think that certain conditions in the world must obtain in order for the development of virtuous activity to even be possible in the first place. In this way, a Stoic might hold that some minimal conditions are necessary for the development of the heteronomous norms to be replaced by autonomous ones. For one, a child needs access to food to develop her rationality for, say, pursuing favorable circumstances such as not being hungry; for another, she also needs some good examples or role models to make her norms autonomous, that is, to learn to value virtuous activity over natural advantage.

Figure 5. Supervenience



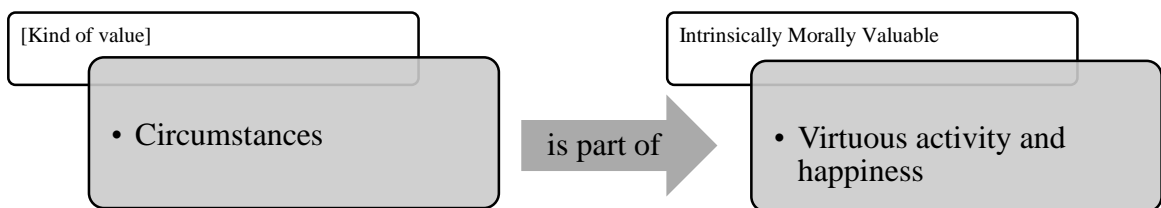
Another model for describing the relationship between the value of circumstances and intrinsic moral value is *supervenience*. What is the supervenience relationship? Davidson describes it as:

A dot-matrix picture has global properties — it is symmetrical, it is cluttered, and whatnot — and yet all there is to the picture is dots and non-dots at each point of the matrix... They supervene: no two pictures could differ in their global properties without differing, somewhere, in whether there is or there isn't a dot. (Davidson 1986, 14)

In the philosophy of mind, some hold that mental states supervene on physical states; no two mental states could differ without their correlative physical states differing. So mental properties are grounded in physical ones. However, the concept of supervenience is notoriously complicated. Kim famously lays out many possible meanings including strong, weak, local, and global versions (1984). In light of these possible renderings, I want to use the most general definition supervenience, that there can be no difference in one category without there also being a difference in another, while setting aside the complications about different versions of the term.

In this model, the value of circumstances is grounded in intrinsic moral value, in much the same way that a philosopher of mind might argue that mental states are grounded in physical states. When virtuous people are healthy, the value of their health depends on their virtuous activity and happiness. This is a view on which changes in the living of one’s life entail a change in its materials (see Irwin 2007, 333). Here, we might describe the value of circumstances as *symptomatic* of intrinsic moral value. When explaining the Stoic approach, Russell refers to some circumstances, such as health, as “supervenient byproducts” of virtuous activity (Russell 2013, 182). The idea here is that a person who is temperate will also be healthy, whereas health is a valuable natural advantage. Of course, this only applies to factors about health that are in one’s control; being temperate will make you healthy, all things being equal, though other factors can undermine one’s health. Although this model might sound counterintuitive to the present-day reader, in addition to Stoic credentials, it has Aristotelian credentials. For example, when commenting on Aristotle’s account of magnanimity, Crisp describes a supervenient relationship between moral virtue and circumstances (Crisp 2006, 167). The idea here is that Aristotle’s magnanimous person does not care for most circumstances, but only those circumstances that meet certain conditions associated with virtuous activity and happiness.

Figure 6. Constitution



The final model for describing the relationship between the value of circumstances and intrinsic moral value is *constitution*, where the value of circumstances becomes a part of virtuous activity and happiness. How can something be a constitutive good? To use Ackrill’s example, playing golf can be constitutive of having a good holiday; so too, putting can be constitutive of playing golf. In virtue ethics, this is a paradigm case of a constitutive good. He claims:

One does not putt in order to play golf as one buys a club in order to play golf; and this distinction matches that between activities that do not and those that do produce a product. It will be "because" you wanted to play golf that you are putting, and "for the sake" of a good holiday that you are playing golf; but this is because putting and golfing are constituents of or ingredients in golfing and having a good holiday respectively, not because they are necessary preliminaries. Putting is playing golf (though not all that

playing golf is), and golfing (in a somewhat different way) is having a good holiday (though not all that having a good holiday is). (19)

The idea is that a smaller activity can become a part of a larger activity. In this context, one activity is constitutive of another in that someone engages in the one for the sake of another. For example, someone plays golf for the sake of having a good holiday. So too, someone putts for the sake of playing golf. By contrast, buying golf clubs is not part of playing golf. We might concede that it could be a causal factor for playing golf and also for having a good holiday, but it is not clear how the activity of buying golf clubs is a constituent of playing golf or having a good holiday.

Although the paradigm cases of playing golf and putting are good examples of constitutive goods, they are activities and therefore not the best examples of circumstances. After all, Ackrill uses these paradigm cases to explain how virtuous activity can be constitutive of happiness; golfing is to having a good holiday as virtuous activity is to happiness. How can a circumstance become constitutive of an activity, such as virtuous activity and living happily?

At this point, I would like to add that things in the world can become constitutive of an activity. Reconsider the example. The putter itself is part of putting and playing golf, since the golfer uses the putter to putt. It would be impossible for someone to putt without a putter. The putter is part of the activity of putting in that the golfer wraps his hands around the club and uses it to strike the golf ball in order to perform the activity of golfing.

In this sense, circumstances can become part of virtuous activity. For example, something like money is often seen as a paradigm example of an instrumental good, something that is valuable only insofar as it promotes something else that is of value. However, we can now see how money could be a constitutive good with respect to generous virtuous activity. Just as the golfer properly uses his putter to play golf, the generous or magnificent person can properly use money to be generous and magnificent. To be clear, money is not a constitutive good without qualification. Misers often make the mistake of thinking that money can make an independent contribution to their happiness. Rather, the virtuous use of money could make money constitutive of that use, i.e., generous activity. Just as the activity of putting requires that one use a putter well, the activity of generously giving requires that there is something to give. In this way, circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity and happiness.

On this interpretation, money itself could be valueless, but the proper use of money in the virtuous person's life can make it valuable. So far, the picture I am painting here seems to resemble the causation model, where a circumstance, such as the possession of money (or some other possession), seems to be causally necessary for certain exercises of generosity. However, this new model is different because it also claims that the circumstance, such as money, can become not merely a means to but also a part of virtuous activity.

I use the example of money to make my case clearly, since it is usually thought of as an instrumental good. Besides money, we can think of other circumstances, such as people and appetites, as part of interpersonal and temperate virtuous activity, respectively. In the case of interpersonal virtues, it is intuitive to say that the people in the relationship are part of the

exercise of friendship. Alternatively, although bodily appetites might be thought of as a circumstance in Aristotelian and Stoic approaches, it is intuitive to say that certain appetites are a part of certain exercises of virtue, such as temperance. Although some appetites, such as the appetite to engorge oneself with massive quantities of unhealthy food, are probably not valuable, others, such as to eat healthy foods, can be described as part of virtuous activity.

What kinds of circumstances could become constitutive of virtuous activity and happiness? My review of the Aristotelian approach to circumstances shows no shortage of resources for providing this explanation. Aristotle's virtuous person only acts out of concern of the fine, acting virtuously for its own sake (EN.1105 a 26-34 and 1144a17-20). The virtuous person pursues favorable circumstances which promotes her virtuous activity and avoids unfavorable ones which impede her activity. The range of possibilities is broad. These favorable circumstances, as I have argued, could range from considerations of human nature, to very wide sociopolitical factors. They include tangible goods (EN.4.1-2), certain appetites (EN.3.10) and emotions (EN.3.6), honor and respect from people whose opinion the virtuous person values (EN.4.3), friendships and other interpersonal relationships (EN.8-9), as well as broader concerns about social justice and the common good (EN.5). So too, on the Stoic approach, certain emotions might lack value themselves, in the absence of virtue, but become valuable when the virtuous person makes them a part of her activity (AD.II.5g), just as the putter is not part of playing golf until the golfer uses it to putt.

§5. Conclusion: Chapter Summary

Annas distinguishes between what she calls the "living" of one's life well (i.e., one's exercise of virtue or, roughly, of skilled rationality) and its "materials" (i.e., the circumstances of one's life, such as one's family, society, and environment). For Annas, the traditional Aristotelian approach combines these two elements, while the Stoic one keeps them distinct and further claims that only the living of one's life is relevant to virtue and happiness. That is, living one's life well is sufficient for happiness, regardless of the circumstances (or "materials") of one's life.

In this chapter, I explained her distinction between the two approaches. This distinction is based off of the historical dispute between Aristotle and the Stoics. For Annas, clarifying the traditional distinction could help us develop a Neo-Stoic account, which she has not yet developed. So, I also reviewed the historical dispute and explore options for developing the two approaches on that basis. We can see the necessity of circumstances for the Stoic account in almost every model I outlined in the previous section. The only one that seems to reflect Annas's distinction between living and materials is the first model of disconnection, there is only one domain of value (virtuous activity and happiness), and circumstances hold no value, not even instrumental value. However, I argued that circumstances are necessary on this approach, just as they are under any plausible one. What is properly valuable for the ancient Stoics, virtue and happiness, depends on having the natural advantage of preferred indifferents (such as having

enough food to avoid starvation). Therefore, the distinction Annas attempts to make is dubious because it is unclear how the external circumstances are unnecessary on her Neo-Stoic approach.

Chapter 3

Russell's Reframing of the Dispute:

Formalized versus Embodied

*Thus spoke Priam, and the heart of Achilles yearned as he bethought him of his father. He took the old man's hand and moved him gently away. The two wept bitterly- Priam, as he lay at Achilles' feet, weeping for Hector, and Achilles now for his father and now for Patroclus, till the house was filled with their lamentation. But when Achilles was now sated with grief and had unburdened the bitterness of his sorrow, he left his seat and raised the old man by the hand, in pity for his white hair and beard; then he said, "Unhappy man, you have indeed been greatly daring; how could you venture to come alone to the ships of the Achaeans, and enter the presence of him who has slain so many of your brave sons? You must have iron courage: sit now upon this seat, and for all our grief we will hide our sorrows in our hearts, for weeping will not avail us... And you too, O Priam, I have heard that you were aforesaid happy. They say that in wealth and plenitude of offspring you surpassed all ... but from the day when the dwellers in heaven sent this evil upon you, war and slaughter have been about your city continually. Bear up against it, and let there be some intervals in your sorrow. Mourn as you may for your brave son, you will take nothing by it. You cannot raise him from the dead, ere you do so yet another sorrow shall befall you."*³⁷

§1. Introduction: Russell's Reframing

In light of recent Stoic concerns from about the traditional Aristotelian approach, Daniel C. Russell argues that virtue ethicists should move past the ancient dispute and think about the topic in new ways. He uses literature about embodied cognition to make sense of how happiness is connected to the world. Although I disagree with the details of Russell's updated Aristotelian account, I think his insight is useful for the development of eudaimonist virtue ethics.

In this chapter, I have two main goals. First, I provide exegesis of Russell's attempt to update the Aristotelian versus Stoic distinction using a new framework. His big idea is to shift the debate toward competing conceptions of "the self" to describe the relationship between the virtuous person's circumstances and her activity. He sketches a Stoic approach that holds a "formalized" conception of the self, which remains distinct from its circumstances. When Priam's city falls, Russell's modified version of the Stoic approach would claim that Priam does not lose a part of himself, since he is distinct from his circumstances. By contrast, Russell thinks that the most plausible Aristotelian approach claims that the self's activities "embody" the virtuous person's circumstances. For this, he draws from literature on embodied cognition and applies it to virtue ethics. When Priam loses his city and family to the Trojan War, he loses a part

³⁷ Homer's *Iliad*, Book 24, lines 507-550, translated by Samuel Butler.

of himself.³⁸ Similarly, a formalized approach would claim that Mr. Dumbai can remain happy, but an embodied one would say that he cannot since he loses a central part of himself and his virtuous activity.

My second goal is to critically evaluate the way Russell sketches his updated version of the Aristotelian versus Stoic distinction. In the next chapter, I will offer broader criticisms, but my goal here is to undermine the way he draws the distinction itself. His updated distinction is based on the notion of control. The formalized approach identifies the agent's power of choice as the self, while the embodied approach claims that the self is intricately connected to many circumstances that are not entirely in the virtuous person's control. I think that this strategy for drawing the distinction is problematic since the conditions that underlie control are determined by circumstances out of our control. For example, while we might be in control of our own thought processes, we may not always control circumstances necessary for being able to think such as having enough air to breathe or enough calories to maintain consciousness. If this is the case, then it seems that both embodied and formalized approaches depend on factors outside of our control.³⁹

§2. Russell's Updated Distinction

My exegesis of Russell has two main components. First, Russell rejects the framing of the ancient dispute. He refers to the ancient dispute as the "sufficiency debate" (i.e., whether virtuous activity is merely necessary or also sufficient for happiness) and he claims that it is limited in its fruitfulness to present-day virtue ethicists (2013, 84).⁴⁰ This is because different aspects of the debate highlight important dimensions of how to live your life happily, but the ancient framing does not fully capture these dimensions. Second, he develops "Neo-" approaches, inspired by their Aristotelian and Stoic antecedents, in order to re-conceptualize the dispute as fundamentally about embodied versus formalized approaches to the virtuous person's agency.

According to Russell, virtue ethicists can learn something by looking at the ancient dispute, since it highlights two important dimensions to happily living one's life. He claims:

Aristotelians and Stoics seem to have agreed on the formal constraints of happiness, and that those constraints favor the idea that virtuous activity is central to happiness. And while there were important differences between Aristotelian and Stoic theories ... the key issue in this debate ... is the question of how activity might, or might not, connect us to the volatile world in which we act. (2013, 84)

³⁸ To be clear, although Russell uses Priam as a paradigm example for how a loss in favorable circumstances can be a loss in virtuous activity, he also follows Aristotle in assuming that Priam's virtuous activity could "shine through" (*dialampeí to kalon*) despite the tragedy (EN.1.10). I explore this complexity of the Priam example in my criticism of Russell in the following chapter.

³⁹ This relates to Aristotle's remarks on moral responsibility, see EN3.1-5, which I do not explore in this dissertation.

⁴⁰ As a reminder, for the traditional dispute to which Russell refers, virtue is necessary on all accounts.

Aristotelian and Stoic approaches share many overlapping views about the structure of happiness. Russell suggests that the two approaches agree that a happy life involves virtuous activity and they have overlapping strategies for describing the value of circumstances for happiness. (I suggested the same thing in Chapter 2.) So, instead of focusing on the ancient dispute over necessity and sufficiency theses, Russell suggests that it is better to focus on how those circumstances are connected to or disconnected from virtuous activity.

In order to explain why it is useful to shift away from the ancient framing of the dispute, Russell identifies what he calls “control” and “patience” as the two central concerns for happiness. He defines control dimension of happiness:

the exercise of practical wisdom –in a word– virtuous activity, which makes a human life such as to be a good human life, and it is on this power that happiness depends above all else. (2013, 90)

This reflects the traditional Stoic intuition that happiness consists in virtuous activity. To use Russell’s terminology, virtuous activity has more control over happiness than anything else. It seems that Russell chooses the term “patience” as an emphatic way of expressing dependency. He defines the patience dimension:

humans are patients: needy creatures full of desires, and vulnerable to circumstances, which we cannot control (2013, 88)

This reflects the traditional Aristotelian intuition that happiness depends on circumstances. It is vulnerable to the world and out of our control.

According to Russell, control and patience are the two most important aspects of happiness: on the one hand, the virtuous person’s activities control her happiness, despite her circumstances, but on the other, how the virtuous person lives her life depends in no small part on her circumstances (2013, 90ff). Overall, Russell sees the tension between these two dimensions as the pivotal question for any account of happiness. His call to focus on these makes sense because clearly people with Aristotelian and Stoic sympathies alike think both dimensions are important, which gets lost in the traditional “sufficiency debate” framing. The Stoics seem to accept that happiness depends on circumstances in some limited respect, which gets lost in the sufficiency thesis framing. So too, Aristotle seems to think that virtuous activity has far more control over happiness than anything else, which gets lost in the necessity thesis framing.

In order to motivate control as a desideratum of happiness, reconsider the traditional Aristotelian necessity thesis that there are two necessary conditions for happiness, favorable circumstances and virtuous activity. On this view, you might need both money and virtue to be happy. However, such an account would make the virtuous person’s happiness a victim of circumstance, by holding her happiness hostage to material wealth. According to Russell, this straw-man of Aristotle’s view would sacrifice the intuitive “control” virtuous activity has over one’s external circumstances and leave us with an account of happiness that is overly dependent on the world (Russell 2013, 91). For example, the virtuous person is traditionally thought to have

the ability to deal with her circumstances well (*Euthydemus* 278-281). So, virtue ethicists have some reason to avoid this extreme approach to happiness.

To motivate patiency, reconsider the Stoic sufficiency thesis that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness. This view seems to suggest that the relevance of circumstances to happiness is nonexistent and, so, the only thing that matters is virtuous activity. However, this interpretation is also vulnerable to intuitive counterexamples. Can you be happy when you do not have the minimum circumstances necessary to perform virtuous activity? Can you be happy without any oxygen in your environment? This example is supposed to be extreme. To use a less extreme one, is health irrelevant for happiness? Imagine that there are two people who engage in virtuous activity, but one is healthy and the other suffers from a debilitating, painful medical condition. All things being equal, a virtue ethicist should be able to claim that it is better to be healthy, than it is to be painfully dying from disease. For if not, the virtue ethical theory would be committed to the counterintuitive conclusion that you can be happy while living in extremely unfortunate circumstances.⁴¹ The caricatured sufficiency thesis downplays the role of preferred indifferents.

Therefore, Russell rejects the theoretical usefulness of the dispute between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches as it is traditionally framed, as a debate over whether virtuous activity is merely necessary or also sufficient for happiness. He instead thinks that the two evoke different sets of concerns for any account of happiness: control and patiency.

He describes these two concerns in terms of two theses about happiness. On the one hand, Russell's *control thesis* claims that "it is upon virtuous activity above all else that human happiness depends" (2013, 91).⁴² He emphasizes that this is a comparative thesis, which claims that virtuous activity is the most important condition (among possibly others) that "controls" happiness.⁴³ So, circumstances could still be relevant to happiness, even if virtuous activity controls happiness.

Consider, for example, Aristotle's discussion of Solon, who claims it is impossible to judge whether someone is happy while he is living, since tragedies could always mar one's life (EN.1.10). Solon famously told the Lydian king, Croesus, who felt secure with his power and his wealth, that we cannot know whether he is happy while still living; Croesus' life is then destroyed by way of tragedy, as his family dies, and he remembers Solon's words while being burned alive on a funeral pyre (Herodotus, 1.29–33). Given the desideratum of control, Russell

⁴¹ Although a virtue ethicist with Stoic sympathies could avoid this conclusion by building off the ancient tradition of preferred indifferents, such an attempt would incorporate patiency into the Stoic sufficiency thesis. It would say that it is better to be healthy than sick. This is what Annas holds (1996), for example. Instead, Russell wants to explore grounds in the middle of the two extremes in the sufficiency debate and he would agree that some of those grounds have been explored by ancient Stoics.

⁴² Russell attributes this thesis to Aristotle EN.1.10.1101a14-16. It is not always clear what he means by "control." One might think of it as some sort of external power. However, Russell often suggests that virtuous activity controls happiness because the two are identical. For example, he claims "happiness is a life shaped by practical wisdom, and it also involves goods outside of our control" (2012, 94).

⁴³ So a slightly modified version of the caricature Aristotelian view could satisfy this thesis, for example, if it claims that there are two necessary, jointly sufficient, conditions (virtue and external circumstances) for happiness, but adds that virtuous activity is the most important condition.

claims that we can see why Solon's view about happiness is implausible, since circumstances should not have this much control over whether someone is happy. Virtuous activity should be the controlling factor. Our intuition should be that Croesus' life was happy before the tragedy so long as he engaged in virtuous activity. Although his life was marred after tragedy, surely he was happy before his life was destroyed by the cruelty of the Persian War. But if Solon is right, then someone living a life of virtuous activity could be unhappy if she experiences some unforeseen, tragic circumstance. Therefore, on Russell's analysis, Solon's account of happiness clearly fails the control thesis because it makes happiness captive to contingent factors by undermining the role of virtuous activity. For the control thesis, virtuous activity must play the most important role in determining whether someone is happy.

In addition, Russell expresses his patiency desideratum as a *dependency thesis*: "there are bodily and external goods that are necessary for parts of happiness" (2013, 91).⁴⁴ Although it would be odd to call Croesus unhappy because of events which have yet to occur, it makes sense to say that tragedy mars his life once those events do occur. In this way, the Croesus case is like the case of Priam or Mr. Dumbai. Extremely bad circumstances, such as tragic loss of family, can undermine happiness. Although Russell draws these two theses from Aristotle, he claims that there is a compelling account of happiness if we move past the historical debate to unify this apparent tension in Aristotle's account of happiness (2013, 94-5).

Russell's strategy for moving past the debate is to shift the discussion towards competing conceptions of the self. In this context, the "self" refers to *prohairesis* or, roughly, the power of choice to engage in activities. This is also what Russell means when he refers to "agency," which is a synonym for "the self" or power of choice. He calls the two conceptions the "embodied" self, which is more Aristotelian, and the "formalized" self, which is more Stoic. The *embodied* conception claims that "the self is not merely located in a physical, social world, but inextricably *fused* with certain parts of [the] world" (2013, 96). Russell identifies this view as his favored account and the strongest version of the Aristotelian approach. It seems that the idea of fusion here is that the physical, social world can become somehow constitutive of virtuous activity and happiness.⁴⁵ To illustrate, Russell refers to famous cases such as Croesus and Priam, both of whom suffered a blow to happiness and virtuous activity because who they were *qua* virtuous agents was stolen by tragedy. On this analysis, Mr. Dumbai also suffers a blow to his happiness and virtuous activity because who he is *qua* virtuous agent (with respect to his family) was stolen by the Ebola virus.

By contrast, on Russell's updated Stoic approach, the self is identical to one's power of choice, regardless of the world, and so happiness is identical to virtuous activity. This view presents a *formalized* conception of self, which holds that "the self and its actions remain always

⁴⁴ Russell attributes this thesis to Aristotle EN.1.10.1100b9, 1101a14-6. Although it may seem that Russell uses "patiency" and "dependency" interchangeably, I take it that "patiency" refers to the desideratum and "dependency" to the thesis about desideratum. He also often uses the term "patients" to express how the self is "patient" (or depends on) the world.

