

# Virtue, Oppression, and Resistance Struggles

Trevor William Smith  
*Marquette University*

---

## Recommended Citation

Smith, Trevor William, "Virtue, Oppression, and Resistance Struggles" (2015). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 551.  
[http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations\\_mu/551](http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/551)

VIRTUE, OPPRESSION, AND RESISTANCE STRUGGLES

by  
Trevor W. Smith, A.A., B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
August 2015

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTERS	
1. OUTLINING A CONCEPTION OF OPPRESSION	10
1.1 The Failure of Comprehensive Theories of Oppression	11
1.2 A Broad Understanding of Oppression	21
1.3 Conclusion	35
2. IDENTIFYING THE WRONGS OF OPPRESSION IN VIRTUE ETHICS	37
2.1 Oppression as a Limitation of Virtue	38
2.2 Oppression and the Manipulation of External Goods	68
2.3 Oppression and Base and Shameful Actions	80
2.4 Conclusion	96
3. ESTABLISHING AN OBLIGATION TO RESIST OPPRESSION	100
3.1 Hursthouse's V-Rules	101
3.2 Rules Beyond the V-Rules	106
3.3 Hard and Soft D-Rules	112
3.4 V-Rules, D-Rules, Oppression, and Resistance	126
3.5 Conclusion	139
4. GIVING CONTENT TO RESISTANCE	141
4.1 The Revolutionary Attitude	142
4.2 A Practical Understanding of Resistance Actions	148
4.3 The Role of Violence in Resistance Struggles	156

4.4 Emerging View of Resistance and the Demandingness Objection	175
4.5 Conclusion	180
CONCLUSION	182
BIBLIOGRAPHY	189

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Trevor W. Smith, A.A., B.A., M.A.

This project, and my entire graduate experience, would not have been possible without the support of my advisor Dr. Nancy Snow. Her continued support for my work cannot be understated. Dr. Snow has shaped my philosophical understandings, encouraged my research, and always pushed me to be a better philosopher. Dr. Snow has been, and will no doubt continue to be, an advisor, an advocate, a friend, and a comrade, and for all this I am eternally grateful.

Special thanks are also owed to Dr. Theresa Tobin and Dr. Susanne Foster for not only working diligently on my committee, but also working to support me throughout my graduate career at Marquette. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Kevin Gibson, Dr. Curtis Carter, Dr. James South, and Dr. Mike Monahan. Working with all of you, as a student, as an advisee, and as a fellow teacher has been beyond rewarding and each of you have helped me in unimaginable ways during my pursuit of this degree.

I would also like to thank the entire philosophy department at the University of Auckland for welcoming me so warmly during my studies in New Zealand. The time I spend in your department invigorated and challenged me in all the best ways possible. Special thanks are owed to Dr. Glen Pettigrove, Dr. Christine Swanton, and Dr. Rosalind Hursthouse for their continued help with my research. And to Dr. Patrick Girard and John Kidd: your friendship and love truly made my time in New Zealand one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. And I cannot think, let alone write, about New Zealand without forever thinking about Dr. Koji Tanaka and Dr. Bronwyn Finnigan, without whom I would not have had the ability or opportunity to work and study in New Zealand. I am forever in their debt and while we are now a half a world apart, you both are never far from my heart and mind.

To all my friends, especially Mike Baker, Cat Origitano, Matt Ross, Ricardo Patron, Lee Guk, and Ann and Andy Zielke: your support and love throughout this process has been unwavering, and special thanks are owed to all of you for everything you have done to support and encourage (and distract) me.

To my family, Dad, Mom, Sean David, Kara, Matthew, Craig, and Heather: I love you all more than words can say, and I am, and will forever be, grateful for the love and support that you have always provided me. Mom: I am grateful for everything you have always done for me, and thank you for never giving up and always pushing me to be a better person. I love you!

I would like to thank Murder by Death, Matt Armstrong, Sarah Balliet, Dagan Thogerson, Adam Turla, David Fountain, James Dean, and Nick Cross for providing both the soundtrack which played throughout the writing of this dissertation as well as the opportunity to leave my desk, hit the road with my friend, and see shows.