⁴⁵ What does Russell mean by the concept of fusion? Although he claims that virtuous activity and certain external circumstances are "fused" together, the exact relationship between the two is not clear. This is a complaint that I have about Russell's approach and a gap that I try to fill when developing my approach in the next chapter.

distinct from [the] world” (Russell 2013, 96).⁴⁶ The Stoic virtuous person follows her autonomous, rather than heteronomous, norms. This is because heteronomous norms are based on pursuing things in the world, which the Stoics think leads to unhappiness. The formalized conception claims that the autonomous norms governing Stoic virtuous activity can be formalized in terms of a set of ethical principles. They are consistent with one another in that they are not vulnerable to the world. The virtuous person can be virtuous regardless of circumstances, even in cases of tragedy like the Priam and Mr. Dumbai cases. The requirements of virtuous activity are internal and in one’s control. Priam and Mr. Dumbai could remain happy after tragedy, since the world does not take away their ability to engage in virtuous activity.

Overall, Russell favors, but does not argue for, his version of Neo-Aristotelian virtuous activity and happiness over his Neo-Stoic alternative.⁴⁷ The traditional Aristotelian view cannot have a “unified conception” of the self, since it is concerned with both virtuous activity and favorable circumstances, combining two disparate things into a single account. This kind of worry reflects Annas’ complaint that the Aristotelian approach combines two forms of reasoning, one aimed at virtuous activity, and the other aimed at favorable circumstances (1996, 240). For Annas, the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis has an advantage over the Aristotelian necessity thesis, since it only aims at virtuous activity. Russell’s response to this complaint is to unify virtuous activity and favorable circumstances into one conception of the self. He thinks Aristotle should have claimed that happiness is one kind of activity, embodied virtuous activity, which unifies virtuous activity and favorable circumstances. On Russell’s embodied conception of the self, the Priam case does not merely show that happiness is vulnerable to tragic circumstances. When Priam loses his city and family to tragic circumstances, the loss is not only an “external” loss, but a loss of his self, a loss of his virtuous activity.⁴⁸ By contrast, on the formalized approach, a Stoic is able to claim that Priam remains happy even after the tragedies, since his virtuous activity does not depend on factors outside of his control. He can engage in virtuous activity without his family or city.

In summary, on Russell’s modified version of Aristotelian happiness, one’s virtuous activity is embodied and essentially about one’s activities in this place, with these people, and so on. According to Russell, this view makes good on the control thesis because embodied virtuous activity is the central component of happiness. But it also makes good on the dependency thesis

⁴⁶ There is an obvious tension between the formalized account and Russell’s claim that the Stoic line between natural and moral value is “permeable” (2012, 184). This is because the Stoic self is not separate when favorable circumstances become a part of its virtuous activity. I discussed his permeability interpretation of the historical Stoics in the previous chapter. On a charitable reading of Russell, the idea is that although the Stoic self is formal, the distinction is blurred in rare cases when certain circumstances, such as those relevant to emotions and health, become part of one’s virtuous activity.

⁴⁷ Ultimately, the ground for his acceptance of his favored view is unclear. Russell claims, “It is a choice I have made with some faith and much trepidation, which is I think the most that anyone can do here” (2012, 257).

⁴⁸ Note that Russell’s analysis of the Priam case is compatible with one aspect of the more traditional Aristotelian analysis, namely, that Priam could remain virtuous but not happy. Russell’s view is that Priam suffers a loss of virtuous activity, but allows for the possibility that virtue remains in respects other than activity. Traditionally, the intuition is that Priam remains virtuous in disposition, even if he lacks spheres in the world, such as his city and family, for exercising his virtuous disposition. I return to this complication in the following Chapter.

because embodied virtuous activity itself depends on worldly circumstances, outside of one's control.

§3. Critical Evaluation of Russell's Updated Distinction

My main complaint about Russell's updated distinction is that I do not understand how it works. For his embodied self, what does it mean to be "fused" to one's circumstances? For his formalized self, what does it mean to "remain separate" from one's circumstances?

First of all, it is unclear what "fusion" means for the tradition of embodied cognition. The common complaint from embodiment defenders is that for much of intellectual history cognition has been treated as disembodied. The pervasiveness of cognitive disembodiment can be traced back (at least) as far as Descartes.⁴⁹ We might think that his

most lasting and consequential achievement has been his constitution of the mental as an independent ontological domain. By taking the mind as a substance, with cognitions as its modes, he accorded them a status ... without essential regard to other entities (Haugland 1998, 208).

A Cartesian cognitive processor is like a calculator or CPU in that the process is independent of physical substance. These processes do not depend on the external world, as such, but rather on some formal mechanism that identifies and manipulates the structures of ideas. Over the next 350 years or so, this disembodied model of cognition has remained dominant.

But over the past decade or so, there has been an explosion of criticism against this more "Cartesian" approach (and support for embodiment), especially from academic disciplines in the cognitive sciences (anthropology, artificial intelligence, computer science, education, linguistics, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and robotics). The tradition has been developed in different contexts, for different purposes. According to one critic, it is "a lexical band-aid covering a 350 year old wound generated and kept suppurating by a schizoid metaphysics" (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, 275). Embodiment is used to address grievances in many disciplines, each with their own qualms about cognition, and so has been developed in very different ways. The generic motivation for embodiment has turned into *situated* embodiment (Zlatev 1997), *mechanistic* and *phenomenal* embodiment (Sharkey & Ziemke 2001), *natural* embodiment (Ziemke 1999), *naturalistic* embodiment (Zlatev 2001), *historical*, *physical*, *organismoid*, and *organismic* embodiment (Ziemke 2003), and so on.

Given the opaqueness of the embodied tradition, when Russell applies it to Aristotelian virtuous activity and happiness, it is not always clear what he means. What does it mean for the embodied self to be "fused" with the world? Let us start by taking a closer look at what Russell means by the embodied self for virtuous activity and happiness. He describes the account:

⁴⁹ Perhaps the first explicit account of disembodied cognition can be found in the *Phaedo* (82e-83a), where Socrates famously claims that his body is a prison for his soul/mind (*psychia*). However, the Cartesian legacy is notable because it made disembodied cognition the norm.

Happiness is a life of embodied virtuous activity... By “embodiment” here I have in mind a certain way in which a person might understand himself and his happiness in relation to a world he ultimately cannot control. One way of putting the point is that happiness is indexical: I can speak of “my happiness,” by I can also speak of “*this* happiness” of mine. When I speak of “my happiness,” I merely mean mine as opposed to someone else’s. But when I speak of “this happiness,” I mean something more. My life is a life of activities – as a husband, as a father, as a worker, as a member of communities– and those activities are not just *in* my life: they *are* my life, and they are *this* happiness of mine, with all their particularity. This is what I mean by thinking of those activities as “embodied,” which contrasts with thinking that my happiness consists in how I conduct myself and with respect to those activities. Simply put, on the latter view, a person’s happiness would be his life of the activity of *exercising wisdom* as he engages in those other activities (i.e. happiness is a life of “formalized” activity); on the embodied view, a person’s happiness is his life of *those activities*, provided he exercises wisdom in them. (2013, 199)

On first blush, why would Russell call this view “embodied”? He does not emphasize anything having to do with the body itself, but rather picks out claims about indexicality and particularity. He identifies what he often calls the “indexical” nature of virtuous activity and happiness; an individual’s happiness makes essential reference to some specific state of affairs, such as *this* job as opposed to a good job, generally speaking. So, indexicality seems to be one important aspect of his notion of embodiment. In addition, Russell’s description adds that the circumstances indexed are themselves constitutive: *this* job itself, and not merely dealing with or thinking about that state of affairs in the right way, is part of virtuous activity and happiness. Particulars in the world are part of an individuals’ indexical virtuous activity and happiness.

Later, Russell explores the more literal description of embodiment, that our activities depend on the body. For Russell, the self and its activities depend on the body in three main ways: body schema, body image, and one’s sense of practical possibilities (2013, 207-213). First, Shaun Gallagher advances this view to argue that our body schema is a system of processes, which include, for example, sensory processes that shape the way we think about and experience the world (2001, 149-158). Drawing from Gallagher, Russell argues that virtuous activity can be thought of as embodied because body schema is relevant to that activity (2013, 207-209). Your body schema is a combination of different sensory processes that structure your orientation of the world, yourself, and the world situated in term of a physical order. So, if you engage in virtuous activity, you experience that activity as embodied through your schema. Second, body image is crucial for virtuous activity, since it involves “attitudes and assumptions” about your place in the world and your existence (2013, 209-12). For example, Russell refers to a study where female patients were found to be more prone to PTSD if they have a burn on their face; he concludes that self-perception of one’s body image has a major psychological impact in cases of trauma (2013, 210). The idea is that one’s body image is a crucial part of one’s psychological identity. One’s psychological identity is related to embodied virtuous activity since how we think about ourselves informs how we think about the world. For example, third, the body grounds your sense of practical possibilities for activity (2013, 212-213). He claims our bodies are:

the very possibility of acting in the world: what we can do now, what expectations we can have, and what plans we can realistically make, how much time we will need, how we extend into the future, and with what certainty we can rely on any of this. (2013, 212)

The idea is that any possible activity we might engage in depends on our bodies. Russell draws from the biography of Epictetus who suffered a physical impediment from a broken leg (2013, 212-3). In this case, his possibilities in life changed. Obviously, he can no longer be a marathon runner. Yet, Epictetus was also able to overcome his bodily change by reorienting his sense of possibilities. As we know, he reoriented himself by replacing his heteronomous norms with autonomous ones; he learned to care more about his power of choice than his power of leg use. Just the same, physical change to his leg was relevant to his reorienting. So, like body schema and body image, our sense of possibilities shapes how we think about ourselves. In summary, Russell's point is that our psychological identity is embodied in three main ways, through our perceptions of ourselves, through our body image, and our sense of possible activities.

I am sympathetic to Russell's strategy of drawing the distinction on the basis of how one's activities are connected to the world. However, it is unclear what he means by "embodied" activity and this blurs the distinction between his two approaches. Sometimes he uses "embodied" to refer to how the self depends on the body, at others to the "indexical" relation of the self's activities in reference to specific contexts, and others to the particular objects in one's activities becoming constitutive of the self's activity. As I will argue in the following chapter, I think that the idea of "embodiment" that Russell describes can be unpacked into three different categories: embodiment (virtuous activity depends on the body), embeddedness (virtuous activity makes use of specific contexts in the world), and extension (the boundaries of virtuous activity go beyond the physical boundaries of the virtuous person and into the world). I think that my attempts to flesh-out the ways in which virtuous activity can be connected to the world is consistent with Russell's idea that activities are "fused" to circumstances, but, I have broader criticisms which I will address in the following chapter.

Regardless of how this "fusion" works, Russell's updated distinction is unclear. On the one hand, the meaning of "embodiment" seems to change for Russell, which makes his Neo-Aristotelian approach hard to discern. But on the other, it is unclear how the formalized activities grounding his Neo-Stoic account "remain distinct" from the external world. If formalized activities are *disembodied* in all of the same ways he claims Neo-Aristotelian ones could be embodied, then Russell's Neo-Stoic account seems vulnerable to obvious counterexamples. Take Russell's discussion of how body schema, body image, and sense of possibilities is important for one's psychological identity. Isn't this the case for the Stoics as well? If someone loses the use of part of his body, then it seems that his body schema, body image, and sense of possibilities would also change on any plausible Stoic account. I am sure Russell would agree. He uses the example of Epictetus. But this is why the distinction needs clarification. Surely, the body is important on any account. For example, as we saw with Annas's distinction, it is unclear how you can be happy when you do not have enough food to think. So too, it is unclear how, on the formalized approach, the self could "remain always distinct from [the] world" (Russell 2013,

96). If it is unclear how the formalized self remains distinct, then it is unclear how exactly Russell's Neo-Stoic approach differs from his Neo-Aristotelian one.

More specifically, as I noted in the previous chapter, Russell suggests that on the formalized Stoic approach to happiness, particular things in the world can become constitutive of the virtuous person's activities and happiness. He claims that the historical distinction between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches surprisingly does not depend on the role of circumstances, as such, in the virtuous person's life, since the two agree that circumstances could become valuable in certain cases (2013, 183-4). This is because the line between what is circumstances, on the one hand, and virtuous activity and happiness, on the other, is actually permeable. For this exegetical point, he references a passage that certain emotions can "fulfill" or "participate in" happiness (AD.II.5g). Therefore, it seems like Russell's formalized Stoic approach allows for particular things in the virtuous person's activities to become constitutive of her happiness. If this is right, indexicality and particularity apply both to embodied and to formalized approaches. So, how are the two different?

It seems that circumstances for developing into a virtuous person are necessary. A formalized self does not emerge from nowhere, *deus ex machina*. As I explained in Chapter 2, it arises out of a process of moral education, starting from heteronomous norms, where the virtuous person *prefers* what is naturally advantageous, such as being full, over what is naturally disadvantageous, such as being hungry. At some point during moral education, the Stoic virtuous person will replace her heteronomous norms with autonomous ones, which do not depend on contingent factors outside of one's control. This is when she is able to *choose* virtue and happiness in terms of the formal requirements of her autonomous norms. Heteronomous norms aim at natural advantage in the world, while autonomous norms aim at virtuous activity for its own sake.

These formal requirements depend on the world. The virtuous person needs some sort of moral education to learn how to be virtuous in the first place. For example, she might need access to some good role model or positive example of an autonomous norm. At the very least, she needs some reason to replace her heteronomous norms with autonomous ones. Imagine someone who grows up with no shortage of any favorable circumstances. She has everything naturally advantageous including plenty of food, pleasure, and so on. However, she never learns that aiming for a natural advantage can cause unhappiness. This is because she is always successful when she aims at a favorable circumstance. So she never has any reason to not aim at them. In this case, it is hard to imagine how she would ever learn to sacrifice her heteronomous norms. Perhaps she has a positive role model to teach her to give up her heteronomous norms and replace them with autonomous ones. But what if she doesn't have a role model? Imagine that she is the daughter of a rich and powerful dictator that allows her to want for nothing and rewards her for non-virtuous behavior. He spoils her out of a mistaken conception of what will make her life go well. Whenever she aims at a favorable circumstance, she is rewarded, so it always makes sense for her to pursue things in the world such as money, power, and so on. It seems like it would be impossible for her to learn to be virtuous in Stoic terms. She needs some kind of moral education.

Simply put, Russell's Stoic approach cannot be disembodied in the ways that he claims that his Aristotelian approach is embodied. In some important respects, a plausible account of Stoic virtuous activity cannot "remain separate" from the world. The patiency of happiness on circumstances is eliminable for the formalized self. Although the formalized self consists entirely in the power of choice, there are obvious things outside of our power of choice underlying that power. In addition to moral education, it seems that the world must have the minimally favorable circumstances necessary for maintaining biological life and cognitive function. For example, not having enough air to breathe or calories for the neural activity to think takes away this power of choice. So, at the very least, any plausible Stoic approach is committed to some minimum favorable circumstances that ground the ability to maintain biological life and cognitive function. If biological life, cognitive function, and learning to become virtuous are impossible in one's circumstances, then surely virtuous activity is also impossible.

§4. Conclusion: Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, I broached the topic of the role of circumstances in happiness by introducing Annas's Stoic complaint to the Aristotelian tradition. This complaint can be unpacked into concerns about elitism and relativism, but, as I argued, it is not clear that one approach is the advantage over the other. This is because, as Annas also acknowledges, the dispute is in need of clarification by taking a closer look at the ancient debate. However, after I surveyed the ancient debate in Chapter 2, I argue that Annas's proposed distinction does not hold. She claims that no favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity on her Stoic approach, but this view is vulnerable to obvious counterexamples. Therefore, I am sympathetic to Russell's move to reorient the debate around competing conceptions of the self or, as he puts it, how one's activity is connected to the world. I am especially sympathetic to the idea of embodiment as a way of connecting virtuous activity to the world. In this Chapter, my complaint against Russell is that it is unclear what distinguishes embodied from formalized virtuous activity. There are many ways to describe embodiment, which Russell embraces, and it seems that the formalized approach must also accept some of these ways. In Chapter 4, I will use Russell's basic strategy to clarify the dispute on the basis of competing conceptions of how virtuous activity is connected to the actual world. I will also argue for my view of a nontraditional sufficiency thesis, which claims that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for that activity.

Chapter 4

A Nontraditional Sufficiency Thesis:

Virtuous Activity is Sufficient for Happiness and Minimally Favorable Circumstances Are Necessary for that Activity

In the chronicles of the epidemic that swept through this country like the plague, Mr. Dumbai, 36, is considered a success story. He is an Ebola survivor. For almost 30 days, he battled the virus, first on his own, covered in a blanket and sitting over a pot of hot water steeped with tea leaves, the African way. When that did not work, he spent six days in a local hospital waiting to get a diagnosis, and 16 days at a hospital in Monrovia fighting the debilitating loss of blood and fluid.

But when he finally emerged into the daylight, an Ebola victor, it was to the news that greets so many others who survived the disease: His family was dead. Mr. Dumbai had lost both parents. Two sisters. One brother. Two aunts. Two uncles. Four nieces and nephews.

That remains one of the biggest curses of the disease that ravaged the West African coast in 2014 — the punishment it inflicted on entire families. With the exception of health workers, who contracted the disease by heroically taking care of sick people they did not know, most Ebola victims got sick because they took care of loved ones. Consequently, most of the more than 5,000 people in Liberia who contracted, and then beat, the disease have become walking case studies in coping with immeasurable loss.

Now, more than a year later, Mr. Dumbai, like so many other survivors of the disease, has his life back. But, like so many other survivors of the disease, it is not the same life.

He is still selling used clothing on the side of the road. He is still living in his same house, about 31 miles from his home in Dolos Town. He is still hoping to get a better job, one that will properly use his economics degree from the University of Liberia.

But Mr. Dumbai's eyesight seems to fade in and out, a consequence of a virus that continues to flummox the medical world. And like the Scottish nurse who survived Ebola and was recently hospitalized with another Ebola-related flare-up, Mr. Dumbai has recurring health issues, including joint pain and weakness.

Mr. Dumbai, whose demeanor was quiet and reserved even before he had Ebola, has almost shrunk into himself, friends say. Now hours pass without his uttering a sound, even when he is surrounded by chattering people. His cellphone rarely rings, an anomaly in a country where everyone seems to relish constant streams of telephone calls and text messages.

It is difficult to chronicle absence, but for Mr. Dumbai, the silent cellphone is perhaps the best measure. There are no calls from his brother Rashid, a Real Madrid soccer fan, to heckle him about Chelsea, Mr. Dumbai's favorite soccer club.

Nor are there phone calls from his sister Miatta's husband to complain that she is not tending to his needs. Mr. Dumbai had often found himself as the de facto counselor for Miatta, who was six months pregnant when she contracted Ebola, and her husband during their marital squabbles. He had not really minded playing referee. It kept him connected to his sprawling family...

Early Sunday, Aug. 17, 2014, Julia Dumbai died. Mr. Dumbai's aunt, uncle and cousin had also recently died. A few days later, Mr. Dumbai's pregnant sister Miatta was dead.

And Mr. Dumbai had a fever...

When the disease finally drained its last victim in Dolos Town three months later, more than 200 people in this village of fewer than 2,000 were dead.

Feeling sick in August, Mr. Dumbai made his way to the local hospital, where he writhed on a mat for six days until the diagnosis he already knew came back. Transported to the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia, he listened as a fellow patient, a young man named Trocon, urged him to hang tough. "God will make it for us to survive," Trocon told him. "You will see."

Trocon died that night.

But Mr. Dumbai was starting to realize that he would beat the disease. As he got stronger, he thought of life without his mother and sister Miatta. Who was going to take care of his father? Mr. Dumbai started making plans.

... Mr. Dumbai found out that his mother, aunt, sister, uncle and cousin were not the only ones to die. Recalling that day, Mr. Dumbai dropped his voice so low it was almost impossible to hear him, as he chronicled the 13 members of his family lost to Ebola...

A second sister and another uncle and cousin were dead as well. "Then he told me about Jennifer, my niece, and Sam, my nephew," he said.

Those were Rashid's children. If they had died, he thought, then what about Rashid?

The confirmation came. Rashid had died as well.

Mr. Dumbai was still not finished. "Finally he told me about my auntie, my mother's sister," he said, who had come to Dolos Town when his mother was sick, to help take care of her.

"She was the last one to die," Mr. Dumbai said.⁵⁰

§1. Introduction: Summary of the Nontraditional Sufficiency Thesis

The paradigm case of Priam in the eudaimonist discourse could seem farfetched to some today. Who has to worry about the Trojan War? Yet, lives are shattered by circumstances all the time. The point of the Priam example is to emphasize how happiness is vulnerable to the world.

⁵⁰ Cooper, Helen. "Ebola, Ruthless to Families, Leaves Liberian Man Alive and Alone." The New York Times. 25 Mar. 2016. [Web](#). 26 Mar. 2016.

Recall the example of Mr. Dumbai, which I mention briefly in the introductory chapter and quote at length above in the epigram. This is a recent, real-life, guiding example to help us explore the role of favorable circumstances in virtuous activity and happiness. Gaye Dumbai, whose family died in the 2014 West African Ebola Outbreak, is an updated Priam-case.⁵¹ Like the Priam example, Mr. Dumbai's loss is extreme. He emerged a survivor and then slowly found out about the deaths of his family members. Obviously, the outbreak was devastating. After such a tragedy, friends say that he "has almost shrunk into himself." He does not seem like the same person anymore.

What is more is that there are many people in Mr. Dumbai's shoes. Thousands of people died in the outbreak including 10% of Dolos Town. According to the World Health Organization public data, there were over 10,000 cases of Ebola in Liberia alone, with nearly 5,000 deaths and new cases being reported as recently as May 2016 (WHO 2016). Outside of Liberia, the numbers are of course much larger worldwide. There are thousands of Ebola survivors like Mr. Dumbai and many of them probably woke up to find that their families had died. In addition, Ebola is just one example of a widespread, recent tragedy. In present times, there are smaller events but nonetheless devastating events on the news seemingly every day. Also, people's lives are often marred by less newsworthy circumstances. If you live your life well and do your best to engage in virtuous activity, you might contract the Ebola virus, die, have your family die or you might be diagnosed with cancer or be the victim of an unexpected terrorist attack. There is no shortage of examples of how our lives are vulnerable to tragedy.