To my partner Lee Wagner: You have always been my strongest ally and without you the accomplishment of this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you for all those ways, both big and small, that you have made my life positive and rewarding. We both know that “I love you” is too small a phrase, so to you I say, “I lub you,” and I know that you will understand all that this means.

Finally, special thanks are owed to my father, Brian Smith. Dad: it was you who introduced me to philosophy, who played the strongest role in shaping the teacher that I have become, and who taught me that while academics have a role to play in creating a just world our work as academics cannot fully satisfy our revolutionary obligations. I know that you scarified dissertations and degrees to be a good father, and in many ways it was these sacrifices which have allowed to me finish this degree. In an important way, I feel that the completion of this dissertation is something *we* did, and did together. Dad, I am so grateful, and it is to you that this dissertation is dedicated.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation works to provide a virtue ethical analysis of oppression and towards the establishment of an obligation which necessitates active engagement in resistance to oppression. In this way, this project can be seen as proceeding in a twofold manner; on one hand this project contains a descriptive element, where oppression and its harmful influence is systematically exposed and laid bare for moral analysis, and, on the other hand it contains a normative element, where this moral analysis is done and the grounds of obligations for resistance are established.

The use of virtue ethics, as a framework for such a project, certainly affords many benefits but at the same time poses many unique challenges. The unique and beneficial aspects a virtue ethical approach provides to the complex social, political, and moral quagmire that is oppression finds its roots in the general arguments advanced by virtue ethicists in defense of virtue.

Michael Slote has noted that there are roughly five main concepts in ethics; (1) general moral concepts, such as good and bad or right or wrong, (2) rational concepts, which relate to actions, decisions making, and choice, (3) “admirability and the kindred concepts,” which indicate the ways morality is conferred or admitted in social relationships, (4) personal well-being or welfare, which is “the idea of things going well for someone or in someone’s life, and, (5) “the class of notions that can be used to evaluate states of affairs, histories of events, and the like.”<sup>1</sup> For Slote, these five classes of concepts represent the different “common sense” ways which ethical notions can be understood. Slote not only defends virtue ethics in that it is uniquely able to capture

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 1992), 198-199.

these five categories of ethical notions, but sights this accomplishment as “add[ing] impetus to the recent revival of virtue ethics.”<sup>2</sup> While Slote does not defend or privilege, in principle, so-called “common sense” approaches to ethics, he does defend virtue ethics over consequentialist (and specifically act-utilitarian) theories as virtue is better equipped to address and utilize these concepts. For Slote, “utilitarianism... allows for a reduction of all its moral terminology to the idea of producing or resulting in good states of affairs, and the latter idea and others of its category can in turn be reduced to the category of personal good.”<sup>3</sup> This sublimation of the complexity of ethical notions, and therein the breadth of moral life in its expansive reality, which utilitarianism encourages is “irrecusably reductive” and leaves utilitarianism ill-equipped to deal with the reality of morality and moral understandings.

Arguments similar to Slote’s have been launched against deontological ethics. Stan van Hooft chronicles, in detail, how virtue ethics “does a better job of performing the four tasks of moral theory: to understand morality, to prescribe norms, to justify [moral norms] and to describe how [moral norms] fit into our lives.”<sup>4</sup> For van Hooft, deontology cannot sensibly advance a conception of the social lives of humans as morally important in its own right, and in holding the centrality of reason in both life and how life is lived deontology must either ignore or devalue other moral aspects of life.

These claims, and the arguments which support them, coalesce into a general picture of dissatisfaction about ways of moral theorizing which do not, in the words of Rosalind Hursthouse, take seriously the role of “moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of

---

<sup>2</sup> Slote, *From Morality*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Slote, *From Morality*, 199.

<sup>4</sup> Stan van Hoff, *Understanding Virtue Ethics* (Acumen Publishing, 2006), 48.

the emotions in our moral life, and the questions of what sort of person I should be, and of how we should live.”<sup>5</sup> In this way, these arguments can be seen as the germination and blooming of the critiques made by G.E.M. Anscombe in her seminal 1958 piece “Modern Moral Philosophy.”<sup>6</sup>

Following in the vein of these defenses of virtue (and therein the critiques made of other forms of moral theories), this project utilizes the comprehensive framework of virtue ethics as a valuable tool for the evaluation of oppression, and the benefit of such an approach is a natural extension of these general arguments. Oppression, as it will be shown, is an extremely complex social phenomenon and exerts its harmful influence on the oppressed in a vast array of ways, and virtue ethics’ moral holism is especially apt at being able to not only descriptively account for the affected aspects of life but also provide a normative assessment of these effects.