On the traditional approaches, can Mr. Dumbai be happy? According to the traditional Stoic approach to happiness, he can be happy despite losing his family. According to the traditional Aristotelian account, like Priam, Mr. Dumbai is no longer happy, but he could still engage in virtuous activity. (As I explained earlier, an Aristotelian could still accept the possibility that Mr. Dumbai can become happy again.) I think that both of the traditional approaches are motivated by very appealing intuitions. The Stoic one wants to claim that virtuous activity guarantees happiness. From the perspective of ethical theory, this kind of universality is appealing. Regardless of contingencies, virtuous people are guaranteed happiness. A slave, Epictetus, and an emperor, Marcus Aurelius, are both happy because they both exercise virtue, even though they live in very different circumstances. This kind of universality is the motivation for saying that Mr. Dumbai can still be happy. By contrast, the Aristotelian approach is motivated by the contrasting intuition that happiness is vulnerable to circumstances. Cases of tragedy, like Priam and Mr. Dumbai, pump the intuition that happiness depends on the world. Obviously, if such terrible things occur in your life, it would be hard to describe you as happy. Your life does not go well and you do not flourish when tragedy steals your loved ones. This is why the traditional Stoic account seems implausible in extreme cases.

My view is that circumstances have taken away Mr. Dumbai's ability to engage in virtuous activity and that is the reason why he is unhappy. I propose that the activities with his family members as a paradigm example of virtuous activity. Mr. Dumbai's relationship with

⁵¹ I think that the examples of Priam and Mr. Dumbai are very similar; they occur in different contexts, but they both tell the story of someone we could plausibly describe as virtuous and happy who suffers a devastating loss.

Miatta (or another loved one, like Rashid) plays a similar role in this example as Priam's relationship with Hector (or another loved one, like Hecuba). In both cases, external tragedy is devastating because it takes away relationships that are central to virtuous activity and, therefore, also central to happiness. This sort of position satisfies the two traditional intuitions in ancient eudaimonism that might at first seem to be in tension. All that Mr. Dumbai needs to be happy is virtuous activity. He does not need to be rich or famous. However, there are also things outside of his control necessary for engaging in virtuous activity in the first place. For example, the lives of his loved ones seem necessary for his exercise of interpersonal virtue, but the Ebola virus takes away their lives through no fault of his own.

Are activities of interpersonal relationships a good example of virtuous activity? It is difficult to give examples for my project, since the theory of virtue is unspecified. Examples like Priam and Mr. Dumbai could be analyzed in many ways, since there are different theories about which character traits qualify as virtues. The reason I focus on Mr. Dumbai's relationship with his family is that I think it is an intuitive example of virtuous activity that cuts across most virtue ethical theories. On any plausible theory of virtue, how you treat others, especially people with whom you engage in important long-term relationships, is an important aspect of virtuous activity. Depending on the theory, different character traits could count as interpersonally virtuous, for example, good will, love, compassion, care, dependability or reliability, devotion, forgiveness, loyalty, and trustworthiness.

Furthermore, even if there are no virtues that are special to our interpersonal relationships, as traditional Stoic theories of virtue often suggest (Annas 1996), relationships can nonetheless provide robust areas of life in which to exercise virtues such as courage, friendliness, wit or humor, responsibility, patience, kindness, teamwork or cooperation, and generosity. Even if a theory of virtue does not include specific virtues for which interpersonal relationships are central, given the importance of relationships most people's everyday lives, it is hard to imagine a theory of virtue where engaging well in an interpersonal relationship isn't a good example of virtuous activity. I am not concerned about the specific theory of virtue or about which individual virtues are relevant to engaging interpersonal relationships well. Rather, I make the uncontroversial assumption that engaging well in an interpersonal relationship is a good example of virtuous activity.⁵² Let us assume that Mr. Dumbai counseling his sister is an example of virtuous activity. The way he engages with his sister is plausibly described as loving, compassionate, caring, kind, and so on, regardless of the theory of virtue.

I will argue that virtuous activity is connected to the world in as many as three possible ways: embodiment, embeddedness, and extension: (1) virtuous activity depends intricately not just on the brain, but also on the body, (2) it routinely exploits structures in the natural and social environments, (3) the boundaries of virtuous activity extend beyond the physical boundaries of the virtuous person. Call this set of possibilities the 3Es framework. Each of these three Es are

⁵² I say "engage well" because someone could engage in an interpersonal relationship in a vicious way. It is not difficult to imagine in cases of abusive relationships.

easy to see in the Mr. Dumbai example. By way of introduction, I will explain them very briefly here and then in more detail later.

First, Mr. Dumbai's counseling his sister on his mobile phone is embodied in the obvious sense that his activity depends on his body. That is, he uses his auditory system to hear what his sister is saying; he uses his vocal system to talk to his sister. Second, the way he talks to his sister makes use of contexts of his environment. He uses his cell phone to talk to his sister because he lives in "a country where everyone seems to relish constant streams of telephone calls and text messages." In addition, the virtuous activity of supporting his sister takes the form of de facto marriage counseling because Miatta was experiencing marital strife with her husband. He uses his knowledge of the marriage to engage with his sister by giving her advice. If not for the need for counseling, Mr. Dumbai would engage with his sister in different ways. Embodiment and embeddedness are uncontroversial claims in virtue ethics. However, extension is more provocative. It claims that Mr. Dumbai's relationship with his sister is part of his virtuous activity. Moreover, since Miatta is the key component of this relationship, she is part of it. According to extension, when Mr. Dumbai loses his sister, he loses a central component of himself in his exercise of interpersonal virtuous activity. The reason that he is unhappy is not simply because the death of his sister is the loss of a favorable circumstance, but rather, it is a loss of virtuous activity. In short, she is part of his virtuous activity.

In this chapter, first, I explain what I mean by embodiment, embeddedness, and extension. To do this, I follow Russell in drawing from analogies about cognition; then, I will explain what each would mean for virtuous activity. Second, I argue for a nontraditional sufficiency thesis: virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and some circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. This view satisfies two intuitions from the traditional dispute in ancient philosophy that might seem in tension: happiness depends on favorable circumstances, and virtuous activity guarantees happiness. In support of this view, I also argue that a minimum threshold of specific categories of circumstances are necessary for the kind of virtuous activity I propose. I think that these circumstances are the very least necessary for virtuous activity.

§2. Virtuous Activity: Embedded, Embodied, and Extended

Russell has identified an interesting conceptual space for the development of virtue ethical theories, but there are many fine-grained possibilities for filling that space. He makes an invaluable contribution to eudaimonism. His proposal is a novel, helpful connection between two areas of philosophy that have always seemed very distant from one another. This kind of proposal can make sense of why a loss of *this* place or *these* relationships is not only a loss of happiness, but also a loss of virtuous activity. Yet, Russell has only offered us a tentative proposal, a gesture towards applying his insight. In his defense, however, his goal is not to offer a detailed research program. Rather, he draws from the ancient debate to tell a plausible story about why something like "embodiment" can help virtue ethicists think about happiness. Then, he focuses on the issue of loss, in order to clarify and update the disagreement between Aristotelian and Stoic traditions. As I argued in the previous chapter, Russell's use of

“embodied” virtuous activity is in need of clarification. So, what I say in this section might be a welcomed fleshing-out of his project. However, as I will address in the following section, I disagree with the way Russell uses his insight in terms of the rest of his virtue ethical theory. Whether virtuous activity is necessary or sufficient for happiness is not his focus; rather, he addresses that dispute quickly to instead highlight interesting tensions between the two approaches on his reframing.

In this section, first, I very briefly explain three ways in which cognitive activity can be connected to the world. To be clear, I am not presenting arguments from theses about cognition; rather, I am trying to capture basic ideas. Next, I explain how each of these three ways applies to virtuous activity. The analogy between cognition and virtuous activity is useful, since the kind of virtuous activity I am concerned with in this discourse is intellectualist, that is to say, virtuous activity is an excellence of intellectual activity. However, it is also important to note that my claims about virtuous activity will not stand or fall on the basis of claims about cognition. The argument is not, “If these claims hold for cognition, then they hold for virtuous activity.” Rather, the claims about cognition are useful metaphors when thinking about how virtuous activity is connected to the world. So, the point of exploring cognition is to help us think about Russell’s insight and explore the different ways in which something like “embodiment” could be applied. Of course, there are more nuanced philosophical controversies about cognition, but I would like to set those aside for now and just give the basic ideas. Later, I will consider how some worries about cognition could be applied to virtuous activity.

For cognition, the three Es are:

1. *Embodiment*: “Cognition depends not just on the brain, but also on the body.”
2. *Embeddedness*: “Cognitive activity routinely exploits structures in the natural and social environments.”
3. *Extension*: “The boundaries of cognition extend beyond the boundaries of individual organisms.”⁵³

Consider the example of deciding where to go to dinner with a date. What is the nature of that cognitive process? If it is embodied, your brain and body behave as the same, complex cognitive unit. For example, your decision may depend on dynamic interactions between the sensorimotor areas of the brain and relevant parts of the body (such as your sense organs and digestive system). If it is embedded, your brain (and body) stretch out into the environment to perform the cognitive task, such as by offloading the cognitive process onto the world, or, simply using contexts in the world to make your decision. For example, you may make your decision based on what is nearby, when your movie starts, whom you are out on a date with, his or her preferences, and so on. If it is extended, then the cognitive process takes place, at least in part, outside of your skull. Chalmers uses the example of exploiting his iPhone to “call up a memo with the names of ... favorite dishes” with “Google ever present to help settle any disputes” (Chalmers, from Clark

⁵³ This version of the three E theses is from Robbins and Aydede 2009. Earlier versions of the extension thesis said “boundaries of the skull” or “head” (see Clark and Chalmers 1998).

2008's preface, ix). The confluence of these three theses, each up for independent argument, is that cognitive processes *embody* themselves in your body, *embed* themselves in your environment, and *extend* themselves beyond your body to include objects in your world.

Andy Clark is the philosopher responsible for the extension thesis and he offers the following definition.

3*. [The] actual local operations that realize certain forms of human cognizing include inextricable tangles of feedback, feed-forward, and feed-around loops: loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body, and world. **The local mechanisms of mind, if this is correct, are not all in the head. Cognition leaks out into body and world.** (2008, xxviii)⁵⁴

The simple definition of extension from Robbins and Aydede is supposed to capture the same idea as the more nuanced definition from Clark. Cognitive activity “extending out” and “leaking out” into the world refer to the same idea where things in the world become a part of the activity. The claim that the boundaries of cognitive activity “extend beyond the boundaries” of the head means that the “mechanisms of the mind are not all in the head.” This is implicit in the 3E thesis and made explicit in 3*. The difference between embeddedness and extension is that, for the one, things in the environment outside of one’s skull can facilitate cognitive process, and, for the other, things in the environment can be constitutive of one’s process.

Since extension depends on the promiscuous, criss-crossing loops of connections between the brain, body, and word, it is difficult to separate out extension from embodiment and embeddedness. In the philosophy of mind, the three E theses come together to “supersize” the mind (Clark 2008).⁵⁵ For Clark, the mind supersedes itself by embodying itself in a body, embedding itself in an epistemic environment and uniting itself with both in extended cognitive activity. There is an array of overlapping views under the headings of embodiment and embeddedness.⁵⁶ When philosophers like Robbins and Aydede specify different theses, it is a project of diagnosing different trends in overlapping bodies of literature. These diagnoses try to capture broad sets of views, without clear consensus in each set. So, embodiment, embeddedness and extension overlap with one another. When Clark champions extension, he combines and argues for the theses together. Cognitive processes are not only embodied, but embedded and extended into that environment so that a thinking, cognizing entity is constituted not only by the embodied mind but also by an embedding environment.

The difference between embodiment and embeddedness is that the first thesis claims that the cognitive processing depends on the body, while the second claims that it depends on the environment outside of one’s brain. Yet, a cognitive process such as counting on your fingers

⁵⁴ The bolded text is my emphasis.

⁵⁵ For our purposes, I take cognition, cognitive activity, and the mind to be the same thing. For other purposes, these terms might be importantly different.

⁵⁶ Clark and others also pick out “enaction” as a fourth E thesis. This kind of thesis combines many themes in this literature to emphasize the role of the organism *acting* in her environment. I omitted enaction, since I do not think it is importantly different from embodiment and embeddedness for my purposes of applying these theses to virtuous activity.

could be both embodied, depending on your fingers, and embedded, depending on the environment outside of your brain. So too, that same process could count as extended out into the environment where your fingers are counted. In this case, your fingers serve a role in your cognitive process, so they are part of the mind in this sense. Your use of your fingers is part of your counting process. For Clark, embodiment and embeddedness are relatively trivial, but extension is provocative. Obviously, our cognitive processes depend on our bodies and environments, but it is controversial to claim that things in the world can become parts of our minds.

Cognitive Embodiment

The most immediate gap that embodiment attempts to fill is the question of how our cognitive processes gain semantic content. The motivation for embodiment is a complaint against the way that others describe cognition. For example, although Newell & Simon (1976) famously argue that a physical symbol system has the necessary and sufficient means for intelligence, it is not clear how physical symbols could ground meaning. Proponents of embodiment often argue that the semantic grounding for symbols does not lie in the mind's ability to produce a mental representation of the world, but instead lies in the role the body plays in connecting the mind to the world.

Grounding the symbol for 'chair', for instance, involves both the reliable detection of chairs, and also the appropriate reactions to them ... The agent must know what sitting is and be able to systematically relate that knowledge to the perceived scene, and thereby see what things (even if non-standardly) afford sitting. In the normal course of things, such knowledge is gained by mastering the skill of sitting (not to mention the related skills of walking, standing up, and moving between sitting and standing), including refining one's perceptual judgments as to what objects invite or allow these behaviors; grounding 'chair', that is to say, involves a very specific set of physical skills and experiences. (Anderson 2003, 102–103)

Implicit in this kind of approach to grounding semantic content is the claim that perceptual processes are not simply input mechanisms. The ability to see the chair also relies on bodily depth perception, eye movement, and even head movement. For example, we are able to "mentally flip" ambiguous illusions (such as the Duck-Rabbit or Necker Cube) by moving our eyeballs (and therefore attending our visual processes to a different part of the image, towards the duck or rabbit, towards the "front" of either cube). So the argument is that bodily factors, such as eye movement, are parts of the cognitive process. This underlies one possible route for describing the body's contribution to meaning. For example, Gallagher advances this view to argue that our body schema is a system of processes, which include, for example, sensory processes that structure our experience the world (Gallagher 2001, 149-158).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Russell draws from Gallagher to claim that virtuous activity depends on our body schema (2013, 207ff).

Cognitive Embeddedness

The embeddedness thesis is that situational contexts play a role in facilitating cognitive processes. The relevant literature describes many ways in which cognition could be embedded such as by “offloading” the process onto the environment, in a time-pressured and task-oriented way. One definition of embedded cognition is that “processes depend *very* heavily, in hitherto unexpected ways, on organismically external props or devices and on the structure of the environment in which cognition takes place” (Rupert 2004, 5). The idea is that we use these props and devices outside of our skulls to help us think. Take an example from Kirsh and Maglio (1994), who studied cognitive processes while playing Tetris, a computer puzzle-game about spatial reasoning.⁵⁸ The player must rotate differently shaped tetrominos to make them fit together. Further, these shapes are “falling” from the top of the computer screen, so this task is time-pressured. The cognitive psychological research on participants playing the game suggests that instead of solving the puzzle (say, by mentally rotating shapes) and then rotating them on the computer screen to complete the task, players would instead rotate falling pieces on the screen to simplify the problem, to save time and make it easier to see where the pieces would fit. Tetris players exploit opportunities in their environment to lighten their cognitive loads. The opportunities found in one’s environment are often described as “affordances,” a term coined by James Gibson.

The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes ... It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment. (1979, 127)

We perceive the world not only in terms of spatially related objects, but also in terms of possibilities for action. This idea has been applied to many fields, for example, in education for an affordance theory of learning. For example, perceptual affordances lend themselves to a kind of ecological system of perception, such that the perceptual organs are part of a larger system in the environment. Although Gibson focuses on perception, the general takeaway is that our cognitive processes’ dependence on affordances make them a part of an ecosystem of thought, involving both the mind and the environment, where those affordances are housed.

Cognitive Extension

The main claim of extension is that cognitive processes extend out into your world, beyond your skull. Your cognitive processes extend, for example, to your Smartphone. They literally extend to the Smartphone itself and not merely to your bodily perception of that object. There are transcranial processes that would count as cognitive processes if only they occurred within your skull.⁵⁹ The boldness of this claim is perhaps best illustrated by the now canonical thought experiment: imagine there is someone named Otto who suffers an impaired memory from Alzheimer’s disease (Clark and Chalmers 1998). So, in order to remember the location of

⁵⁸ Clark also uses this example (1998, 65ff).

⁵⁹ Take the example of transcranial magnetic stimulation of the brain, where neurons are depolarized or hyperpolarized non-invasively in order to, for example, enhance cognitive performance or alter affective states.

the museum he wants to visit, he writes the address down in a notebook. By contrast, Inga, whose memory is not impaired, just remembers the address in her head. Given this parable, we might think that Otto and his notebook form a single mind. His cognitive processes are extended to the notebook; it plays the same role as Inga's memory in her process.⁶⁰ To be clear, the extension is a more radical thesis than embeddedness. This is because Otto's notebook is not only an opportunity to offload his cognitive process (memory) onto his environment, but also constitutive of the process. His notebook is part of his mind and not merely an affordance for his mind to exploit.

In addition to the notebook, Otto's mind might extend to his broader social environment. Clark claims: "What about socially extended cognition? ... For example, the waiter at my favorite restaurant might act as a repository for my beliefs about my favorite meals.... In other cases, one's beliefs might be embodied in one's secretary, one's accountant, or one's collaborator" (2008, 231-32). Imagine, for example, that Andy Clark develops Alzheimer's disease and therefore naturally adopts Otto's strategy for remembering things, such as addresses. However, Andy's condition progresses to the point where David Chalmers checks him into an assisted living community. At some point, Andy's memory loss gets to the point where he cannot even recognize his notebook ... he cannot recognize David's face, engage in meaningful collaborations about the philosophy of mind, or advise his dissertation students. In short, Andy's loss of social extensions, such as friends and work, is similar to a loss of his notebook.

Virtuous Activity and Worries about Cognitive Extension

Since cognitive extension is a radical thesis, it is not surprising that it has been a lightning-rod for criticisms in the philosophy of mind. Again, I would like to emphasize that my proposal for virtuous activity does not depend on these claims about cognition. Extended cognition is a set of descriptive claims about the way the world is, that is, about how cognition actually works, while what I want to say about virtuous activity is a set of normative claims about how things in the world could be important for virtuous activity. So, in principle, it could be that cognitive extension is false, but it is still useful to think of things in the world as part of virtuous activity. In intellectualist approaches to virtue ethics, including Aristotelian and Stoic traditions, virtue and happiness are structured by practical wisdom (*phronesis*), a form of rationality about acting in the world. So the discussion of cognitive processes can be applied to virtuous activity, which consists in excellent moral agency or, roughly, the power of choice (*prohairesis*). For a virtue ethicist, as opposed to a philosopher of mind, the nature of this excellence is the area of concern. Should we think of moral agency to exercise practical wisdom as not only embodied, but also embedded in situational contexts, the way virtue ethicists usually assume, but also extended into the virtuous person's environment? This kind of question does

⁶⁰ The argument here depends on the Parity Principle, which states roughly that if a process occurs in the world, but plays the same functional role as if it were in the head, then (due to functional parity) we should think of both processes as cognitive. The first iteration of this thesis, described here, first shows up in Clark and Chalmers 1998.

not depend on whether the three Es about cognition accurately describe how people actually think.

Nevertheless, given the parallel, the worries about cognitive extension can illuminate analogous concerns for virtuous activity. So, here, I briefly review the most famous objection, cognitive bloating. My common response to any objection about cognition is that it is not worrisome because it does not engage argumentatively with claims about virtuous activity. Even so, the objection raises interesting questions to help us develop different virtue ethical theories. In short, controversies about extended cognition can be useful for identifying options. So, my goal here is not to respond exhaustively, but rather to demonstrate a common strategy for approaching worries and identifying areas of theoretically rich options.

The cognitive bloating worry is that the conditions which allow something to be extended would permit too much (Rowlands 2009). If a notebook counts as part of Otto's cognitive process, then why not the entire phonebook, or even anything that you could possibly find by searching Google (Rupert 2004)?⁶¹ Simply put, if one transcranial affordance, such as Otto's notebook, counts as cognitive, then why don't all possible affordances count as cognitive as well? This is a kind of demarcation problem; if the skull fails to draw the line between cognitive and non-cognitive processes, then what could possibly make that distinction? Even if Clark and Chalmers are right that cognition is not confined to the physical boundaries of the skull, extended cognition risks absurd inflation by not drawing a clear line itself. There is also a related objection that in failing to make a clear distinction, the extended mind view makes a fallacy of equivocation; the causal-constitutional fallacy argument claims that extension confuses causal coupling as constitutive (Adams and Aizawa 2008, 67-80).⁶² That is to say, there is no good reason to think that an object, like Otto's notebook, is part of his cognitive process, instead of a mere causal factor in the process. Again, what draws the line?

The general response from extended cognition supporters is to draw a line. They usually claim that for something to be extended, it must have an *important* role in the cognitive process (Clark 2008), with different options to choose from.⁶³ This kind of response clarifies and defends new conditions for demarcating cognitive processes from others. When applied to virtuous activity, the question might be how far should the virtuous person's activities extend? To the other side of the world? To future generations? To be precise, the question concerns the roles an object of circumstance must play in order to have to be considered part of the virtuous person's activities. Like cognition, the answer for virtue ethics is that something must fulfill an *important* role in the virtuous person's activities. Here, "importance" is of course an evaluative term in need of independent argument. Does an interpersonal relationship have to play a central part in

⁶¹ Rupert 2004 explains the intuitive pull of the thought experiment as a kind of "epistemic dependence." Otto's knowledge depends on his notebook, which is an obvious and much weaker claim than cognitive extension.

⁶² They open with the humorous jab: "Question: Why did the pencil think that $2 + 2 = 4$?, Clark's Answer: Because it was coupled to the mathematician," (2008, 67).

⁶³ Some philosophers of mind adopt a weaker version of the thesis. For example, extension defenders have offered different version of the parity principle or investigate other aspects of the diverse components of cognitive systems. Rowlands 2010 for instance agrees that cognition is not confined to the skull and instead claims that mental states depend, for their realization, on an amalgamation of bodily, neural, and external processes.

the virtuous person's life to matter? Or do less personal ones, say with countrymen also count? What about the general cosmopolitan relationship we all share with other human beings? At that end of the spectrum, for example, Diogenes of Sinope claims, "I am citizen of the world" (DL.VI.2.63).

It would be possible to develop a virtue ethical theory that gives great importance to a virtue of impersonal benevolence and therefore superficially demand the same kind of impersonal charity, for example, as Peter Singer's version of utilitarianism. Alternatively, a virtue ethical theory could propose a very narrow account of what is important, which might claim that something must be a more central part of your life in order to be a part of your virtuous activity. So too, the importance might depend on context-embedded features about the virtuous person's experiences; perhaps something in her life gives her special reason to care about future generations and climate change. In short, the importance an object of the world must play in order to be considered a part of virtuous activity is open to argument for different kinds of virtue ethical theories. There are also many possibilities internal to the Aristotelian tradition. As I discussed in Chapter 2, a traditional Aristotle describes many far-reaching areas of virtuous activity including aspects of human nature, such as certain appetites (EN.3.10) and emotions (EN.3.6), tangible possessions (EN.4.1-2), honor or respect (EN.4.3), friendships and other interpersonal relationships (EN.8-9), as well as a general concern for the common good (EN.5).

Virtuous Activity

For virtuous activity, the three E claims are:

1. *Embodiment*: Virtuous activity depends intricately not just on the brain, but also on the body.
2. *Embeddedness*: Virtuous activity routinely exploits structures in the natural and social environments.
3. *Extension*: The boundaries of virtuous activity extend beyond the physical boundaries of the virtuous person.⁶⁴

I clarify and distinguish this set of claims by explaining what each is and how it works for virtue ethical theory. Again, I am not arguing from these thesis, but rather trying to describe basic ideas using some examples. The three theses are important to separate out how we can think of virtuous activity as extended out into the world. One example I suggest to flesh out the 3Es framework is Aristotle's case of Milo (EN.2.6). This is a good example because it shows that embodiment and embeddedness are uncontroversial. It is a paradigm example of what virtue ethicists mean when they say that virtuous activity depends on the body and is context-embedded. Of course, extension will require more discussion beyond the Milo example. My strategy will be to first, explain how each thesis applies to the Milo case and other examples,

⁶⁴ 3* clarifies that extending out into the environment means that things in the environment are part of virtuous activity.

then I will bring it back to our guiding example and explain how each thesis applies to Mr. Dumbai. To be clear, I think that the first two E theses are trivial for virtue ethicists. If pressed, Annas and Russell would concede that the first two Es apply to all of the accounts they outline. There is no quarrel with respect to the first two theses. But I think the third E will be a useful way of distinguishing the two approaches for present-day virtue ethicists.

Embodied Virtuous Activity

The claim is that virtuous activity is shaped by the body and its interactions with the world. It is easy enough to see in Aristotle's ethical theory. Recall that his temperate person is well disposed to bodily pleasures (EN.3.10). The virtuous person's gustatory system, taste buds, metabolism, physical fitness, and so on, all play roles in structuring the virtue of temperance. According to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, virtue depends on one's relationship with the environment, that is, on being rightly disposed toward many different features depending on the given situation (EN.II.6.1106b20-24). For example, Milo, the wrestler must take his weight, physical training, relative size, and so on, into account when trying to determine how much to eat. Because Milo is a wrestler who exercises all the time, perhaps he needs to eat a large amount of protein or carbohydrates. From all of this, it is clear that the body plays an integral role on an Aristotelian approach.

Aristotle suggests that Milo's epistemic access to all of the relevant contextual features of his virtuous activity depends on perception. One might interpret Aristotle as proposing one of the first accounts of moral perception. Nussbaum describes Aristotle's idea as "the ability to discern, acutely and responsively, the salient features of one's particular situation ... at the core of what practical wisdom is, and ... not only a tool toward achieving the correct action or statement, but an ethically valuable activity in its own right" (1990, 37), and elsewhere as "some sort of complex responsiveness to the salient features of one's concrete situation" (1990, 55). For Aristotle, moral deliberation is structured by a series of practical syllogisms and bottoms out when the last minor premise is an "ultimate particular" or object of moral perception (EN.6.8.1142a23-30). In order to recognize the minor premise and thereby spark the moral deliberation process described in the practical syllogism, moral perception is necessary. In other words, virtuous activity requires special perceptual skills to discern the normatively relevant description of happiness in the world. Major premises like an abstract description of temperance and happiness are of little use to Milo; he must also be skilled at picking out particular foods that make him virtuous and happy.

The Aristotelian picture of moral deliberation structured by practical syllogisms is not the significant part of this discussion. Rather, the aspect I want to emphasize is that moral perception, which depends on the body, is an important aspect of virtuous activity in general because it informs how the virtuous person understands the world around her and, therefore, it also informs her activities. On the Aristotelian picture, the virtuous person must be sensitive and rightly disposed to objects of moral perception order to behave virtuously and thereby live happily. It is not enough for Milo to know that he must eat healthily; when he decides what to eat

for lunch he must see *this* food as what he should eat. Aristotle's famous "the mean relative to us" (EN.2.6.1106b36-1107a2) dictum applies not only to Milo's body (as a wrestler who needs to eat more food), but also to Milo's perceptual skills. That is to say, that Milo's body and, ultimately, his moral perception of the world around him structures what it means for him to be virtuous. He sees actual food in the world and recognizes it as temperate. This idea of moral perception makes dynamic interactions between the body and world central to the virtuous person's practical reason. And, in doing so, it gives virtuous activity meaning. Without honed perceptual skills, it would be impossible for Milo to behave temperately.

Like Milo's temperate activity, Mr. Dumbai's relationship with his sister is embodied. To start, it is embodied in the trivial sense that he uses his ears to hear his sister's voice in the same way that Milo uses his eyes to see which food to eat. Now we can add that Mr. Dumbai's relationship with Miatta depends intricately on the body because, for example, he uses perceptual skills to understand what she is saying and how to respond. Like body language, people are very good at reading spoken language for cues like voice inflection and changes in breath. If he were to ask her a question about her marriage, such as "How was your anniversary celebration?", if Miatta raises the pitch of her voice when responding positively, "Goo___d", then Mr. Dumbai would know that he should be skeptical of her answer and inquire further. Alternatively, if she takes a deep breath before responding, he might suspect that her answer is strained and, again, in need of further investigation. From the use of his auditory system to talk on his cellphone, Mr. Dumbai receives auditory cues to help him counsel his sister through her marital strife.

Embedded Virtuous Activity

The claim is that virtuous activity routinely exploits structures in the natural and social environments. This claim is one of the main themes in virtue ethics. Nussbaum describes context-embeddedness, "to see any single feature of a situation appropriately it is usually essential to see it in its relations of connectedness to many other features of its complex and concrete context" (1990, 38). Milo's activities are context-embedded, for example, in his development as a wrestler, his physical training, his available food options, and so on. The main takeaway from Aristotle's discussion is that Milo's temperance is "relative to" Milo because wrestling increases his appetite (EN.2.6). So too, your temperance is relative to you. Since you do not expend Herculean amounts of energy wrestling, you do not need to eat Herculean amounts of food.

By way of example, consider the following sketch that might require use of the environment to figure out the virtuous thing to do. One day a romantic partner asks, "How was dinner?" Assume that the dinner was disgusting. The virtuous person can tell that answering negatively would likely hurt her partner's feelings. Perhaps she can tell that her partner is especially sensitive to criticism about certain things, such as cooking. If she is both honest and kind, she will try to find an honest way to respond that will also spare feelings. Perhaps she will notice that her partner is particularly proud of a side dish, which she can honestly compliment. Or, perhaps she realizes that honestly saying that the food was not very good is actually, in the

long run, the kindest course of action. So, the virtuous person starts with the particulars of her given situation, including her romantic partner, the food from the dinner, and all of the salient features of the situation. She surveys the world around her for an answer to this everyday dilemma. That is to say, she looks for creative, unique ways of solving this sticky situation. The thought behind the appeal is that circumstances can help fill in virtuous activity, when ideas the virtuous person might already have about behaving virtuously (like, “be kind” and “be honest”) seem to fall short.

The motivation for context-embeddedness is to embrace the messiness of moral deliberation and in so doing capture a wide-range of normatively relevant factors. We see this most clearly in Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, which claims that the virtuous person must be rightly disposed towards the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way (EN.2.6.1106b20-24). Milo’s temperance, for example, involves being rightly disposed towards many different features simultaneously. But he doesn’t have some antecedent principle that determines exactly what and how much he ought to eat in any given situation. An ethical principle, such as “be temperate,” is meaningless without the proper context. Milo encounters new and unanticipated features the same way doctors encounter medically relevant features when performing differential diagnoses (Nussbaum 1990, 38). Dr. Gregory House must apply his medical wisdom to new cases each week, with strange and unexpected symptoms. Just as a doctor’s knowledge of medical texts radically underdetermines her treatment of unexpected symptoms, Milo’s knowledge of temperance underdetermines how he will respond to the new and unanticipated features of his situation.

Context-embeddedness is important not only because it situates virtuous activity in terms of complexity and richness, as Nussbaum suggests, but also because it affords the virtuous person opportunities for her activity. Outside of the context in which it is embedded, there is no right or wrong answer to the “How was dinner?” question. The right answer depends on the world around the virtuous person. “How was dinner?” is a real-time, pressured, question with no easy answer; possible solutions might come from the environment (such as a side dish or beverage). Just as we see a doorknob as an opportunity to turn the handle, we can say that the virtuous person sees the burning cat as an opportunity to relieve suffering. Like seeing a button as an opportunity to push, Milo sees healthy food as an opportunity to practice his temperance. The virtuous person relies on moral perception both for her epistemic access to particular circumstances as well as for opportunities to exploit structures in her natural and social environments. Like tetris players flipping their falling pieces, the virtuous person can manipulate her environment. In the “How was dinner?” example, the virtuous person might be able to change her situation in order to solve the dilemma and behave virtuously, say by lightening the mood with a joke or by placing the meal into an appropriate context, such as by shifting focus to the special occasion instead of the food. Note that the virtuous person’s activity starts with her objects of moral perception, what she sees as opportunities, say, the micro-expressions on her romantic partner’s face, or even perhaps tasting the faintest hint of a spice or herb that marks something significant in their relationship.

So too, we can see context-embeddedness in the Mr. Dumbai example. The way he counsels his sister depends on contextual features of their relationship's social and natural environment. We can make the obvious claim that he talks to his sister on his cell phone because that is a very popular mode of communication in Liberia. Also, we can speculate that the way he understands and responds to Miatta in conversation depends in no small part on broader contextual features. Recall that she was six months pregnant when she contracted the Ebola virus and died. Before the tragedy, imagine that Miatta asks whether Mr. Dumbai thinks that her husband wants another child. Depending on the context, this question could be similar in some respects to asking how a loved one enjoyed a disgusting dinner. Perhaps the family has some financial troubles that make the husband worry that another child would be a burden. Or, perhaps, he suspects that having a baby is a way avoiding deeper problems in the relationship. Mr. Dumbai was a confidant to both his sister and her husband, so he had counseled husband previously about these worries. The point is that these contexts shape the way that he cares for and advises his sister. When Miatta asks whether her husband wants the child, perhaps Mr. Dumbai is able to gain additional contextual information about her concern when she asks the question from cues like voice inflection and changes in breath. If she asks in the question in a light-hearted tone, he might respond with laughter, "of course, everyone loves babies." But if she asks in a somber one, he might ask her about her concern.

Extended Virtuous Activity

The claim is that the boundaries of virtuous activity extend beyond the physical boundaries of the virtuous person's skull. This thesis is related to, but distinct from, the thesis that virtuous activity is embedded in particular contexts. For both theses, aspects of the virtuous person's environment play a facilitating role in her activity. The difference is that those external aspects need only play a role for embeddedness, but for extension their role is that they are constitutive of activity.

In order to get a clearer idea, I would like to look at evidence for something like extended virtuous activity in the Aristotelian corpus. Here is the passage where commentators identify an account of moral perception.⁶⁵

That practical wisdom is not scientific knowledge is evident; for it is, as has been said, concerned with the ultimate particular fact, since the thing to be done is of this nature ... while practical wisdom is concerned with the ultimate particular, which is the object not of scientific knowledge but of perception ... But this is rather perception than practical wisdom, though it is another kind of perception than that of the qualities peculiar to each sense. (EN.VI.8.1142a-23-30)

This passage presents an argument contrasting practical wisdom with scientific knowledge (*episteme*). Practical wisdom is concerned with both particulars and universals, but scientific knowledge is concerned only with universals. Practical wisdom is therefore not the same as

⁶⁵ See Nussbaum 1990. For more exegetical work, see Reeve (1992).

scientific knowledge. Rather, Aristotle suggests that practical wisdom involves a kind of perception, which discerns ultimate particulars.⁶⁶ The idea is that perception of some particular normatively relevant feature is not merely the motivation for virtuous activity, say when the courageous person jumps in the water to save the drowning child. Rather, the drowning child himself, situated in relevant contexts, is part of the virtuous person's activity. In Aristotle's practical syllogism, it is the minor premise in the virtuous person's syllogistic deliberation. The virtuous person does not see the child and then make a post hoc inference that this situation demands courageous action (based on some abstract ethical principle). Rather, the normatively relevant features of the situation are themselves minor premises for the deliberative process and therefore an integral part of the activity. For example, Aristotle suggests that Milo uses his perceptual abilities of his contexts to choose to eat *this* particular white meat which Milo eats (EN.6.7).

This passage is exegetically controversial, since Aristotle does not give a detailed explanation of why *this* particular is important for Milo's virtue and happiness. Perhaps Aristotle should have said that particular objects could become constitutive of his virtue and happiness. Extension claims that *this* particular becomes constitutive of his temperate and happy activities. We can depart from Aristotle's Milo example and imagine a similar character living in other contexts. When someone falls in love and grows a family, those people become a part of his exercise of interpersonal virtues and of his happiness. They are part of how he lives his life, just as your career and loved ones are part of your activities. If a virtue ethical theory were to reject extension, then the particular food and people in someone's life are not part of his activity, even if those things are contexts that play a role in shaping for his activity.

In addition to the Milo example of food, we might think of virtuous activity as extended to the ethical relevance of particular persons and relationships. In support of this idea, Nussbaum draws an example from *The Golden Bowl*, by Henry James (1990, 39-40). In the novel, Adam Verver is Maggie's father. Maggie marries Prince Amerigo and encourages Adam to propose to Charlotte, a former mistress of the Prince. Although Charlotte accepts Adam's proposal, Charlotte and the Prince eventually rekindle their relationship. This is in no small part because Maggie and Adam appear more interested in their own relationship between each other than in their respective marriages. Nussbaum claims that Maggie perceives the value of her relationship with her father. Even if Adam were replaced with a clone, or with another person meeting all of Adam's describable properties, Nussbaum claims that something would be missing: "She loves *him* ... – however mysterious that is" (1990, 39). This is not something she can abstract from her

⁶⁶ According to Aristotle, the ultimate particular is the object of moral perception, which, as commentators have suggested, depends Aristotle's practical syllogism. A syllogism has a major premise, such as 'All men are mortal' and a minor premise, such as 'Socrates was a man.' From this we can infer 'Socrates was mortal.' In the practical syllogism, the major premise is a universal ethical principle and the minor premise is a particular fact that falls within the perceptual field. When the agent combines the major and minor premises, she infers the conclusion. And when this demands virtuous action, she therefore acts. What the virtuous agent perceives is some morally salient particular in her perceptual field. This is the ultimate particular. See Reeve, 69; see Cooper, 37. Reeve and Cooper also note that there is further exegetical support for making this connection. Namely, the "ultimate particular" from (EN.VI.8.1142a-23-30) seems to correspond to geometer analogy about practical wisdom (EN.3.3.1112b20-21). This is because Aristotle explicitly makes reference to a geometrical construction, the triangle, when explaining moral perception.

particular situation because it is something ultimately particular. In fact, Nussbaum suggests that the ethical relevance of particular others is fundamentally non-repeatable. By definition, it is impossible for the same ultimate particular to arise again.

Maggie loves Adam for him, which includes all of the contextual features that make up who he is. The value of this relationship seems to be enhanced for Maggie because of the novel situation she finds herself in: Prince Amerigo (Maggie's husband) and Charlotte (Adam's wife) have an affair. What she finds valuable is something over and above all of Adam's describable properties and his metaphysical bases. If Maggie were to lose Adam, only to have him replaced by a clone or someone able to fill a similar role in her life, there would be a significant loss. This is because it is Adam, in particular, who is part of Maggie's virtuous activity. The point of the Adam clone example is not to say that Adam is the only person with whom Maggie can engage in interpersonal virtuous activity. Clearly, she can with others. It is intuitive to think that she would have a very similar relationship with the clone. But even if she could learn to have a meaningful relationship with cloned Adam, it would be a different relationship with a person who has developed in different contexts from the non-cloned Adam. For example, a loss of Adam would be a devastating blow to her happiness, even if Prince Amerigo will love her instead. She could learn to love the Prince and have someone help fill the hole in her life, but, in this case, she would be developing something new.

The kind relationship Mr. Dumbai has with Miatta is similar. In both cases, a relationship with a particular person is morally important. The particular person is part of interpersonal virtuous activity. Although it is true that we could have interpersonal relationships with others and exercise virtue in different ways, a particular person is part of *that* activity. If a particular person with whom you exercise your interpersonal virtue dies, then *that* interpersonal virtuous activity also dies. After Miatta dies, it is still possible for Mr. Dumbai to form a close relationship with someone else, but *that* relationship with his sister is gone. He can no longer engage in those same activities with that same person. Just as Prince Amerigo cannot replace Adam, other people in Mr. Dumbai's life cannot replace Miatta. For example, the *New York Times* article discusses a friend, Naomi Tama. But Ms. Tama feels distant and sympathetic towards him now, unable to understand how he is coping with the loss of so many family members. "I feel too bad for him, man," she claims. Although she can offer him sympathy and a friendly smile, she cannot revive Mr. Dumbai's relationship with his sister. In addition to his friends, Mr. Dumbai had a fiancé. Perhaps he can engage in meaningful relationship with her.

Mr. Dumbai ended their relationship a few months after he got out of the hospital when, during a fight, she blurted out that his mother did not die of Ebola, but that she had been messing around with spells and that it had backfired.

If all Mr. Dumbai needs is a rich area of opportunity to exercise his virtue, such as by engaging in a meaningful relationship, then it seems like he still has opportunities available to him. He could develop his friendship with Ms. Tama, learn to love other people, or he could have maybe had a different kind of relationship with his former fiancé. Indeed, it is true that he could find new and different ways to engage well in interpersonal relationships. However, if he were to develop new morally important relationships, he would be engaging in a different activity. It

would be activity, with a new person, operating in new contexts. *That* relationship with Miatta, that virtuous activity and happiness is gone. It is in this way that I mean that Miatta is part of Mr. Dumbai's virtuous activity.⁶⁷ Particular objects in the world, such as people, careers, or even foods, can become a part of a particular person's activity. Who Mr. Dumbai was before the Ebola outbreak is unable to exercise his virtuous activity after the loss of his family, but with some change a new version of himself could possibly learn to engage in new virtuous activities, depending on the theory of virtue, and therefore find a new happiness.

In Mr. Dumbai's case, it is logically possible for him to engage in new relationships and find new people with whom to share in interpersonal virtuous activity. However, the immeasurable gravity of his loss makes it emotionally difficult for him to engage in new relationships. "Now hours pass without his uttering a sound, even when he is surrounded by chattering people." His affect is flat and he is socially reticent. This suggests that without his family, he has lost some of what he needs to engage in interpersonal relationships in the first place. Perhaps his family grounded the emotional fortitude to go out in the world and engage well with people outside of his family.

There is one important way in which the Priam and Mr. Dumbai examples are different. If we have to judge the happiness of someone's life as a whole and if devastating tragedy makes someone unhappy, then it seems that they are both doomed to unhappiness. However, depending on the theory of virtue, someone might be able to approximate virtue and therefore also approximate happiness. One important part of Aristotle's discussion of Priam is that he is so old that he cannot rebuild his life. Although I think it is possible for Priam to approximate interpersonal virtuous activity again, such as when he bonds with Achilles, and therefore to approximate happiness, it is unlikely that his life will change much in the little time that he has left. By contrast, Mr. Dumbai is still a young man and it is possible that he will be able to start to be virtuous and happy again by engaging with new people. Unfortunately, even for Mr. Dumbai, his potential for happiness is diminished by the tragedy that cut off so much virtuous activity through the death of his family.

My 3Es framework: Neo-Stoic 1-2E versus Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E

The common difficulty with the way Annas and Russell attempt to draw a distinction between two approaches lies in how the more Stoic approach could claim that circumstances are unnecessary for happiness. Obviously, if someone does not have enough calories to think or enough oxygen to live, then she is unable to engage in virtuous activity. Surely, this is true for

⁶⁷ I mean the same thing as Russell when he claims that: "But when I speak of 'this happiness,' I mean something more. My life is a life of activities—as a husband, as a father, as a worker, as a member of communities—and those activities are not just in my life: they are my life, and they are this happiness of mine, with all their particularity" (2013, 199). However, in this passage, Russell is making a stronger claim that particular things in the external world, such as *this* relationship or *this* career, are also part of happiness, since they are a part of virtuous activity. By contrast, right now I am only making the claim that they are part of virtuous activity. Although I agree that they are also a part of happiness, I with Russel about the relationship between circumstances, virtuous activity, and happiness. I address that concern in the following section.

any Stoic. What does my 3Es framework add to the discourse? One upshot is that this framework can hold the distinction between two approaches by making sense of the role of external circumstances for a Neo-Stoic account. If 1-2E (virtuous activity is embodied and embedded), then Annas's proposed Neo-Stoic versus Neo-Aristotelian distinction (based on "living" versus "materials") is dubious. I claim that 1-2E are indubitable for virtue ethicists with more Stoic sympathies, just as it is for ones with Aristotelian sympathies. Annas is unable to explain how Stoic virtue and happiness could be separate from the world. She is committed to the living of one's life being embodied and are embedded in contexts. For example, the kind of disposition Milo must have with respect to his appetites depends on his body burning calories wrestling.⁶⁸ So, satisfying his Herculean appetite is appropriate for his temperance and happiness. But if Milo were to live in an extremely impoverished megalopolis, it may be hard to find healthy food to eat. How he lives his life depends on the availability of food, as well as other factors such as his physical training. This sort of embodiment and embeddedness is essential to Annas's account.

It is difficult to deny the more trivial embodiment claim that virtuous activity depends intricately on the body and its interactions with the world. Our activities are not disembodied. Surely, Mr. Dumbai uses his auditory system to hear his sister talking on the phone. Surely, Milo's temperance depends on his body. It is also likely that Annas would accept an account of moral perception, where being virtuous and happy depends on a bodily perception of circumstances and is embedded in those contexts.⁶⁹

What is more is that it is exegetically controversial whether the ancient Stoics accepted such an account of moral perception. Historical Stoic discussions of moral perception are seen as debates over the universalizability of an autonomous norm. Is moral perception necessary to make sense of exception cases in rules? On the one hand, Phillip Mitsis claims that for the Stoics "developing the requisite sensitivity to moral particulars is strictly a matter of cognitively grasping the applications of such rules," a view which he contrasts with Inwood (1986), on the other hand, who argues "that the sage's moral perception in particular circumstances may depend on an ability to break or transcend universal rules" (1989, 290). Although the exegesis of ancient philosophers is controversial, someone developing a Stoic virtue ethical theory has reason to be attracted to embodiment, since moral perception is a valuable theoretical resource for virtue ethicists.