While virtue ethics is particularly well suited for the descriptive task of morally assessing the damaging impact of oppression in the lives of the oppressed in a rich and meaningful way, it poses a unique set of challenges when one moves from the descriptive project to the generation of prescriptive requirements in the face of such moral harm. Virtue ethics has not only been assailed, often unfairly, for being unable to adequately generate schemas for action guidance in a general way, but the “recent revival of virtue ethics” (to borrow a phrase from Slote) has been in large part motivated by Anscombe’s plea for a return to ethics without obligation. While I will argue, in chapter three, that this general critique is unfounded and that virtue ethics does, in fact, present a conception of action-guidance, the second half of this project seeks to not only generate a specific

---

<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>6</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” *Philosophy*, 33, no. 124 (1958).

schema for action-guidance in response to oppression but to root these actions in to a conception of obligation. It is here that virtue ethics poses a unique challenge for this project as such a framework has traditionally eschewed such concepts and many of virtue's most staunch proponents have argued against such attempts.

Before moving on to outline, in more detail, the work in the chapters to follow, it is important to note while this project uses, continually, the broad label "virtue ethics" and actively seeks a virtue ethical interpretation of oppression, it is within Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics that this work is being done. While virtue ethics have been developed in conjunction with consequentialism<sup>7</sup> and deontology,<sup>8</sup> and the possibility of virtue theories being found in the work of Hume<sup>9</sup> and Nietzsche<sup>10</sup> have been explored, this project does not seek, nor utilize, a synthesis of these positions. With this admission made clear, the subsequent chapters can be outlined such that the shape of this project can be seen in greater detail.

Chapter one outlines the broad conception of oppression which is deployed throughout the project, and is primarily drawn from the paradigmatic examples of racism, sexism, classism, and heteronormativity. At the outset it is argued that comprehensive theories of oppression, which seek to exhaustively schematize oppression in all possible variants such that oppression can be differentiated from other forms of political and moral wrongs, can act as an obstacle for moral analyses of obvious cases of oppression. Further it is argued that a comprehensive theory of oppression is unnecessary for such

---

<sup>7</sup> See Julia Driver's *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> See Nancy Sherman's *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), and, Onora O'Neill's "Kant's Virtues," in *How Should One Live: Essays on the Virtues*, ed. Roger Crisp (Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> See Christine Swanton's "Hume and Virtue Ethics," in *Oxford Handbook of Hume*, ed. Paul Russell (Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> See Christine Swanton's "Nietzsche and the Virtues of Mature Egoism," in *Nietzsche's On The Genealogy of Morals: A Critical Study Guide*, ed. Simon May (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

work to proceed. In lieu of advancing or endorsing a rigid theory of oppression, this chapter works from an understanding of oppression as an emergent social phenomenon which is deeply entangled with unjust social structures to identify five salient features of oppression. The salient features identified here are: (1) oppression is a social phenomenon and affects individuals qua their membership in social and economic groups, (2) oppression is harmful for the oppressed, (3) oppression is not, in and of itself, a chosen state of existence by the oppressed, (4) oppression exerts its harmful influence over a protracted period of time, and, (5) oppression cannot be reduced to any single facet and exists as a confluence of factors, harms, and social structures. The conception of oppression which emerges here lays the groundwork for the morally assessment of oppression which is to follow.