In addition to embodiment, the Annas and the Stoic tradition are committed to the idea that virtuous activity is embedded. One of her major ideas is that learning to be virtuous "always takes place in an embedded context" (2011, 21). For a Stoic, the virtuous person is born into contexts that shape her character traits. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a virtue ethical theory that is dis-embedded. However, her account rejects 3E because it claims that no particular circumstances are necessary for happiness.

⁶⁸ The historical Stoics also seemed to believe in 1E. For example, they claimed that the virtuous person will commit suicide when his body is maimed or diseased (DL, *Lives*, 130).

⁶⁹ See Annas 2001.

I propose a distinction where the Neo-Stoic approach holds 1-2E (embodiment, and embeddedness of virtuous activity), while the Neo-Aristotelian holds 1-3E (embodiment, embeddedness, and extension of virtuous activity). Embodiment and embeddedness are crucial for the development and maintenance of virtue on either approach. On my proposed distinction, a Neo-Stoic claims that Milo's temperance and happiness depend on his body and on worldly contexts. However, what distinguishes the Neo-Aristotelian approach is that some things in Milo's world become part of his virtuous activity. When Milo falls in love and grows a family, for a Neo-Aristotelian, those people become a part of his exercise of interpersonal virtues and of his living happily. *This* particular food (EN.6.7) becomes a part of his temperance, just as *this* relationship becomes a part of his happiness. By contrast, on my Neo-Stoic approach, *these* particulars are not part of Milo's virtuous activity. They merely provide contexts to shape how he lives his life.⁷⁰

Although virtue ethical theories in the Aristotelian tradition are usually distinguished as "Aristotelian" or "Neo-Aristotelian" because of a necessity thesis, I think that my 1-3E version of a nontraditional sufficiency thesis is best described in the category. This is because I think it is faithful exegesis of Aristotle's view. The ancient text underdetermines the interpretation. Although there are sure to be more exegetically faithful interpretations of the ancient text, it is a charitable interpretation of the sort of view Aristotle probably had in mind.

When the 2014 West African Ebola Epidemic steals Mr. Dumbai's family, a Neo-Stoic account claims that he can still be happy, since he can still engage in virtuous activity with others. Particular objects, such as people, are not necessary for the Neo-Stoic. He does not need *this* particular relationship in order to exercise his virtue or to be happy. All he needs whatever the bare minimum is for him to exercise virtue such as enough air to breath and food to eat. But the food and air is easily replaced by another. So too, when Miatta dies, that particular person is not part of Mr. Dumbai's activity. All he needs to engage in the same kind of activity is to find someone else with whom he can engage with virtuously in the context of a relationship.⁷¹

In summary, my strategy for distinguishing between Neo-Stoic and Neo-Aristotelian approaches does not collapse. It is not clear how, for Annas or Russell, some favorable circumstances are not necessary for a more Stoic account. My 3Es framework shows how circumstances can be part of Neo-Stoic virtuous activity in terms of embodiment and embeddedness. It also shows how a Neo-Stoic can claim that particular circumstances are not necessary for virtuous activity by denying extension.

⁷⁰ As a reminder, I am neutral about the theory of virtue. So, my claims about temperance and interpersonal virtues here would not apply if those terms do not identify ways of engaging in virtuous activity. I choose them because I think they are intuitive.

⁷¹ However, it may not be necessary to engage in interpersonal relationships in order to be virtuous in the first place. This is one way a Neo-Stoic view could be developed. On such a view, not only are no particular people necessary for virtuous activity, but the category of people is unnecessary. This could be because there are no virtues special to interpersonal relationships. So, the Milo example is better than the Mr. Dumbai example. For the historical Stoics, temperance is a virtue, which requires food. For this kind of temperance, no particular food is necessary for temperance. All that is necessary is that Milo has enough food to be temperate. By contrast, if Milo's temperate activity is extended to his food, then the particular food he eats is part of his temperate activity.

§3. Virtuous Activity is Sufficient for Happiness

On my proposal, the Neo-Stoic approach is 1-2E (embodied and embedded) and the Neo-Aristotelian one is 1-3E (embodied, embedded, and extended). Within the category I am calling Neo-Aristotelian, there is conceptual space for both necessity and sufficiency theses. Is virtuous activity merely necessary, or also sufficient, for happiness? As I will argue, if we accept 1-3E virtuous activity, then a sufficiency thesis is more plausible than a necessity thesis. This is a surprising conclusion for the Aristotelian tradition, since it is often distinguished by its claim that virtuous activity is merely necessary, but not sufficient. Yet, if we conceive of virtuous activity as including circumstances as one of its central parts, then favorable circumstances are necessary for happiness only because they are necessary for virtuous activity.⁷²

I agree with the traditional Stoic intuition that virtuous activity should guarantee happiness, so it is desirable to make the account of happiness applicable to everyone who exercises virtue. The call for universality from the Stoic tradition puts the onus on the Aristotelian necessity thesis to explain how someone could engage in virtuous activity, but still not be happy. I share the same intuition as Annas that Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are both happy because they engage in virtuous activity. I accept the argument from Annas, which I explained in Chapter 1, that universality is a desideratum for virtue ethics and a sufficiency thesis makes the theory more universal. This is because happiness is universally accessible to anyone who can engage in virtuous activity. The theory applies universally to everyone in that everyone has the same rationale to try to engage in virtuous activity, to be happy, even if it turns out that virtuous activity is impossible.

The obvious worry about a sufficiency thesis is how to make sense of tragedy. The paradigm cases of Priam and Mr. Dumbai are supposed to pump the intuition that virtue and happiness can become separated in cases of extreme loss, but they do not suggest that 1-3E virtuous activity and happiness can become separated, since favorable circumstances are part of that activity. As I will argue, if we conceive of virtuous activity as 1-3E, then it is hard to come up with any plausible candidate for anything else that would be necessary for happiness.

To be clear, the Aristotelian necessity thesis is usually depicted by the claim that favorable circumstances and virtue (as opposed virtuous activity) are both necessary for happiness. On the one hand, virtue is usually conceived of as a robust set of positive character traits, that is, dispositions to engage in virtuous activity. On the other, virtuous activity is the activity of exercising one's virtuous disposition. For example, someone might be disposed to behave courageously, but not exercise her courage if the opportunity never presents itself. Perhaps she never experiences risk or danger. It is plausible for someone with more Aristotelian sympathies to claim that a virtuous *disposition* is necessary, but not sufficient, for happiness.

⁷² At this point, a reader might worry that I am claiming that Mr. Dumbai could get a new family. That is not necessarily true, even if it would be difficult for him to engage in new interpersonal activities. The point is that *this* interpersonal virtuous activity with his family is dead. Depending on the theory of virtue, he could learn to engage virtuously with new people, but that would be a new kind of activity. It would not be *this* activity that he shared with Miatta.

Yet, I think that favorable circumstances are necessary for her to transform her disposition into an activity. As I will argue, it is not plausible to say that virtuous *activity* is necessary, but not sufficient, for happiness.

I focus on virtuous activity, as opposed to disposition, for two reasons. First, I am addressing Russell and he reframes the ancient debate around virtuous activity. This is because he thinks that the more important debate behind the ancient dispute is about the conception of virtuous activity itself: Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Stoic views should be distinguished in terms of the virtuous person's agency and how it is related to the world, instead of by necessity and sufficiency theses.⁷³ As I noted in the previous chapter, I like Russell's reframing.

Second, it is intuitive to think that virtuous activity is necessary for a virtuous disposition. This is because in order to develop character traits, someone must actually practice those traits in action. For this point, we can turn to Annas who argues that virtue is like a skill. This skills analogy is central to her conception of virtue on any eudaimonist account.⁷⁴ Skills do not develop out of nowhere. Practice makes better. The virtuous learner practices the skills from observing her virtuous role models. The virtuous learner does not merely try to impersonate her role model, rather, she tries to understand the reasons behind the activity and find ways to make it her own. For example, Annas cites psychological research to support this drive to aspire, where children distinguish themselves from their role models and look for ways to improve (2011, 24). Given the way virtuous dispositions develop, it is hard to imagine how they could develop without virtuous activity. Furthermore, if someone has developed a virtuous disposition through virtuous activity, then it seems that the disposition will slowly disappear when it is left dormant.

We can see the same phenomenon when it comes to practical skills such as translating ancient Greek or shooting free throws. If you do not practice your skill, it grows rusty. A summer off from translating Greek might require that you relearn all of your paradigms and declension tables. This is not to say that every disposition must be practiced daily or it will disappear. Some dispositions are more stable. After a skill is learned, sometimes it is easy to practice after long periods of inactivity. For some, shooting a free throw for the first time in years is like the old adage of riding a bike. However, for many, if you take a year or even a few months away from translating Greek, you will have to relearn the skill from scratch. Although it depends on the disposition, some level of activity seems necessary for the maintenance of the disposition. Granted, the level of activity here is unspecified. This is because the content of virtuous activity will depend on the theory of virtue, what character traits are, which ones count for the theory, and so on, which my 3Es framework is neutral about. There could be different plausible theories about the level of specific activities the virtuous person must engage in to exercise her virtue.

Therefore, the question I aim to address is whether virtuous activity is merely necessary, or also sufficient, for happiness. On a Neo-Stoic 1-2E approach, virtuous activity is sufficient for

⁷³ See Chapter 3.

⁷⁴ That is, she thinks that the skills analogy applies to the eudaimonist tradition, of which Aristotelian and Stoic traditions are both members.

happiness. Now I will argue, contra Russell and others with traditionally Aristotelian intuitions, that on a Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approach, virtuous activity is also sufficient.

On Russell's account, virtuous activity is necessary and not sufficient for happiness, since he thinks it is possible for a circumstance to be part of one's living happily and not part of acting virtuously. He claims:

I have argued that happiness is a life of virtuous activity. Even so, I do not believe that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness. I shall not argue for that claim; to do so amongst modern readers would seem like the ultimate case of pushing against an open door. (2013, 84)

As I argued in Chapter 3, Russell's distinction between "embodied" versus "formalized" virtuous activity is unclear. I am sympathetic to his strategy of drawing the distinction and I try to flesh out his general project by proposing a 3Es framework to make explicit the ways in which both approaches can be connected to the actual world, as well as how a Neo-Aristotelian approach is different. In some ways, my 3Es framework may resemble a charitable reconstruction of what Russell had in mind in the first place. However, I disagree with Russell about how virtuous activity is connected to the rest of the theory. According to Russell, circumstances can belong to a different category than virtuous activity. This is because he holds that circumstances can make an independent contribution to the virtuous person's happiness. Unfortunately, he assumes but does not argue for his version of the necessity thesis. Although he thinks that virtuous activity is the most important necessary condition for happiness, he also says that there are possibly other conditions that are also necessary (94).

In addition, Russell preemptively dismisses something that resembles my view: virtuous activity, including its favorable circumstances, is sufficient for happiness. The thrust of his complaint is that such a view would not take seriously the way that our happiness depends on the world. In other words, such a view would not satisfy his patency thesis. He claims:

For on this view bodily and external goods now seem, for happiness, to matter in the wrong way: surely my involvement in this career and these relationships should be part of my happiness, and not just part of my acting virtuously. Perhaps my relationships with my children, say, do make for a rich sphere of opportunities for me to exercise the virtues, but if I think that these relationships are necessary for my happiness, presumably I think so because I also regard them as among the things in which my happiness *consists*. (2013, 93)

Russell argues that virtuous activity and circumstances are deeply interconnected, but either could make an independent contribution of their own to happiness. What is unclear about his view is how the contribution of conditions to happiness could be independent from (what he calls) "embodied" virtuous activity. If happiness fundamentally consists in virtuous activity, and if the people in your life are part of your virtuous activity, then what would it mean for your family to also be a part of your happiness (but not part of your activity)? Why does Russell think that some favorable circumstances are necessary for happiness, but not for virtuous activity?

Reconsider the Priam case. His virtue was able to “shine through” in the face of tragedy (EN.1.10.1100b30-3), which suggests to Russell that that, since virtuous activity and happiness can come apart, “favorable circumstances are important for happiness and not just for the sake of virtuous activity” (2013, 93). On his interpretation, the primary reason that Priam cannot be happy is that he cannot engage in virtuous activity. His city and his family were a central part of that activity. This is Russell’s key motivating example for the intuition that circumstances are part of virtuous activity. However, Russell adds that because of how Priam reacted after the Trojan way, favorable circumstances can make an independent contribution to happiness, even if they also contribution to virtuous activity.

To be clear, Russell claims that the Trojan War makes it so Priam can no longer engage in certain virtuous activities. This is one of his paradigm examples for his preferred “embodied” approach, to show that a blow to one’s happiness can actually be a blow to one’s virtuous activity, i.e., to one’s embodied self. External tragedies can be a loss of oneself, where oneself is conceived as “embodying” circumstances in the external world. Given that the tragedy takes away Priam’s virtuous activity, it follows that Priam also cannot be happy. At the same time, Russell follows Aristotle in assuming that Priam can still be virtuous in some diminished sense. That is, Priam’s virtue can “shine through” (*dialampeí to kalon*) despite these tragedies (EN.1.10). The idea seems to be that Priam has lost his virtuous activity because he has lost his family and city, but can nonetheless begin to approximate other kinds of virtuous activities. Unfortunately, Aristotle does not provide us with a concrete example for how someone like Priam could engage in virtuous activity and not be happy. Neither does Russell.

However, I would like to take a closer look at the Priam case. It is unclear how he engages in virtuous activity after he loses so much to tragedy. As a result, it is not clear why virtuous activity and happiness actually come apart in this case. The default interpretation of Aristotle’s discussion is that Priam’s virtuous disposition was able to shine through, not his virtuous activity. Can Priam find a way for his virtuous activity to also shine through?

Actually, I think that Priam’s activity may have been able to shine through, but, if it does, then it seems that his happiness was also able to shine through in the same narrow opening. So, it does not seem that circumstance make an independent contribution to Priam’s happiness. In Book XXIV the *Iliad*, although Priam’s spheres of activity have been severely diminished by the tide of fortune, he takes a wagon out of Troy and enters the Achaean camp to beg Achilles for the body of his son, Hector. Achilles is moved to tears, as the two emotionally bond over their shared experiences of tragic loss. It seems that Priam is able to practice some approximation of interpersonal virtue. He does not develop the same virtuous activity he was able to enjoy with Hector, but is nonetheless able to start to engage in the same kind of activity again, even if only partially, in some small way. He develops a new relationship with the most unlikely partner, sharing deep feelings of family, loss, and grief.

Furthermore, it seems that Priam’s meaningful connection with Achilles is not devoid of happiness. At the very least, Priam’s life is happy insofar as he is able to develop a new “relationship” by sharing such an intimate experience with another person. Priam and Achilles now have the same kind of meaningful emotional connection one would expect to find between

the dearest friends. He asks Achilles to think of his own father, Peleus. Achilles compares Priam's loss of Hector with his own loss of his loved one, Patroclus, and then weeps. Achilles also praises the courage Priam exercises sneaking into the Achaean camp to have a face-to-face confrontation. They bond and express deep admiration and respect. The return of Hector's body to Troy is symbolic of this shared bond. So, it is not clear that virtuous activity and happiness are separate in the Priam case; rather, they seem to be intertwined. It is plausible to say that insofar as Priam's virtuous activity shines through, happiness also shines through in the face of the Trojan War.

The examples of interpersonal virtuous activity are difficult to assess because clearly your relationship with your loved ones is part of both your activity and your happiness. As Russell would agree, Hector is part of Priam's virtuous activity and happiness. So too, Miatta is part of Mr. Dumbai's virtuous activity and happiness. For Russell, happiness consists primarily in virtuous activity. Cases of tragedy where favorable circumstances (such as loved ones) are taken away from a virtuous person do not show that virtuous activity and happiness become separate. At best, they show that virtuous disposition and happiness become separate. But that conclusion is consistent with my sufficiency thesis. Someone might be disposed to be virtuous, but she must actually engage in virtuous activity in order to be happy, while unfavorable circumstances could prevent the disposition from being exercised. So, what, besides virtuous activity, could possibly be necessary for happiness? The idea has to be that a circumstance, such as a loved one, can be both part of virtuous activity and happiness at the same time, but in different ways. Yet, in the case of interpersonal relationships, it is hard to identify how some aspect of that relationship is relevant to happiness, but not virtuous activity. What is the missing, secret ingredient to happiness?

For a clearer example of what Russell means, let's turn to a new dinner example. Imagine that you have the choice between eating two dinners: actively virtuous, on the one hand, or happy, on the other. The virtuous dinner is temperate. Think a modest, healthy meal. The happy dinner is delicious, but not intemperate. It contributes to happiness, but not to temperance. Think a favorite, perhaps slightly indulgent meal. Although the delicious meal does not entail intemperance, or any other viciousness (since that would be unhappy), it is also not necessary for virtuous activity in that it would be possible for someone to be temperate without enjoying that meal. She could eat something slightly less favored and delicious. In this example, if we assume that something like the *enjoyment* from eating a delicious meal is a necessary component of happiness, then perhaps it would be possible for someone's activities to be virtuous, but not happy, eating only non-delicious food. This is a more plausible candidate for how virtuous activity and happiness could become separate.

However, even in this case, I do not think that the elements become separate, given the way that virtuous activity is connected to the world. I argue that the delicious meal either contributes to virtuous activity (and therefore also to happiness) or it does not contribute to happiness at all. An uncontroversial definition of temperate activity is doing well in the sphere of bodily pleasures (such as eating, drinking, and sexual activity). If we consider the range of activity over the virtuous person's sphere of bodily pleasures, then eating the delicious meal

could be part of virtuous activity. There should be plenty of room in the virtuous person's life for gustatory indulgence once in a while so long as the overall activity is not viciously indulgent. Depending on the theory of virtue, temperate activity might require the occasional gustatory indulgence. The delicious meal might not be logically necessary for *this* particular mean to be temperate, since *someone* could eat the modest and healthy meal instead. Yet, all the delicious meals the virtuous person eats are part of *that* person's temperance, since they are parts of her activities of doing well in the sphere of bodily pleasures. Eating her favorite meal on her birthday does not make the virtuous person intemperate; rather, it makes eating the favorite meal part of her temperate activity.

On my proposed definition, virtuous activity means doing well in the relevant sphere of life. As such, happiness consists in doing well in all spheres of life. So, virtuous activity is sufficient for living happily. Therefore, I think that if the delicious meal is not part of virtuous activity, then it is not part of happiness. However, Russell would object to me that happiness includes both virtuous activity as well as some unspecified ingredient. Perhaps the delicious meal is part of the virtuous person's activity in that her food is part of her temperance, but in addition to temperance, she needs some pleasurable experiences in order to be happy. Perhaps pleasurable experience is the secret ingredient to happiness. But I think that this kind of a view is implausible for two main reasons.

First, since virtuous activity includes external circumstances,⁷⁵ it is hard to imagine what extra ingredient could possibly be necessary for happiness. For any circumstance Russell might claim makes an independent contribution to happiness, I argue that it is actually part of virtuous activity (or it is not part of happiness). I can't even imagine a plausible candidate of an independent contribution. Even an example like a delicious meal is unclear, since it seems like pleasurable experiences can be captured in virtuous activity. As Aristotle suggests, taking pleasure in virtuous activity indicates that someone has a virtuous disposition (E.N.2.3). To support Aristotle's conclusion outside of historical exegesis, Annas argues pleasurable experience is necessary for virtuous activity from a psychological perspective.⁷⁶ For Annas, a certain kind of pleasurable experience, flow, is necessary for behaving virtuously because, if we conceive of virtue as exercising a skill with expertise, then we have good reason to think that this exercise involves putting oneself in a flow state of mind. Flow experience, identified by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, is the state of being in the zone, when you are so immersed in an activity that your experience is autotelic, feeling that the activity has an end in itself, you lose your sense of self.⁷⁷ People experience flow when they expertly exercise a skill. Her argument about flow experience could be taken as a present-day extension of the Aristotelian claim about taking pleasure in virtuous activity. This would be one way to make gustatory indulgence necessary for happiness, by making it necessary for the practice of virtue. It is intuitive to think of temperate people as enjoying the kinds of food they eat, both when temperate people enjoy modest, healthy

⁷⁵ At this point a reader might worry about the bloating objection to 1-3E virtuous activity. I responded to this objection earlier in section 2. I am neutral about the theory of virtue and there could be variety of theories filling my conceptual space that are more or less vulnerable to the bloating worry.

⁷⁶ See Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 2011, p. 70-82.

⁷⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper & Row.

food (“I love my veggies”) or when they enjoy more indulgent, but not intemperate food (“That pizza was so good”). To be clear, the problem is not simply skepticism, but rather that it is hard to even generate a plausible candidate of a circumstance that could make an independent contribution to happiness.

One consequence of Russell’s necessity thesis is an unsatisfactory response to the Immoralist’s Challenge.⁷⁸ The eudaimonist’s response to the challenge “why be virtuous?” is that you should behave virtuously because doing so is necessary for happiness. In our dinner example, assume that Russell is right that there is some unspecified, secret ingredient to happiness not captured by virtuous activity. On that assumption, someone could either act non-virtuously, to aim at a circumstance relevant to happiness (e.g., the delicious meal), or act virtuously (i.e., temperately) and not aim at that circumstance. If the virtuous person chooses the virtuous meal over the happy one, the motivational authority for her choice is mysterious. She did not choose to be temperate in order to be happy. In response to the Immoralist, Russell cannot say the answer is “because it will make you happy” since the delicious meal is a more direct route to happiness. If virtuous activity and favorable circumstances can come apart, then it seems like there will be cases when it would be rational for someone to behave non-virtuously. By contrast, on a sufficiency thesis, happiness consists in one thing, virtuous activity, and so the virtuous person always has happiness available as a rationale for her activity.

Moreover, Russell makes the motivational authority of virtuous activity mysterious. On Russell’s view, since circumstances can independently contribute to happiness, they must have a sort of non-moral motivational authority. By non-moral authority, I mean that the rationale for pursuing the favorable circumstance is independent from the rationale for choosing to act virtuously. For example, choosing to eat a delicious meal simply because it tastes good is a non-moral motivation for happiness. But in cases, like the virtuous versus happy dinner example, someone might have to choose between two different rationales: the moral motivation of virtuous activity versus the non-moral motivation of favorable circumstances over and above virtuous activity. The worry is that if moral and non-moral rationales can come apart, then the reason to be moral becomes mysterious. Why would it be rational to choose virtuous activity over something that would make you happier?