Chapter two takes the conception of oppression outlined in chapter one and, using the framework of Aristotelian (and neo-Aristotelian) virtue ethics, works to substantiate the *prima facie* claim that oppression is wrong as it inflicts moral damage on the oppressed. In short, this chapter argues that oppression acts, in a multitude of ways, as an obstacle for the achievement of flourishing. This chapter is broken down into three sections. In section one, the ways oppression works as a limitation of virtue is explored. Here, it is shown that specific virtues are made either impossible, overly onerous, or burdened by the existence of oppression. In each of these ways specific virtues are radically affected and, more often than not, made an impossibility for oppressed people and thus oppression can be shown to be a force which curtails the possibility of flourishing. In section two, the ways oppression systematically manipulates the external goods necessary for the achievement of flourishing is explored. Here, it is argued that

Aristotelian virtue ethics advances the view that certain material goods are necessary, yet not sufficient, for the achievement of flourishing and these necessary goods are systematically manipulated under conditions of oppression. This systematic manipulation means that the external goods necessary for flourishing are often unavailable to the oppressed. In section three, oppression is connected to so-called “base and shameful actions.” This section begins exegetically and works to uncover Aristotle’s view of base actions, and it is argued that Aristotle’s account of such actions suffers from important shortcomings. Yet, by building on Aristotle’s views, in light of these shortcomings, a coherent view of base actions can be established and it will be demonstrated that oppression often curtails flourishing by forcing the habituation of these base actions. In total this chapter works to connect the harmful effects of oppression via virtue ethics and uses this encompassing framework to trace the harmful effects of oppression to our desires, our emotions, our choices, our habits, our interactions with others, and our political existence as social beings. The resulting picture of oppression and its harms not only demonstrates the extent and depth of oppression’s devastating effects on the oppressed, but works to ground the claim that the existence of oppression mandates obligatory responses from virtuous agents.

Chapter three takes up the challenge of establishing, in the virtue ethical framework, a strong moral obligation which requires agents to resist oppression and obligates individuals to actively engage in liberatory struggles against oppressive forces. Admittedly, there is an immediate and apparent tension between the project of virtue ethics and the idea of strong obligations. Yet, it is argued that such an obligation can still be found in virtue ethics. To defend this view, this chapter begins by outlining

Hursthouse's virtue-based account of action guidance as found in the so-called 'v-rules.' For Hursthouse, the v-rules are derived from the existence of the virtues themselves and create a schema of rules for the achievement of flourishing. While the v-rules themselves do not generate obligations, this chapter works to show that the v-rules entail a vast set of derivative rules (or 'd-rules') which do obligate agents in a variety of ways. Of significance here is the way that the v-rules, and their entailed d-rules, obligate agents to act in such a way as to resistance the damning influence of oppression as it is a barrier to flourishing.

The fourth and final chapter works to give substance to the broad obligation, established in chapter three, that agents are under to resist oppression. It is argued here that the dischargement of this obligation cannot be fulfilled through the development of certain intellectual or emotional capacities which might allow individuals to understand and then judge (properly) their experience of oppression with moral outrage. If it is oppression's inherent harms that make flourishing impossible for the oppressed (and therefore creates the moral mandate for resistance), then it is these harms, along with the practical mechanisms which level these harms, that resistance must be directed. While some of the harms inflicted by oppression are emotional and psychological in nature, these harms cannot be reduced to merely "internal" states which can be solved by transforming an agent's dispositions. Thus, it is argued that virtue ethics, in its demands that we meet oppression head-on, cannot be reduced to an obligation to cultivate a disposition and must focus upon action determination. The resistance necessitated by virtue ethics must function to directly and purposefully attack and dismantle the apparatuses of oppression which make avenues to flourishing impossible for the

oppressed. To provide substance to this call for action determination in resistance struggles, a model, drawn from the practical world of activist organizing, is imported and explained such that one is able to see a clear path towards the fulfillment of the obligation to resist. In the end, this chapter defends the robust account of revolutionary action put forth and defends against the possible worry of demandingness.

Broadly speaking, this project was largely inspired by the works of Lisa Tessman and Rosalind Hursthouse, who in many ways work at opposite ends of the virtue ethics spectrum. I was extremely fortunate to be able to spend time in New Zealand working closely with Hursthouse during the writing of this dissertation, and during our time together she often claimed that we did not need to answer “those political problems” as they were best left to “political philosophers.” While Hursthouse’s work often engages, deeply, in ‘political’ questions, she sees a divide between political philosophy and moral philosophy and her work focuses on what has traditionally been in the arena of moral philosophy. Tessman, on the other hand, works expressly to engage virtue ethics in the social and political arenas, and her work on the so-called ‘burdened virtues’ and their connection to liberatory struggles is, to my mind, the best example of how virtue ethics can, and must, be used to address these ‘political’ questions. Tessman, I would suspect, sees no strict divide between these two spheres.

The work which follows here could be characterized as an attempt to synthesize these two perspectives. I disagree with Hursthouse’s characterization of distinct spheres and do not see a divide between ‘moral theory’ and ‘political philosophy.’ Yet, I agree with her that virtue ethics begins with a moral framework and that it is through this framework that virtue ethics works, even when addressing political and social questions.

Thus, this project works to keep moral assessment and obligation at the core of the arguments, and avoids (for example) the political works of Aristotle. Following Tessman, whose work on the burdened virtues encapsulates one relatively narrow although extremely important aspect of oppression, this work continually returns to questions of flourishing and the acquisition of virtue and can contrasted with other work which might seek to keep justice, or injustice, at its theoretical nucleus. In the end, I believe that Tessman is right and that the framework of virtue ethics necessitates active engagement in political and social questions and, in these engagements, virtue ethics can truly excel at addressing these problems and laying the groundwork for moving beyond them.

## CHAPTER ONE

### OUTLINING A CONCEPTION OF OPPRESSION

It might be believed that the natural starting point for a protracted project on oppression and moral resistance would be the establishment, or at least the outlining, of a comprehensive theory of oppression. Such a theory, once detailed and defended, would provide the foundation for the moral work of chronicling oppression's damning effects on the lives of the oppressed and the need for resistance struggles. Yet, no such comprehensive theory of oppression will be found here, although this first chapter will outline a broad understanding of oppression and will highlight some of oppression's salient features. This broad understanding of oppression will serve to launch subsequent moral discussions of oppression, oppression's harms, and the need for moral resistance struggles.

Before outlining the understanding of oppression which is at work in this project the seemingly bold move to omit a robust theory of oppression from this project needs to be explained and defended. It will be argued here that not only is such a theory unnecessary for moral philosophizing about oppression and resistance but that attempts at comprehensive theories of oppression might actually act as roadblocks for further important work on these topics.

## Section 1 - The Failures of Comprehensive Theories of Oppression

Oppression is not a foreign concept to anyone working academically in political and moral philosophy or to those who work in activist and revolutionary movements. While the concept of oppression, or at least being oppressed, is understood by most people, an understanding of exactly what oppression is, and how it is differentiated from other forms of moral and political harm, remains oddly elusive. Racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and classism are all paradigmatic examples of oppression and, often, these examples serve as stand-ins for robust 'theories of oppression.' Identifying *a* theory of oppression, where oppression is exhaustively schematized and where oppression in all possible variants and nuances is differentiated from other forms of political and moral wrongs, often takes a back-seat to other more substantial questions about how oppression manifests in the lives of the oppressed or how the lived struggle against oppression ought to take shape. Too many, and I would include myself in this group, the concept of oppression and its strict ontology are less important than the question(s) about how oppression is to be resisted. Thus, paradigmatic examples of oppression often act as a placeholder for a complete theory of oppression and allows for us to agree on oppression's obvious existence.

Considerable academic and activist work has been devoted to the topic of oppression. Deeply theoretical accounts, descriptions, and treatments of oppression have emerged from both academics and activists to chronicle, in detail, oppression's influences, existence, and root cause(s), yet, to my mind, a comprehensive and all-inclusive theory of oppression remains peculiarly intangible. Attempts to chronicle

oppression, such that oppression in all its varied forms, be they real, historic, or even potential, rely on the belief that oppression can be schematized into a singular theoretical framework. To this end, what might be called ‘ontologies of oppression’ can be seen to fall into two rough camps; one which seeks to encompass the idea of oppression into a *particular* theoretical framework, and, the other which seeks to identify oppression via necessary and sufficient conditions. It is my belief that both camps ultimately fail to provide a compelling unified conception of oppression and here I would like to, briefly, explain why.

This first camp, which seeks a theory of oppression within a particular philosophical theory, takes forms of oppression and works towards a singular paradigm such that all the different types or kinds of oppression can be shown to share a common core within a distinct theoretical framework. The pre-existing theoretical framework is imported into discussions of oppression and acts both as the intellectual scaffolding for the construction of an account of oppression as well as works to move oppression into the fold of the existent theoretical structure. No better example of this can be found than in the work of Marxists.