By contrast, on my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, the motivation for pursuing a favorable circumstance is virtuous activity, since being a part of virtuous activity makes the circumstance favorable (for happiness). And the motivation for pursuing virtuous activity is happiness. When the virtuous person chooses her favored delicious meal, then she could make it part of her virtuous activity. Her motivation is still ultimately happiness.

A related concern is that Russell’s necessity thesis undermines the virtuous person’s psychological harmony. For one, the virtuous person could experience a dinner example conflict. For another, even if this kind of conflict is never experienced, the virtuous person has the uneasy task of aligning two things: favorable circumstances and virtuous activity. The virtuous person must aim at two things with no clear way to put them together. Annas complains that someone

⁷⁸ See Plato’s *Republic II*.

who aims at virtue and successfully engages in virtuous activity could fail to be happy due to circumstances.⁷⁹ Yet, this failure is not simply about the volatility of the external world. More fundamentally, it is about trying to combine two things into a unified account of happiness. Even if someone were to engage in virtuous activities *and* live with very favorable circumstances, she might still fail to be happy if she does not put the two components together in the right way. For example, on Russell's account, if the delicious meal makes an independent contribution that is necessary for happiness, then a wealthy person with delicious food available to her who instead chooses to only eat modest, healthy food would not qualify as happy. The virtuous person could choose to engage in virtuous activities without pursuing Russell's secret ingredient for happiness and so fail to be happy. That doesn't make sense.

The better approach claims that happiness consists entirely in one thing, virtuous activity, which is sufficient for happiness, but some circumstances are necessary for that activity. As such, it is impossible for a circumstance to only be a part of happiness without also being a part of the virtuous person's activity. This thesis is compelling because it satisfies two intuitions from the traditional dispute. First, happiness depends on circumstances. This intuition is also supported by Russell's dependency thesis. The Stoic conclusion that favorable circumstances are not part of happiness is counterintuitive. Obviously, if Mr. Dumbai did not survive the Ebola virus, he would be unable to be happy. The reason certain circumstances are necessary is not merely that they are necessary for happiness, but they are necessary for behaving virtuously in the first place. Without his family, Mr. Dumbai cannot engage in his interpersonal virtues.⁸⁰ Second, engaging in virtuous activity guarantees happiness. This is supported by Annas's intuition that Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are both guaranteed happiness. The virtuous person only needs to worry about being virtuous (and the favorable circumstances tied up with that activity). However, contra Annas, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis does not claim that nobody will fail to be happy for reasons outside of their control, since that is patently false as we saw with Priam and Mr. Dumbai. Rather, it claims that nobody who engages in virtuous activity will fail for reasons outside of their control. Assuming he was happy before the outbreak, the only way external circumstances can make Mr. Dumbai unhappy is by undermining his virtuous activity.

§5. Conclusion: Chapter Summary

In Chapters 1-3, I critically evaluated a dispute between two kinds of approaches to happiness. My main complaint was that it was unclear how the two approaches are distinct, so it is unclear how to assess the dispute. In this chapter, I proposed a 3Es framework for

⁷⁹ See Annas 1996 for a focused discussion of how the Aristotelian tradition of happiness includes two aims and why she thinks this is a problem. However, her general complaint is also prominent in her 2005 and 2011 works I have cited. Also, to be clear, her complaint is about the traditional version of the necessity thesis, not Russell's version.

⁸⁰ By that I mean that Mr. Dumbai can no longer engage in interpersonal virtues with his family, since they are dead, just as Priam can no longer engage in activities with Hecuba and Hector. However, like Priam (engaging with Achilles), it is possible that Mr. Dumbai could learn to engage in some new virtuous activity. This possibility would depend on the theory of virtue, which I am leaving unspecified.

distinguishing the two approaches from one another. My version of the Neo-Stoic virtuous activity is embodied and embedded, while the Neo-Aristotelian is embodied, embedded, and extended. Although my 3E proposal might seem like a continuation of Russell's project, I objected to his virtue ethical theory more broadly. He would agree to something like 1-3E virtuous activity, but thinks that such activity is necessary for happiness, since some favorable circumstances could be independently necessary. Therefore, after proposing a 3Es framework, I argued for a nontraditional sufficiency thesis: virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but some favorable circumstances are necessary for that activity.

Chapter 5

A Minimum Threshold of Favorable Circumstances Necessary for Virtuous Activity and Happiness

Then would we be happy because of our present goods, if they gave us no benefit, or if they gave us some?

If they gave us benefit, he said.

And would a thing benefit us if we merely had it and did not use it? For instance, if we had a lot of provisions, but did not eat them, or liquor, and did not drink it, could we be said to be benefited?

Of course not, he answered.

Well then, if every craftsman found the requisites for his particular work all ready prepared for him, and then made no use of them, would he prosper because of these acquisitions, as having acquired all the things necessary for a craftsman to have at hand? For example, if a carpenter were furnished with all his tools and a good supply of wood, but did no carpentry, is it possible he could be benefited by what he had got?

By no means, he said.

Well now, suppose a man had got wealth and all the goods that we mentioned just now, but made no use of them; would he be happy because of his possessing these goods?

Surely not, Socrates.

So it seems one must not merely have acquired such goods if one is to be happy, but use them too; else there is no benefit gained from their possession.

True.

Then have we here enough means, Cleinias, for making a man happy—in the possession of these goods and using them?

I think so.⁸¹

§1. Introduction

In this chapter, I argue for a minimum threshold of favorable circumstances necessary for happiness. Why specify a minimum threshold? On the traditional Stoic account, no

⁸¹ Plato's *Euthydemus* (280B-E), translated by W.R.M. Lamb.

circumstances are specified for happiness. This is reflected by Annas's version of the Stoic approach that claims that only the "living" and not the "materials" are relevant for virtuous activity and happiness.⁸² But I have argued that this interpretation of the Stoic approach does not make sense because some minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for the living of one's life. Also, on the traditional Aristotelian account, some favorable circumstances are necessary, though the level and kind of circumstances necessary is controversial. For example, some virtue ethicists in the Aristotelian tradition might think that Aristotle made a mistake by identifying magnificence as a virtue that requires extraordinary wealth. On Russell's updated Neo-Aristotelian approach, there is surprisingly no discussion of a minimum threshold. He suggests that happiness is only vulnerable to the world through a loss of circumstances that ground virtuous activity.⁸³ His only explicit remarks about how happiness depends on the world are about cases of loss due to tragedy, only after circumstances become part of the virtuous person's activities. To use the paradigm example, Priam's family and city are a part of his interpersonally and politically virtuous activities, so he suffers a loss of happiness during the Trojan War because. At the same time, it seems as if Russell's virtuous person could, in principle, find ways to be virtuous in any circumstance. Priam does not need to be the king of Troy in order to be happy. Russell seems to hold that the only way in which happiness depends on the world is through such a loss. It is possible that he assumes that losses of circumstances are the only way because he assumes that there is a minimum threshold of favorable circumstances necessary for virtuous activity in the first place. Regardless, I try to flesh out this assumption.

My goal is to identify the bare minimum of favorable circumstances necessary for virtuous activity to be possible on any plausible eudaimonist virtue ethical theory, regardless of its theory of virtue. As I argued previously, the distinction between Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Stoic approaches lies not in what kinds of circumstances are necessary for happiness, but rather in how they are connected. Neo-Aristotelian is 1-3E and Neo-Stoic is 1-2E. The two camps could agree that the same kinds of things are important for virtue and happiness, but they disagree on how they are important. In either case, if someone lives a very unlucky life within an impoverished set of circumstances, but has a modest level of the necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education, I think that it would be possible for that person to engage in virtuous activity. For example, Epictetus lives as a slave, in oppressive social conditions, with no material wealth or possessions of his own. He was able to maintain his biological life and exercise his cognitive ability. In addition, unlike many slaves, Epictetus's master afforded him the opportunity to study eudaimonist philosophy under Musonius Rufus (*Discourses*, i.7.32). So, he also had a kind of moral education. This is an example of someone who lives in unfavorable

⁸² However, as I have discussed, elsewhere Annas also often suggests that in unfavorable circumstances virtuous activity is not possible for her Stoic account. One of the major tasks of Chapter 2 was to investigate why Annas makes two claims that seem inconsistent with one another.

⁸³ This is how Richard Kraut's book review interprets Russell, "Notice that the *only* way in which Russell's theory accounts for the vulnerability of a good person to misfortune is through the cessation of that good person's embedded virtuous activity. The *only* way something bad could happen to someone who is practically wise and emotionally sound is through the disruption of activities that express those cognitive and affective skills" (2013, np). Kraut argues that Russell's view is implausible on other grounds, that the view would be too Stoic since it would lack the resources to claim that it is preferable to be killed by one's enemies instead of being tortured and then killed.

circumstances, but has some minimum threshold of circumstances that allows him to exercise virtue, even though he has little else. In agreement with Annas, I think that it is possible for Epictetus to engage in virtuous activity and live well in his circumstances.

Given that others do not explain a minimum threshold of favorable circumstances necessary for happiness, I propose one. My view is that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but certain favorable circumstances are necessary for that activity. Now, I try to answer which circumstances I think are necessary. First, I describe categories of circumstances. Next, I identify one condition which virtue ethicists in this discourse (including ancient Stoics, Aristotle, Annas, Russell and all other present-day eudaimonist virtue ethicists) all agree is necessary for happiness: virtuous activity. Then, I investigate which circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity by examining commonsense examples. My conclusion is that a minimum threshold of favorable circumstances from the following categories is necessary: (1) the necessities for biological life, (2) cognitive ability, and (3) moral education.

I suggest a very austere set of minimal external conditions for virtuous activity only in the sense that I think that this is the set of conditions that is applicable to all of the theories of virtue that would fall under my 3Es framework. Personally, I would find a theory of virtue more attractive if it included more than the bare minimum. So, I leave open the possibility that there are many plausible theories of virtue that require more than minimally favorable circumstances for the necessities of biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education.

§2. Categories of External Circumstances

In this section, I describe categories of contingencies that might impact happiness. As a quick reminder, what do we mean by “external circumstances”? They are “circumstances” in that they are states of affairs in the world that could be otherwise. Also, they are “external” to the agent in that they are outside of her power of choice (*prohairesis*). This perspective of what counts as external is opposed to the intuition that bodily, mental, and emotional circumstances are internal. Although we might control some aspects, surely others are out of our control. For example, there is a sense in which the necessities of life are partially in one’s control, since it is usually possible to go out and find these things in the world. At the same time, the necessities of life are not entirely in one’s control, say, if the environment were to have a severe shortage of food, air, and water. So too, we can take proactive steps to change physical health (say, via diet and exercise), affective states like mood (say, by using self-help positive psychology) or cognitive abilities like mathematical problem-solving (say, by playing Sudoku), though there are also factors about our health, affective states and cognitive ability we are powerless to control. For example, despite very good practices of diet and exercise, someone might be genetically predisposed to have poor health.

Furthermore, although these categories are distinct, they also overlap, such that a circumstance could be a member of more than one category. For example, enjoying a certain affective state or having a certain cognitive ability might also be part of what it means to be mentally healthy. So too, a deficit in one category of circumstance could lead to a deficit in

another, for example, a severely unhealthy diet could cause deficits in affective states or cognitive ability. At the same time, the categories are semantically distinct in that it means something different to be a member of one category instead of another. The same circumstance, not consuming enough food, could be about health (or lack thereof) –a malnourished body– or about cognitive ability –insufficient calories for neural activity. Now I describe the following eight categories:

1. **Necessities of biological life**
2. **Cognitive ability**
3. **Moral education**
4. **Health**
5. **Affective states**
6. **Material wealth**
7. **Social esteem**
8. **Interpersonal relationships**

The **necessities of biological life** are the circumstances needed for sustaining biological life. Which contingencies must obtain in order to maintain your body? This would include items such as having enough food, water, and air to continue living. Shelter from the elements, water, and sanitation might also be added to the list when they are necessary for maintaining life. These items are all external in that they are not fully in one's control. Note that someone can have these necessities of life and, at the same time, have a poorly maintained biological life. A deficit in nutrition, for example, could cause poor health, even if there is enough food to technically continue living.

Cognitive ability includes skills grounded in neural activity such as attention, memory, motor skills, language use, visual and spatial processing, and executive functions including reasoning skills, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and comprehension. For example, someone with a great aptitude for attention can focus on the task at hand, while someone without might find it hard to concentrate. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is often associated with deficits in the executive functions. In this example, someone with ADHD can of course still have high cognitive ability, but ADHD highlights how there is a broad spectrum of ability to perform different aspects of executive functions.

Moral education includes the circumstances that facilitate the development of a person's character such as a bond with a loving caretaker or a positive role model. So, it likely involves interpersonal relationships. In addition, it involves other items presupposed for moral education to take place including the necessities of life and some minimum of health, positive affect, cognitive ability, material wealth and opportunity. Virtue ethical theories place great emphasis on the role of moral education for happiness, since they hold that the virtuous person must develop certain character traits in order to live happily. Moral education could be a circumstance that influences virtuous activity because upbringing has a significant impact on personal development. For example, you might think that someone needs a bond with a loving caretaker at childhood in order to grow up to be a virtuous person. This might be because having an emotional bond in early childhood development is necessary for developing into an emotionally

healthy adult. So too, if not a loving caretaker, we might think that some positive role models are necessary for learning to be virtuous. In other words, someone might need to see a model of virtuously living life in order to learn how to live virtuously her own life. Perhaps having a good role model is necessary for learning certain kind of behavior that underlies virtuous activity. For example, someone might need to have a role model of certain cognitive skills about planning one's life in order to master those skills.

Health is a more difficult category to identify, given that there is a philosophical controversy over the concept. Philip Kitcher summarizes the dispute between objectivism (or naturalism) versus constructivism about health.

Some scholars, objectivists about disease, think that there are facts about the human body on which the notion of disease is founded, and that those with a clear grasp of those facts would have no trouble drawing lines, even in the challenging cases. Their opponents, constructivists about disease, maintain that this is an illusion, that the disputed cases reveal how the values of different social groups conflict, rather than exposing any ignorance of facts, and that agreement is sometimes even produced because of universal acceptance of a system of values. (1997, 28-9)

The first way of approaching health is objectivist (or naturalist). Health is conceived as freedom from disease, a deficit in objective claims about a well-functioning body. In this vein, the most prevalent definition involves species-typical functioning. For example, Boorse claims, "Health as freedom from disease is then statistical normality of function, i.e., the ability to perform all typical physiological functions with at least typical efficiency" (1997, 542). This concept of health is both naturalist and value-neutral insofar as the concept is about biological facts.

One challenge to this kind of definition is that the description of biological facts is non-objective. That is, describing a fact about a human body as "well-functioning" is value-laden. For example, Susan Sherwin makes a feminist critique of healthcare ethics where she points out that certain aspects of a woman's life such as menstruation, pregnancy, menopause, body size, and behavior, have been treated as disease because they deviate from species-typical functioning (1992, 179). In this sense, the way medical professionals identify biological facts is itself socially constructed, laden with patriarchal values that marginalize women's lives. This kind of criticism of the objectivist or naturalist approach motivates a socially constructed account: health is a concept of socially constructed value claims about biological functioning.

However, while I am sympathetic to the social constructivist's criticism, the concept of health I want to identify is the objectivist one, grounded in biological facts. This level of analysis, identifying the circumstances, is concerned with states of affairs in the world and not with how we describe them. The definitional controversy is not about the state of the body, *per se*, but how we describe the state as healthy or unhealthy (as valuable or disvaluable). In cataloguing categories of circumstances, I am only concerned with states of affairs in the world and not how they are described or valued. For my purposes, value will be relevant when I discuss how the circumstance relates to virtuous activity, since that is the primary way in which something can become valuable (relevant to happiness) in eudaimonism. It could be the case that

people depend on their value-laden biases when identifying biological facts and that those biases are socially constructed, for example, through a patriarchal history of oppression. Regardless, I take for granted that there are physical, biological facts independent of how people describe them and of how those descriptions are socially constructed.⁸⁴

The objectivist approach to health can also be applied to the mental health. However, the concept of mental health brings up further complications of identifying the naturalistic bases for mental functioning. If there are no biological facts that ground a mental dysfunction, we might have greater reason to think that mental health and illness are socially constructed. What are the physical, bodily phenomena that would ground mental health or disease? It is outside the scope of my project to answer this question satisfactorily, but I think we can take for granted that there are states of affairs about mental life that are out of your control. Just as suffering from cancer can be unhealthy as a bodily dysfunction, suffering from chronic memory loss can be unhealthy as a mental dysfunction.⁸⁵

Affective states are experiences of a feeling, such as emotion, desire, bodily appetite, mood, or attitude. When you are too angry to think or too depressed to act, this is an affective state. It is possible that an affective state is a deficit in mental health, for example, depression might be a symptom of a mood disorder. It is also possible that a person could enjoy certain affective states, such as “flow” experience, over and above mental health. A flow experience, described by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (1990), is the state of being in the zone, when you are so immersed in an activity that your experience is autotelic, feeling that the activity has an end in itself, you lose your sense of self. Although one might think that enjoying flow experience is a necessary condition for living virtuously, as Annas argues the flow experience is necessary for virtuous activity (2011, 70-82), it is not clear why it would be a condition for mental health. So, I identify affective states as a distinct category.

Material wealth is the possession of tangible property, valuable resources and money. Wealth goes above and beyond having the necessities for life. It would include things like owning a car and clothes. For example, someone who wins the lottery, has a large bank account, owns a big house and owns a lot of cars, toys, and so on, would count as materially wealthy. By contrast, someone who is poor, say, living in the slums of Rio de Janeiro or Mumbai, would not count as materially wealthy. Like the concept of health, wealth is a term that could be value-laden and consist in degree. However, I am not concerned with how the wealth is described or valued, or at what point someone is considered moderately wealthy versus affluent. Rather, the

⁸⁴ There is a deeper criticism available to the social constructivist, namely, that it is impossible to describe a state of affairs in a value-neutral way since our perception of the world is necessarily value-laden. Although I am sympathetic, this is an additional criticism, which would apply to how we describe any circumstance, and the value-ladenness of perception while relevant is outside the scope of my project for this document. Furthermore, eudaimonist virtue ethicists can accept that perception is value-laden. For my purposes, the reason for separating out value is simply to make the category of external circumstance clear for the reader.

⁸⁵ The objectivist approach to health reflects eudaimonism’s naturalist strategy of accounting for happiness. Aristotelian and Stoic virtue ethicists both think that happiness is grounded in biological facts about human functioning. See Hursthouse 1999, Chapter 7. Also, see Annas 2005.

circumstance I want to identify here is just the possession of property, resources, and money, over and above the necessities for maintaining biological life.

Social esteem involves being respected or honored by others. This plays a crucial psychological role in the way people conceive of themselves and the value of their own lives. As John Rawls claims,

Now our self-respect normally depends upon the respect of others. Unless we feel that our endeavors are honored by them, it is difficult if not impossible for us to maintain the conviction that our ends are worth advancing... (1972, 178-9)

People are often granted recognition and respect for their projects such as raising a family, pursuing a degree or profession, writing a book, or positively influencing society. How other people see you is a circumstance that has great influence over our affective states such as feeling motivated. Social esteem is also something not entirely in one's control, since others can be disrespectful of things deserving of respect and celebrate things not deserving of respect. People that drastically change society for the better may go unnoticed, while others may be exalted to the level of celebrity for insignificant accomplishments. Although Aristotle dismisses the honor seeking life as a bad candidate for happiness (EN.1.5), he also claims that honor, in a qualified sense, is the greatest external good, such that the virtuous person does not care for all honors but only those accorded by persons of worth (EN.4.3.1123b-24a). One reason Aristotle might have said this is that social esteem is a good indicator of living virtuously and happily. At the same time, you are not in control of whether you live in a society with persons of worth or in one full of ignoramuses.

Interpersonal relationships are social and emotional connections with other people. This would include such connections with parents, romantic partners, children, siblings, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. These connections of course vary greatly; romantic partners share a more intimate connection than neighbors or colleagues. They may also vary in terms of duration; a parent-child relationship could span for decades, while a friendship might only last a couple years. In addition, they might vary in terms of the common ground shared in the connection. By way of example, Aristotle famously distinguishes three kinds of interpersonal connections (EN.8): some are grounded in mutual beneficence, others in mutual pleasure, and the best are grounded in mutually caring about the other for her own sake.

§3. How Circumstances Can Influence Happiness

In this section, I describe the relationship between virtuous activity and each category of circumstances. For each item kind of circumstance, I explore the question: Is this circumstance necessary for engaging in virtuous activity? Through this exploration, the goal of this section is to provide a tentative set of conclusions about how different circumstances seem to be necessary for happiness.

First, I describe how circumstances could influence happiness. This of course depends on assumptions about happiness. The one assumption I want to highlight shared by eudaimonist

virtue ethicists, historical and present-day, is that virtuous activity is a necessary component of happiness. So, if a circumstance is necessary for virtuous activity, then it is also necessary for happiness. Exercising virtue is a necessary condition for happiness. The assumption is that happiness involves having certain character traits. This condition is intuitive when we try to generate examples of non-virtuous people, such as villains, who are happy, but lack positive character traits. How can television antiheroes such as Tony Soprano and Dexter Morgan be happy? They have plenty of favorable circumstances, but also lack certain character traits we associate with happy people (such as honesty).

Ancient philosophers most commonly identify virtuous activity as the key ingredient for happiness (*eudaimonia*). Although Aristotelian and Stoic approaches disagree over whether it is sufficient for happiness, they agree that it is at least necessary. (They also disagree about what it means to be virtuous.) This feature of happiness is perhaps more intuitive to our modern ears if we conceive of virtue as doing well (*eu prattein*) or living well (*eu zen*), i.e., an excellence (*arête*) of rational activity. The thought is that doing or living well is necessary for living a flourishing life.⁸⁶ Different traditions will have different theories of virtue under, which we might describe different activities as virtuous or non-virtuous. For example, the Stoics do not claim the social virtues identified by Aristotle (such as wit, friendless, etc.). However, I want to leave the theory of virtue unspecified here and look at what circumstances are necessary across the board, for any plausible theory of virtue.

The **necessities of biological life** seem necessary, since living biologically is a necessary condition for living, let alone living virtuously.⁸⁷ A Stoic might claim that living virtuously and happily could require the sacrifice of the necessities of life. However, it seems that someone must be biologically living in order to have the chance to behave virtuously, even if a Stoic would argue that behaving virtuously would entail death. So, the necessities of biological life are still necessary in this way even for the Stoic who claims that living virtuously entails forgoing those necessities.

Some degree of **cognitive ability** is necessary for virtuous activity. This is true by definition, according to intellectualist approaches to virtue ethics. Someone needs to think in order to behave properly. Aristotelians and Stoics, among others, define virtue as fundamentally an exercise of cognitive function. For example, ancient virtue ethicists, including Socrates, Aristotle, and the Stoics, identify virtue as an excellent exercise of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Regardless of ancient theories about virtue, cognitive ability seems necessary for virtuously living one's life insofar as it is necessary for grounding character traits. The virtuous person, for example, must use her problem-solving skills when she encounters a moral issue in her life.

In virtue ethics, there is a prevalent focus on the connection between **moral education** and being virtuous. Like cognitive ability, moral education is conceptually necessary for virtuous

⁸⁶ Although there is some question of historical exegesis, *eu prattein* and *eu zen* are generally taken to be synonymous with one another. See Brickhouse & Smith (1994).

⁸⁷ A Stoic might claim that living virtuously and happily could require the sacrifice of the necessities of life. However, it seems that someone must be biologically living in order to have the chance to behave virtuously, even if a Stoic would argue that behaving virtuously would entail death.

activity, since eudaimonists theories of virtue are developmental. That is, nobody starts off as virtuous and whatever virtuous activity consists in, it must be something that must be learned in some way or another. As I discussed earlier, moral education could be something like an emotional bond with a loving caretaker or, simply, positive role models of virtuous behavior. In fact, those role models might not need to be real people. Perhaps someone could be morally educated by reading literature, by playing some sophisticated computer simulation, or by learning from interactive, humanoid artificial intelligence units. Regardless, it is hard to imagine how someone without any of these things could develop into a virtuous person. Imagine someone raised by wolves, so to speak, with no loving caretaker. Instead, she is trained to be vicious. Perhaps she was rewarded for cruelty, selfishness, and cowardice, but punished for kindness, generosity, and bravery. Also, imagine that she has no positive role models of virtue including no fictional depictions in arts or literature. Perhaps she was sheltered to only enjoy perverse fairytales celebrating immorality. It is unlikely that this person would develop into a virtuous person. The way she develops from early childhood could severely narrow her life choices by narrowing the kind of person she becomes. For example, a boy in ancient Sparta who is taken from his mother at an early age, rigorously training to be a soldier, would find it difficult to become a poet or anything other than a soldier. Without some positive example modelling the skills necessary for happily living, someone is unlikely to develop those skills on her own. She would have no epistemic access to skills involved in living virtuously and happily. Those skills might involve acting virtuously as well as others like cognitive abilities, eating as healthily as possible given the food in in one's environment, or avoiding dysfunction in the interpersonal relationships found in one's life. To be clear, people do not require a perfect moral education. Virtuous and happy people are sometimes raised by vicious and unhappy people. Rather, some minimum of moral education, even if just some positive role models, seems to be necessary.

The reason that the **necessities of life, cognitive ability**, and some level of **moral education** are all necessary is that it is impossible for someone to engage in virtuous activity without these things on any plausible account. If someone cannot live, think or learn to be virtuous, then she is unable to engage in virtuous activity.

However, for every other category of circumstances, we cannot tell whether it is necessary for virtue. This is because there is room for competing accounts of what the individual virtues are, how someone learns to be virtuous, what counts as engaging in virtuous activity, and so on. For example, material wealth is necessary for virtuous activity on a strict reading of Aristotle's discussion of magnificence. Yet, for most in the Aristotelian tradition, magnificence is not a virtue and therefore material wealth is not necessary for engaging in virtuous activity. (So too, internal to interpretations of Aristotle, we could debate about the appropriate level of material wealth someone must have in order to be virtuous.) If someone builds a theory of virtue from Aristotle exegesis, she might claim that a high level of material wealth is necessary for virtuous activity. At the same time, if someone were to build a theory of virtue from Epictetus exegesis, she would not claim that material wealth is necessary. There are different theories of virtue. Yet, theories of virtue are outside of the scope of this dissertation. Given that we must remain neutral about the theory of virtue, in discussing each of the following categories, I will

explain how they could be important for some form of virtuous activity, but I will also explain why they are not necessary for virtuous activity in general.

On first blush, some level of **health** seems necessary for virtue. For example, someone who suffers from a mood disorder might lack the motivation to be kind to others. If she is incredibly depressed and disinterested, she would be unlikely to, say, notice that her friend is in need of her kindness or have the emotional wherewithal to go out of her way to help. So too, if she suffers from poor physical health, she might not be able to perform certain virtuous actions. For example, if someone is diagnosed with a terminal illness, her sphere of virtuous activity diminishes significantly. She may be too tired and physically strained to go out in the world and behave virtuously. Her life could become a life of survival instead of a life of virtue.

In these cases, it seems that a stalwart Stoic could argue that someone could live well with respect to everything in her control, even given a severe deficit in physical or mental health. The person with locked-in syndrome can still control her thoughts. For example, when Jean-Dominique Bauby suffered a stroke that resulted in locked-in syndrome, he had to give up certain projects that were no longer in his control, but was nonetheless able to find another valuable project and write *Divining Bell and the Butterfly* by blinking his eyes. For a Stoic, someone could still engage in virtuous activity and live happily with locked-in syndrome. Similarly, it seems that someone could still be happy with other health complications.⁸⁸

However, this Stoic position is harder to make sense of in cases of mental illness when someone lacks control over her mental life. It is unclear how a Stoic could argue that people suffering from severe dementia or Alzheimer's could live well or happily, since very little is in their rational power of choice. In cases when mental health undermines cognitive ability, some minimum level of mental health is necessary. It is not clear that other kinds of mental illness would prevent someone from being virtuous. For example, if someone suffers from depression or from an anxiety disorder, then it might be very hard to be virtuous sometimes. Yet, it is logically possible for her to overcome her depression or her anxiety and engage in virtuous activities such as kindness. For example, a theory of virtue could plausibly claim that someone exercises her courage when she confronts her social anxiety and interacts with people at a party.

Along the same lines, it would seem at first that some positive **affective states** could be necessary. A certain one, such as flow experience, could be necessary for behaving virtuously because, if we conceive of virtue as exercising a skill with expertise, we have good reason to think that this exercise involves putting oneself in a flow state of mind. Just as an elite athlete can get "in the zone" and lose her sense of self in her focus on the task at hand, the virtuous person being kind, courageous, and so on, can experience flow. However, someone might argue that these affective states are not, strictly speaking, necessary for happiness, but, rather, that it would just be very difficult to be happy without positive affect. Surely, someone who cannot experience the flow could still engage in certain activities that count as virtuous. For example, although Annas argues that flow experience is necessary on her account of virtuous activity,

⁸⁸ For an illuminating discussion, see Carel (2007), which argues that health is not a necessary condition for happiness; you can be happy and ill at the same time.

which is supposed to be neutral between Stoic and Aristotelian approaches (2011, 70-82), her argument is controversial insofar as she dismisses other plausible accounts where flow is not a necessary condition of virtuous activity. Consider the paradigm case of a moral dilemma, *Sophie's Choice*, where a mother is forced to choose which of her two children will be executed. It would be possible for Sophie to act viciously, for example, by behaving callously and rashly. Yet, if she is a virtuous person, she will behave compassionately and considerately and still be forced to do something tragic. The virtuous person would therefore feel enormous regret, remorse and reluctance for choosing the immediate death of one of her children. According to Hursthouse, in this sort of case, the virtuous person would feel a moral "remainder" or "residue" (1999, 75); it seems she would be unlikely to experience flow when deciding on the death of a child.

In addition, some minimum threshold of **material wealth** seems like it could be important for virtue and happiness in some cases, but it is not necessary. For example, if generosity is a virtue and if it involves the proper sharing of material wealth, then the possession of some money, resources, or property seems necessary.⁸⁹ It is possible that generosity does not, strictly speaking, require that the virtuous person has wealth to share with others. The virtuous person can be generous in spirit or with sparse resources, the way we might imagine two impoverished people sharing what little they have. However, some level of material wealth still seems important. This is because it affords people the opportunity to develop their character traits and behave virtuously. Someone fighting for her daily survival in the slums of Rio de Janeiro or Mumbai is unlikely to have much opportunity or time to reflect on the good. Also, living in impoverished conditions could motivate people to turn their focus away from virtue and instead towards securing resources for themselves. Someone so impoverished might not be generous in spirit to the people around her because she feels insecure about her own survival.

Although it is logically possible for someone to be virtuous without material wealth, a lack of wealth can make one's virtue more vulnerable to the world. For example, in *The Bicycle Thief*, a father is desperate to support his family in post-World War II Italy. The family pawns a prized possession, their dowry sheets, in order to pay for a bicycle needed for the father's livelihood. Living in poverty, the family is not entirely in control of their fate and, as such, are incredibly vulnerable to circumstances. In the movie, someone steals the bicycle they desperately need. The father is left powerless to support his family. In fact, the scarcity motivates him to try to steal another bicycle himself, further jeopardizing his happiness –undermining his virtue and social esteem. It seems that although severe deficits in material wealth would make it very hard

⁸⁹ As I have noted elsewhere in the dissertation, Annas uses a similar example when she claims, "We do not expect people raised on garbage dumps outside a Third World megalopolis to be kind and generous ... Their environment has obviously lacked the opportunities to learn and do these things" (2011, 31). To be clear, on her Stoic approach, generosity is not a virtue because it demarcates an area of concern about the external world, but she uses the example to show how unfavorable circumstances can undermine the natural capacity to behave virtuously through no fault of the would-be virtuous person. Elsewhere, she makes a similar claim in reference to living well instead of virtue, "Of course there are some situations where humans are so reduced by starvation that ... considerations of living well have to recede" (2005, 23). I discuss these claims from Annas in other chapters and suggest that some minimum threshold of material wealth is necessary for the development and exercise of virtue even on her rendering of a Stoic approach.

to be happy they are not, strictly speaking, necessary. It is possible but difficult to be happy living in the slums of Rio de Janeiro or Mumbai, or in post-World War II Italy. A deficit in material wealth makes happiness exceedingly vulnerable to circumstances, for example, when a bicycle is stolen.

It is difficult to imagine how someone could develop virtue without any **social esteem**. Aristotle suggests that honor is the greatest external good because the virtuous person depends on other virtuous people in order to know whether he is virtuous (EN.4.3. 1123b-24a). Being praised by other virtuous people for an action is a good indicator that it is virtuous. Could someone be virtuous if she is never recognized for behaving virtuously? It seems that this is possible in that it does not entail a logical contradiction. We can imagine a virtuous person being teleported to a parallel universe where nobody recognizes virtue. We can even imagine her remaining virtuous despite no social esteem. But it would be very hard for her to remain virtuous. For one, there would be no positive psychological incentive from her surroundings. For another, without recognition of her virtue, she may lose sight of how to behave virtuously and which of her activities are virtuous. Perhaps she tries to be kind to everyone she meets in the possible world with no social esteem, but if her kindness is unappreciated she might start to revise what she thinks of as kindness. “Maybe people in this world don’t like being asked about their day.” Therefore, it seems that some social esteem might be useful, but perhaps not necessary, for maintaining virtue.

Whether social esteem is necessary for virtue depends on broader assumptions about the nature of virtue. However, even on a Stoic approach, it seems that some level of social esteem would be helpful for developing in addition to maintaining virtue. Without recognition of a virtuous action as virtuous, it would be difficult for the learner of virtue to develop into an expert on virtue. The line of reasoning here is similar to the one for moral education. Although it first seems that positive relationships are necessary for learning to be virtuous, perhaps someone could learn to be virtuous only through positive examples, from one-sided “relationships” with distant role models and reading literature. In this way, we could imagine someone learning to be virtuous without any social esteem. Therefore, it seems that it would be difficult, but not, strictly speaking, impossible to become virtuous without social esteem. Even if social esteem is not itself necessary for happiness, it would be very difficult to be happy without it.

It is unclear whether **interpersonal relationships** are required for happiness. To start, it is unclear whether they are necessary for virtue due to a theoretical disagreement about the concept of virtue. On first blush, it seems obvious that someone must have certain relationships in order to develop and exercise virtues concerning interpersonal relationships, such as kindness and loyalty. If someone lives without other people in her life, perhaps as a hermit, it would be difficult to exercise or develop these virtues without having particular others to direct kindness and loyalty toward. So, interpersonal relationships seem necessary for virtues concerned with that area of life. It is conceivable that someone could develop kindness and loyalty without any other people, for example, a hermit could be kind to his pet dog or loyal to the ideal of self-reliance. However, these are arguably different character traits than kindness and loyalty in the context of an interpersonal relationship. If there are virtues concerned with interpersonal

relationships, then those relationships are necessary for the development and exercise of virtue. This line of reasoning reflects the traditional Aristotelian approach.

Some claim that there are no virtues specially concerned with interpersonal relationships. For instance, according to Annas the Stoic conception has no special concern for any category of circumstances, including interpersonal relationships (1996, 243ff.). On Annas's version of the Stoic approach, generosity, kindness, and loyalty are not virtues. Therefore, interpersonal relationships do not seem logically necessary for virtue. The Stoic hermit could be virtuous living by herself. Just as the virtuous person does not have to own a bicycle to be happy, she does not have to plan her life around the pursuit of relationships. It is true that lacking interpersonal relationships could undermine the development of virtue on the Stoic approach, say, through the absence of moral education. However, as I have discussed, we can think of thought experiments when someone could develop virtuously without other people (say, through a sophisticated training manual or computer simulation). Although I do not find this picture of moral education compelling, it is logically possible to live a virtuous life without having relationships with other people.

§4. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter argues that there is a bare minimum of favorable circumstances necessary for engaging in virtuous activity. Some minimum level of the necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education are necessary favorable circumstances. Despite the suggestion Annas sometimes makes, that no favorable circumstances are necessary, surely these bare minimums are necessary for her Stoic account. It would be impossible for a Stoic to develop or maintain her virtuous activity if she is unable to live, think or learn to be virtuous. In addition, I think that this is the bare minimum is necessary for my proposed Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E account. However, the 3Es framework for thinking about the relationship between virtuous activity and favorable circumstances. Within this framework, there is room for different theories of virtue. It is possible to have a 1-3E theory of virtue that requires more than the minimum threshold I propose here. For example, a theory of virtue might argue that there is a virtue that is special to displays of material wealth, such as magnificence (EN.4.2), and therefore require favorable circumstances of material wealth in order to exercise the virtue of magnificence. However, a theory of virtue that requires magnificence is not necessary for the 3Es framework. Many different theories of virtue could be developed in this conceptual space.

Chapter 6

Conclusion:

Different Theoretical Approaches and What we want from a Virtue Ethical Theory

“[The] life of the man who is active in accordance with virtue will be happy.”⁹⁰

§1. Introduction: Summary of Dissertation

The views discussed in this dissertation fall under three different strategies for framing a possible dispute over the importance of circumstances for virtue ethical theory.

First, Annas’s description of her two approaches is her way of expressing the traditional distinction in ancient philosophy. On the traditional Stoic approach, happiness consists entirely in living virtuously. Virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness. So, favorable circumstances are unnecessary. On the traditional Aristotelian approach, happiness consists in two things. Virtuous activity and some favorable circumstances are both necessary for happiness, but neither one of them is alone sufficient. For Annas, the “living of one’s life” (virtuous activity) is sufficient for happiness on the Stoic approach, and both the “living of one’s life” and the “materials” (circumstances) of one’s life are necessary for happiness on the Aristotelian approach. Annas favors her Stoic approach because it has a greater call to universality.

Second, Russell makes the shift towards competing conceptions of the self, or of how one’s agency to engage in virtuous activity is connected to the world. According to Russell’s updated distinction, the Stoic’s virtuous activity is formalized, so it “remains distinct” from the world, and the Aristotelian’s virtuous activity is “fused” to the world. Formalized virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness on the updated Stoic approach, and embodied virtuous activity is necessary, but not sufficient, for the updated Aristotelian one. Russell favors but does not argue for his updated Aristotelian approach.

Third, on my proposed distinction, Neo-Stoic and Neo-Aristotelian approaches both accept that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and also that some favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. They disagree, however, on the grounds of how circumstances are necessary. For my Neo-Stoic approach, virtuous activity is 1-2E (embodied and embedded). For my Neo-Aristotelian approach, virtuous activity is 1-3E (embodied, embedded, and extended). The crucial dispute between my two approaches is whether circumstances become constitutive of virtuous activity.

Although I have intuitions in favor of my Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approach, I also find my Neo-Stoic 1-2E approach plausible and I offer no objections against it. As far as the two are in tension, I have only offered argument for why extended virtuous activity is a plausible option. I

⁹⁰ Aristotle, EN.1179a.

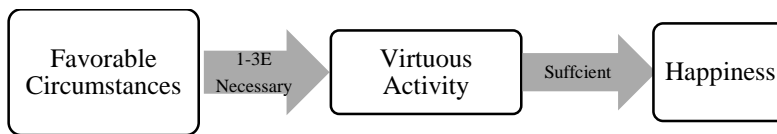
think it is plausible to claim that things in the world can become constitutive of virtuous activity, but I am ultimately neutral with respect to 1-2E versus 1-3E virtuous activity. I also find 1-2E plausible. Regardless of whether the virtue ethical theory is 1-2E or 1-3E, I have argued that my nontraditional sufficiency thesis holds.

The main accomplishments of the dissertation are that it (1) clarifies the dispute for present-day virtue ethicists, given the shortcomings of other attempts, and (2) defends a nontraditional sufficiency thesis: virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, but some minimally favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. On my proposed distinction, both approaches fall under the nontraditional sufficiency thesis and we can represent both diagrammatically.

Figure 1: 1-2E Neo-Stoic Approach



Figure 2: 1-3E Neo-Aristotelian Approach



My Neo-Stoic approach claims that 1-2E virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and my Neo-Aristotelian approach claims that 1-3E is sufficient. The disagreement is over extended virtuous activity. In Figure 1, virtuous activity is embodied and embedded in circumstances. In Figure 2, virtuous activity is also embodied and embedded, but it also extends out in the world to include certain circumstances in virtuous activity. For example, to use the paradigm example of Mr. Dumbai, both of my approaches can say that his family played an important facilitating role in structuring his virtuous activity, but only my Neo-Aristotelian approach says that his family is actually a part of his activity (for example, depending on the theory of virtue). My Neo-Stoic approach merely says that they provide important contexts in which Mr. Dumbai can exercise his virtue. As I argued, the advantage of my distinction is that it does not collapse in the way Annas's and Russell's distinctions collapse, since I specify how favorable circumstances are necessary for a Neo-Stoic approach.

My nontraditional sufficiency thesis satisfies two intuitions from the ancient dispute, which seem to conflict in the traditional framing of the dispute. These are intuitions that motivate the traditional disagreement. The first is the Stoic claim that virtuous activity guarantees happiness and the second is the Aristotelian one that happiness depends on external

circumstances. For both of my approaches, virtuous activity guarantees happiness. There is no secret ingredient in the world the virtuous person has to find in order to be happy. So too, in both cases, virtuous activity requires favorable circumstances. At a minimum, as I argued in the previous chapter, virtuous activity requires the necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education. These circumstances seem necessary for any plausible account of virtuous activity, though there is room under both 1-2E and 1-3E approaches for specific theories about the virtues that have other requirements. I think that my Neo-Stoic 1-2E approach is in the spirit of what Annas and Russell probably have in mind for their Stoic approaches. I also think that my description of 1-3E virtuous activity is in the spirit of what Russell means for “embodied” virtuous activity. I disagreed with Russell on the grounds of whether something like 1-3E virtuous activity is necessary or sufficient for happiness. This I because I needed to dismiss the option of a 1-3E necessity thesis in order to defend my nontraditional sufficiency thesis.

§1.1 Can you be Happy on the Rack?

To make my nontraditional sufficiency thesis clear, I would like to apply it to the classic question of whether you can be happy while being physically tortured, say, on a medieval rack. This sort of case is usually considered to be a problem for the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis, but it is not a problem for my nontraditional version. Given the claim that circumstances are unnecessary for virtuous activity and virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness, the traditional Stoic would claim that someone can remain virtuous, and therefore happy, while being physically tortured. Yet, most people would find this traditional Stoic claim implausible and counterintuitive. If anything in this world is true, surely you cannot be properly described as happy while suffering from physical torture.

Unlike the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis is not committed to the claim many of would find counterintuitive, that you can be happy on the rack. This is because it is silent with respect to a theory of virtue. Whether you can be happy on the rack is an open question, since it is indeterminate whether you can be virtuous on the rack. But, if you can be virtuous on the rack, then that virtuous activity is all you need in order to be happy.

According to my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, it is possible for you to be happy on the rack. If this is the case, then it would be possible to maintain virtuous activity on the relevant theory of virtue. Since the pain from being stretched out on the rack would undermine any feelings of pleasure, it stands to reason that pleasure is not a necessary condition for this theory of virtue’s virtuous activity. What is more is that severe physical pain is no impediment to virtuous activity. By way of analogy, when Epictetus’s leg was broken, while being tortured according to some accounts, he learned to care more about his power of choice than his power of leg use. Depending on the theory of virtue, the virtuous person might still be able to think virtuously under extreme pain. While I do not find this kind of theory of virtue intuitively attractive, it allows for the possibility that someone can be happy on the rack.

It is also possible for you to be unhappy on the rack on my nontraditional sufficiency thesis. If you are unable to be happy on the rack, then it is because you are unable to engage in

virtuous activity. At first blush, someone who is in a medieval torture chamber, subjected to the rack, is unlikely to be virtuous. This is because the person's life options are severely diminished. She is likely imprisoned, either guilty or the victim of tragic circumstances, and is unlikely to make it out alive. She can no longer engage in interpersonal virtuous activities with her family or pursue causes in the world that are important to her. Regardless of the physical torture, a plausible theory of virtue might be skeptical that it is possible for someone to be happy on the rack. She might lack the necessary favorable circumstances to engage in virtuous activity when she is trapped in a medieval dungeon. Further, since she is being physically tortured on the rack, she enjoys pain instead of pleasure. If pleasure is a necessary condition for virtuous activity, then it seems that extreme pain would undermine the possibility of virtuous activity. It would be difficult to even take pleasure in virtuous thoughts, while being tortured on the rack. As Annas suggests, a certain kind of pleasure is necessary for virtuous activity (2011, see Chapter 6). As I have explained, this is because Annas analogizes virtuous activity to the exercise of a skill and suggests that a "flow" experience is part of the expert practice of a skill. Although the traditional Aristotelian necessity thesis would come to the same conclusion, you cannot be happy on the rack, it comes to that conclusion from a different rationale. It might claim that pleasure makes an independent contribution to happiness. Yet, on my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, the only reason why you cannot be happy on the rack is that you cannot be virtuous. Happiness consists entirely in virtuous activity.

§2. What we want from a Virtue Ethical Theory

To conclude the dissertation, I want to return to the concerns from the introductory chapter which motivated the revival of the ancient dispute between Aristotelian and Stoic approaches for present-day virtue ethicists. In this final chapter, I review the views discussed in this dissertation in terms of virtue ethical concerns about elitism and relativism. First, I offer a quick review of the two concerns and the different views discussed in the dissertation. I also summarize my overall position. Then, I examine how the different views fare in terms of the objections. I conclude that my nontraditional sufficiency thesis fares the best.

Annas renews the virtue ethical interest in the ancient dispute by arguing that the traditional Stoic approach has advantages over the traditional Aristotelian approach. That is, the Stoic approach could better accommodate concerns that have plagued virtue ethicists' traditionally Aristotelian assumptions about the role of circumstances in happiness. These concerns are that the virtue ethical theory is elitist or relativistic. However, as I suggested in Chapter 1, these concerns are more complicated than they might first appear.

The elitism objection claims that the virtue ethical theory lacks universal accessibility. What does it mean to lack universal accessibility? First, the theory could make distinctions on the basis of persons themselves, so only certain kinds of people have access to happiness. I call this the essential elitism objection. For example, on some interpretations, the historical Aristotle's theory was essentially elitist. If a virtue ethical theory says that happiness is only

possible for Greeks or for men, then it excludes certain kinds of people, namely, it excludes people who are not Greek men.

Second, the theory could make distinctions about the circumstances in which people live. I call this concern moral luck elitism. A theory would be moral luck elitist, but not essentially elitist, when every kind of person can access happiness only if they are lucky enough to live in circumstances necessary for happiness. For example, a virtue ethical theory could be moral luck elitist if it says that material wealth is necessary for happiness. This kind of theory would exclude people for their circumstances and not for the kind of persons they are.

Third, intellectual elitism makes distinctions on the basis of rationality. Rationality depends on certain cognitive abilities such as the ability to mentally focus, remember, use language, and make decisions. Traditionally, Aristotelian and Stoic approaches are intellectually elitist insofar that they claim virtuous activity is a kind of rational activity, so those incapable of rational activity are excluded. Therefore, the traditional approaches are intellectually elitist because they would exclude known non-human animals and humans with cognitive impairments. It seems that the intellectual elitism concern blurs the distinction between moral luck and essential elitism in some respects. Rationality is a central element of the sort of person someone is, but the way someone develops rationality depends in no small part on luck. For example, imagine someone is raised in circumstances that make language use impossible (-say, as a feral child). If a virtue ethical theory is intellectually elitist in claiming that this person cannot be happy because she lacks rational faculty, then the theory also seems to be essentially elitist in one way (since it makes a distinction based on the sort of person she is) and moral luck elitist in another (since her inability to develop her rationality is at least in part a product of her impoverished environment).

In addition to elitism, there are concerns about relativism. One of the common objections to popular forms of virtue ethical theories is that they depend too much on local contexts to shape the virtues. A theory can depend too much on circumstances if it requires certain external factors to obtain in order for someone to be happy. This objection is often applied to the way Aristotle develops his own theory, since he gives credence to the common opinions of his time (*endoxa*) to guide his ethical enquiry and inform his discussion of the virtues. Outside of Aristotle, the more specific concern is about the way virtue is typically described as context-embedded, depending on the specific time, place, and people involved, as well as people's specific upbringing, community, culture, and so on. The worry is that all of these factors have too much influence on what makes the virtuous person's activities virtuous. For example, we can imagine people growing up in two very different cultures and therefore revering two very different, even conflicting character traits. On the one hand, virtuous people in Aristotle's times took greatness of soul (E.N.4.3, *megalopsuchia*) to be a virtue, which requires a high estimation of oneself, but, on the other hand, virtuous people living in other traditions, such as the Catholic tradition, take modesty to be a virtue, which precludes a high estimation of oneself.

It is important to remember that the relativism objection is not just an objection about relativism, but rather it is an objection about negotiating two extremes. Part of what makes virtue ethical theories so appealing is that they are context embedded, which makes the theory sensitive

to the messiness of moral deliberation. There is a tension here between sensitivity to context and criticism of that context. The worry is about negotiating two extremes between some universal standard for ethical evaluation and flexibility of that evaluation. Rationality, as a theoretical mechanism, will either be too open ended and fail to give us the conclusions we want from a virtue ethical theory, or it will be overly conservative in that it will make self-fulfilling assumptions about the nature of rationality.

§3. The Annas Distinction: Living versus Materials

Elitism

Based on the way she draws her distinction, Annas claims that the Aristotelian is elitist and the Stoic is universal. This is because on her Aristotelian approach people can fail to be happy through no fault of their own, but on her Stoic approach, happiness is universally accessible to everyone. However, as I argued, her distinction is unclear because virtuous activity is not universally accessible to everyone. Rather, minimally favorable circumstances seem necessary on any plausible account. Both approaches are vulnerable to moral luck elitism, since extremely unfavorable circumstances can prevent people from being happy on either approach. If Mr. Dumbai did not survive the Ebola virus, then he obviously would be unable to engage in virtuous activity or live happily. Given Annas's unstable distinction, there is room for her Aristotelian approach to claim the kind of universality that she lauds for her Stoic approach. For example, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, both 1-2E and 1-3E, would be classified as Aristotelian for Annas, since they both claim that favorable circumstances are necessary for virtuous activity. Both of the approaches on my distinction have a claim to universality insofar as happiness is guaranteed for everyone who engages in virtuous activity. So too, her Stoic approach can be elitist insofar as virtuous activity depends on minimally favorable circumstances. People cannot engage in virtuous activity are excluded from happiness, even if the circumstances that prevent them are out of their control. For example, someone might have a deficient moral education and so lack the opportunity to develop the skills for virtuous activity. Although neither approach is guilty of essential elitism in its most pernicious sense, both approaches are intellectually elitist because they exclude those who lack the cognitive ability to develop and exercise their virtue. As I have suggested, in these cases, essential and moral luck elitism run together, since circumstances can prevent the development of cognitive ability.

Relativism

Although relativism is a common objection to eudaimonist virtue ethical theories, Annas claims that her rendering of the Aristotelian approach is more vulnerable to relativism. One of her reasons is that Aristotle's dialectical methodology in the *Nicomachean Ethics* depends overmuch on *endoxa*; by contrast, she suggests that her Stoic approach has special access to a kind of universality (2012, 58-9). For Annas, all Stoic virtuous people can be thought of as part of a moral community who share a universal language of "certain reasons, feelings, and attitudes

in a way that renders them distinctive” (2012, 55). There is something about Stoic rationality, for Annas, that gives it more power than Aristotelian rationality to criticize its local contexts. Stoic rationality can tap into some sort of universal language of virtuous activity. And this conception of rationality would eliminate certain possibilities for virtuous activity in any possible local contexts. Someone from ancient Greece and someone from present times will have different upbringings, living in different cultures, but they will share the same content of their virtuous activity in terms of reasons, feelings and attitudes.

An open question for the Stoic view Annas describes is how it could be classified as naturalistic. This was a worry that I noted previously, but did not pursue. It seems like her Stoic approach transcends the actual world, since it is unclear how the universal language of virtuous activity is tied to the natural environment. The account risks non-naturalism. For Annas, Stoic virtuous activity is informed by a metaphysical, universal truth about the nature of the virtues, which has the same status for any virtuous person, living in any time or culture, regardless of local contexts. As a result, her Stoic approach has a greater claim to universality. By contrast, according to the Annas’s Aristotelian account, the virtuous person does not have a universal language available to her when she criticizes her local contexts. As a result, it is more difficult to criticize her local contexts because the virtuous person does not have this universality to step outside of the local; rather, her criticism has to come from within her contexts. Although Annas’s rendering of the Aristotelian approach does not have as strong of a claim to universality, it also does not risk non-naturalism by assuming a universal truth that is dis-embedded.

§4. The Russell Distinction: Embodied versus Formalized

Elitism

Russell is unconcerned with worries such as elitism and relativism, but we can still apply these concerns to the views he describes. Like the Stoic approach that Annas proposes, Russell’s formalized approach seems to be protected from the elitist objection by its separateness from the world. Since formalized virtuous activity “remains separate” from the world, the tragic circumstances of the world cannot make Russell’s virtuous Stoic person unhappy. However, as I argued, it is not clear how the Stoic approach actually “remains separate” on Russell’s distinction. So, as we saw with Annas, Russell’s formalized approach is vulnerable to elitism in the same ways that his updated Aristotelian one might be. People are excluded from virtuous activity, and thus also from happiness, in extremely unfavorable circumstances. In this way, the moral luck elitism objection applies to both approaches on Russell’s distinction, just as it did for Annas’s distinction.

In addition, Russell’s embodied Aristotelian approach could be more vulnerable to moral luck elitism, depending on how we flesh the theory out. This is because it requires an independent contribution from favorable circumstances. This is a mysterious ingredient, unspecified by Russell. It might be some circumstance like living in moderate wealth. Russell’s updated Aristotelian account is vulnerable to the kind of moral luck elitism that Annas is concerned about when she criticizes the traditional Aristotelian necessity thesis. If moderate

wealth makes an independent contribution necessary for happiness, then the theory excludes people who are not lucky enough to live in circumstances where moderate wealth is possible. If the pleasurable experience one gets from eating a moderately indulgent meal makes an independent contribution, then the theory excludes people who do not live in circumstances where it is possible to eat slightly indulgent, pleasurable meals. So, Russell's updated version of the Aristotelian approach can be elitist in the same ways Annas claims that the traditional Aristotelian necessity thesis is elitist.

Relativism

Again, Russell is not concerned about relativism, but there is a way in which both approaches on his distinction could be described as relativistic. This is because both approaches are committed to the claim that virtuous activity depends on favorable circumstances. At this level, both theories could be relativistic in the sense that considerations of virtuous activity are relative to those living in the circumstances that underlie that activity. This is the generic relativism worry for most virtue ethical theories. Therefore, both of Russell's approaches have common responses about virtuous activity being powerful enough to overcome one's circumstances.

It is difficult to assess how Russell's favored Aristotelian approach fares in light of the relativism objection both because it is unclear how it is different from his formalized and because he does not specify the secret ingredient. His Aristotelian approach seems more open to the relativism concern because of its secret ingredient, the circumstance(s) that makes an independent contribution necessary for happiness. So, the account of happiness (not virtuous activity) has more of a relativism worry. If the secret ingredient is something like material wealth, then happiness is relative to people who live in circumstances of material wealth. For example, it might make sense from the perspective of someone's happiness to pursue a favorable circumstance in one's local contexts instead of engaging in virtuous activity. Depending on the richness of circumstances in one's local contexts, it might often be the case that it makes sense for someone's happiness to pursue things other than virtuous activity. The shape of happiness would be malleable to local circumstances. By contrast, his formalized Stoic approach claims that virtuous activity is sufficient for happiness and so favorable circumstances cannot make an independent contribution to happiness. It seems that Russell's Aristotelian necessity thesis is vulnerable to some of the same relativism concerns someone might have about the traditional necessity thesis, though Russell might have more flexibility in how he fleshes out his account.

§5. We want a Nontraditional Sufficiency Thesis for Virtue Ethical Theory

Elitism

Both of the approaches under my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, Neo-Stoic 1-2E and Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E, claim that virtuous activity guarantees happiness. As a result, they claim that happiness is universally accessible to anyone who can engage in virtuous activity. This

captures what is intuitively compelling about the traditional Stoic sufficiency thesis. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius can both be happy, given that they can both engage in virtuous activity. Contra a necessity thesis, I argue that favorable circumstances cannot themselves make an independent contribution to happiness. The theory cannot be elitist with respect to any circumstance that is unnecessary for virtuous activity. For example, if the theory says that material wealth is unnecessary for virtuous activity, then the theory would not exclude people from happiness on the basis of whether they live in circumstances that make material wealth possible. The only thing that is relevant for happiness is virtuous activity. As I argued in the previous chapter, this kind of universality is appealing for a variety of reasons. First, it has a strong answer to the Immoralist Challenge of why we should engage in virtuous activity. The common answer for eudaimonism is that virtuous activity is necessary for happiness. The advantage of a sufficiency thesis is that the virtuous person will never have to choose between virtuous activity and something else that is necessary for happiness. She does not have the uneasy task of combining two things into her happiness. This kind of universality is similar to the universality that Annas champions, that is, nobody will fail to be happy for reasons outside of their control. Yet, as I have argued, Annas's desire for universality is impossible, since virtuous activity depends on favorable circumstances. So, my version of universality is that happiness is universally accessible to everyone who engages in virtuous activity; people can only fail to be happy by failing to engage in virtuous activity.

In addition, my nontraditional sufficiency thesis captures a compelling intuition from the traditional Aristotelian approach, that is, happiness obviously depends on the world. As I have argued, it is impossible to engage in virtuous activity without minimally favorable circumstances in the categories of the necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education. If Mr. Dumbai died from the Ebola virus, he would not be able to act virtuously or live happily. He also would also be unable if he never developed the rationality to engage in virtuous activity. On my view, the virtuous person might still need to pursue favorable circumstances, but only the ones necessary for virtuous activity are relevant. For example, it could be morally important for the virtuous person to pursue food, since food could be part of her temperate activity; so too, securing enough food to eat could be a minimally favorable circumstance for maintaining her biological life necessary for engaging in virtuous activity. Yet, outside of her virtuous activity, circumstances are irrelevant to her happiness. By way of analogy, the only good thing without qualification for Kant is the good will, though other things can be valuable in a qualified way. For my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, favorable circumstances are favorable because they are necessary for virtuous activity. This kind of option for virtue ethical theory has a strong, somewhat Kantian, claim to universality, but takes seriously the intuition that our happiness depends on circumstances.

Therefore, moral luck elitism is ineliminable from my Neo-Stoic 1-2E and Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approaches. People are excluded from happiness if their circumstances make virtuous activity impossible. All approaches in this discourse are essentially elitist insofar that they require cognitive ability in order to engage in virtuous activity and live happily. This is the intellectual elitism objection against intellectualist approaches to virtue ethics. Intellectual elitism blurs the distinction between moral luck and essential elitism, since someone could grow

up in impoverished circumstances that prevent her from developing the cognitive ability to engage in virtuous activity.

For the concerns about elitism, my Neo-Stoic 1-2E and Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approaches are more or less on the same grounds. It is possible that a Neo-Aristotelian theory is elitist in terms of the requirements for specific virtues. However, the two approaches I propose are neutral about the theory of virtue. It is possible to have a Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E theory of virtue that requires a large amount of material wealth, like Aristotle's discussion of magnificence (EN.4.2). In this case, the requirement would be that material wealth could imply a circumstance that is part of the virtuous person's activities (such as her magnificent activities). However, it is also possible to have a Neo-Stoic 1-2E theory of virtue that requires the exact same amount of material wealth. For that theory, the material wealth could be an important aspect of shaping the virtuous person's activity, but the wealth is not itself a part of the activity.

The one way my two approaches differ with respect to moral luck elitism is that the virtuous person's activity is more vulnerable to unfavorable external circumstances on 1-3E virtuous activity. This is because particular circumstances in the world are constitutive of that activity. As a result, whenever the world takes those circumstances away, the ability to engage in virtuous activity, and thus the ability to be happy, is lost. For example, when Mr. Dumbai and Priam lose their families to tragedy, they cannot be happy, if they can no longer engage in the interpersonally virtuous activities central to their lives. By contrast, on my Neo-Stoic account, circumstances are not part of virtuous activity; they merely play a facilitating role in shaping that activity.⁹¹ So, when virtuous people lose circumstances where they would previously exercise their virtue, it is easier to find other areas to exercise their virtue. This makes the account less vulnerable to tragedy, since the world can only take away someone's happiness if it takes away the ability to engage in virtuous activity in *any* possible circumstance available to them. There would have to be no other areas in one's life in which to engage in virtuous activity. For example, if a virtuous Stoic person were to suffer from a mental illness that takes away her cognitive function, she could become unable to control her mind to engage in the moral deliberation necessary for virtuous activity.

By contrast, on my Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approach, when Priam and Mr. Dumbai lose their families, they seem to lose their abilities to engage in their interpersonally virtuous activities. Even if they were to find new people with whom to exercise their virtue, it would be a new kind of activity with new people. The happiness that Priam had before the Trojan War and the happiness Mr. Dumbai had before the 2014 outbreak are now lost forever, even if they can find a new kind of happiness later in life. As I have noted, it is possible for either Priam or Mr. Dumbai to find new ways to engage in virtuous activity and therefore live happily again. It is possible to approximate virtuous activity and living happily. The difference in the two examples is that, given his old age, Priam has much less time.

⁹¹ Note however that a Stoic theory of virtue is not committed to the claim that virtuous activity involves the exercise of interpersonal virtues. It might be that you could exercise virtue and live happily without other people.

Although my Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approach is more vulnerable to moral luck elitism, the worry can be assuaged in terms of the theory of virtue, which I have not addressed in this dissertation. For any of the major approaches discussed in the dissertation, it is an open question which character traits would qualify as virtues. It is possible for a 1-3E theory of virtue to argue that Aristotle's magnificence is a virtue and therefore material wealth is part of the virtuous person's magnificent activity. In this case, the activity would be vulnerable to circumstance, since material wealth is vulnerable to theft, fluctuating economies, and many other factors outside of one's control. Yet, there is also room for a theory that is much more modest with respect to the kinds of circumstances the virtuous makes part of her activity. For example, to my knowledge few present-day virtue ethicists in the Aristotelian tradition take Aristotle's virtue of magnificence very seriously. Unlike the historical Aristotle's theory, there is room for virtue ethicists to develop a 1-3E theory of virtue that only includes a few virtues, say the four cardinal virtues of the historical Stoics, and only require minimally favorable circumstances in the categories of the necessities for biological life, cognitive ability, and moral education.

Furthermore, a 1-3E theory of virtue could influence how the virtuous person's activity is vulnerable in how she deals with loss. It might be that the theory of virtue includes character traits such as resilience and fortitude for dealing with loss. There is also a range of possibilities under which the theory of virtue could claim that it is easier or harder to rebuild one's virtuous activity after a tragic loss. For example, Mr. Dumbai still raises his son. His son is not mentioned anywhere in the *New York Times* article, but one can find captioned photos in the gallery of Mr. Dumbai picking up his son, Echaman, from school in Buchanan, Liberia, and doing homework together.⁹² This seems like another plausible candidate for interpersonal virtuous activity. It is an open question for the theory of virtue whether and how quickly Mr. Dumbai can rebuild his virtuous activity by engaging with new people, in new circumstances. As I have described, *that* happiness that Mr. Dumbai shared with his sister and other deceased family members is now dead; however, it may be possible for him to develop *this* new happiness with his son. While the 1-3E Neo-Aristotelian approach is more vulnerable to moral luck elitism than the 1-2E Neo-Aristotelian approach, the vulnerability will ultimately depend on the theory of virtue.

Relativism

With respect to the relativism objection, my two approaches are on similar grounds since they share a generic strategy: virtuous activity is powerful enough to overcome one's local contexts and therefore also powerful enough to avoid relativism. My two approaches differ, on the one hand, from Russell's updated Aristotelian approach which includes a secret ingredient and, on the other, from Annas's Stoic approach which risks non-naturalism. Both of the views under my nontraditional sufficiency thesis sit in between Russell's favored version of the Aristotelian approach and Annas's favored version of the Stoic approach. For both my Neo-Stoic 1-2E and Neo-Aristotelian 1-3E approaches, virtuous activity and happiness consists entirely in

⁹² https://www.nytsyn.com/images/photos?search_id=2989579. This is the link to the pictures. The full citation for the article is in the bibliography, see Cooper 2016.

the virtuous person's interactions with her local contexts. Neither approach assumes a secret ingredient, the way Russell does, or a universal truth, the way Annas does.

On the one hand, Russell's version of his Aristotelian approach arguably has more flexibility in terms of the relativism worry. One of the strengths of virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory is to embrace the messiness of moral reasoning by drawing from specific contexts in the world. On his favored approach, virtuous activity and happiness both consist entirely in the virtuous person's connections to her local contexts. The worry is the same worry about relativism that critics level against Aristotle. For my nontraditional sufficiency thesis, happiness consists in one thing, virtuous activity and that activity depends on circumstances in the world. But Russell's favored view disagrees with my sufficiency claim and instead says that circumstances can make their own independent contribution necessary for happiness. As I suggested above, this weakens the generic response to the relativism worry. Russell's secret ingredient makes the account of happiness relativistic in a way that a sufficiency thesis is not.

On the other hand, Annas's favored Stoic approach arguably has a greater claim to universality. One of the worries about virtue-oriented approaches to ethical theory is that they do not have the conceptual resources to overcome the local contexts of the virtuous person to escape relativism. Annas's favored approach disagrees with mine because she thinks that Stoic virtuous people have special epistemic access to universal truths about virtuous activity even when they have no access to these truths in their local contexts. This risks non-naturalism. At the same time, the cost of assuming universal truths gives the approach the conceptual resources for the virtuous person to criticize her local contexts and not be relativistic.

§6. Conclusion: Chapter Summary

My chief argument in this dissertation is that my nontraditional sufficiency thesis is an appealing option for virtue ethical theory. It is more appealing than the other options I have examined. For one, as I have argued, the other views are unclear, since it is unclear how Annas and Russell are able to maintain distinctions between their respective approaches. My description of the Stoic approach as 1-2E and the Aristotelian one as 1-3E maintains the distinction where others collapse. For another, the views under my nontraditional sufficiency thesis capture important intuitions about what we want in a virtue ethical theory: the ancient Stoic intuition that virtuous activity guarantees happiness and the Aristotelian intuition that happiness depends on favorable circumstances.

In this conclusion Chapter 6, I returned to the concerns from the introductory Chapter 1, elitism and relativism, which motivated the revival of the ancient dispute. It is unclear how the views under Annas's and Russell's distinction can deal with these objections, since the views are unclear. Even so, all of the approaches under their distinctions seem vulnerable to moral luck elitism as well as to essential elitism, in a limited way, insofar as intellectual elitism is essentially elitist. Annas's strategy for dealing with the elitism worries on her favored Stoic approach is implausible. Russell's decision to include a secret ingredient in his favored Aristotelian approach risks more elitism. With respect to the relativism objection, Annas's favored approach assumes

universal truth, while Russell's assumes a secret ingredient. I conclude that my nontraditional sufficiency thesis fares the best, in light of these worries about elitism and relativism. Both of the views I describe under my distinction have a strong response to the elitism concern, by claiming that virtuous activity guarantees happiness. The relativism objection is about negotiating between two extremes: universality and flexibility. Annas and Russell each err towards opposite ends. The views on my nontraditional sufficiency thesis are in between.

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