Marxists have long tried to craft unified theories of oppression where the historical causes of oppression can be identified and the common essence of various forms of oppression can be unearthed and shown to be a part of 'Oppression.' For the Marxist, this unified theory of oppression situates the oppression of workers at the ideological center of their account and then seeks to subsume other forms of oppression as variants of the oppression of the working class. Thus, the oppression of women and people of color are explained as exploitative relationships of capital and private property

and are treated as merely different, but no less pernicious, forms of class exploitation. This attempt to consolidate various forms of oppression into a singular theory has led to what Heidi Hartmann has called an "unhappy marriage" between feminism and Marxism.<sup>11</sup> For Hartmann, the early Marxist's conception of oppression essentially analyzed patriarchal oppression in terms of women's relationship to capital and private property<sup>12</sup> and could not take seriously the relationship between men and women.<sup>13</sup> Feminist critiques of such sublimation helped show how simple Marxist analyses could not take the oppression of women seriously as an issue in its own right, and in many ways such critiques did not fall universally on deaf ears. Hartmann cites the work of Eli Zaretsky as an example of a Marxist theorist who took the feminist critique of traditional Marxism seriously and attempted to avoid the sex-blind nature of classical Marxism and who tried to synthesize feminism and Marxism together.<sup>14</sup> For Hartmann (and others such as Lydia Sargent<sup>15</sup>), this attempt, while not sex-blind, still replicated the Marxist trope of sublimating patriarchal oppression into class divisions. According to Hartmann, Zaretsky's analysis "ultimately rests on the notion of separation, on the concept of *division*, as the crux of the problem" such that patriarchal oppression remains "a division attributable to capitalism."<sup>16</sup> Similar analyses have shown problems of the same kind in sublimation of race and racism in the Marxist analysis, and such problems lead Leonardo

---

<sup>11</sup> Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (South End Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> The most famous of such "early Marxist attempts" at analyzing the oppression of women can be found in Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which was written in the year immediately following Marx's death.

<sup>13</sup> Hartmann, "Unhappy Marriage," 3.

<sup>14</sup> Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*, (Harpercollins, 1986), and also, "Socialist Politics and the Family," *Socialist Revolution* (now *Socialist Review*) 19 (January-March 1974), 83-98.

<sup>15</sup> Lydia Sargent, "New Left Women and Men: The Honeymoon is Over," in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (South End Press, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Hartmann, "Unhappy Marriage," 6 (emphasis in original).

Zeus to (borrowing the title from Hartmann) identify the "unhappy marriage between Marxism and race critique."<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, attempts to craft a singular vision of oppression, which can explain both the historical causes and material conditions, for various forms of oppression fail in both their descriptive content as well as their in their normative uptake as such endeavors must take one of the paradigmatic forms of oppression as the common crux and then engage in various forms of sublimation. It is in this intellectual act of sublimation that one fails to take seriously the unique epistemological, historical, and contextual facts of various forms of oppression and it seems that such attempts, regardless of noble intent, are doomed to failure. It was the failure of unified theories of oppression which led Iris Marion Young to note that "attempts by theorists and activists to discover a common description or the essential causes of the oppression of all these groups have frequently led to fruitless disputes about whose oppression is more fundamental or more grave."<sup>18</sup>

Whereas so-called unified theories of oppression seek to fold oppression into a *particular* theoretical framework, such as Marxism, other theories of oppression seek to unify oppression into a codified set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Attempts such as these do not, at least overtly, try to fold oppression into larger theoretical discussions but rather try and establish a set of criteria drawn from examples of oppression into a rigid schema of essentially shared characteristics. Unfortunately, attempts of this nature, to devise a unified conception of oppression from a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, also fail to provide a compelling account of oppression.

---

<sup>17</sup> Leonardo Zeus, "Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Race Critique: Political Economy and the Production of Racialized Knowledge," *Policy Futures in Education*, vol. 2, no. 3-4, 483-493 (2004).

<sup>18</sup> Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," in *Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance*, eds. Lisa Heldke and Peg O'Connor (McGraw Hill, 2004), 2.

One problem with attempts to explain oppression by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions is that most attempts of this nature devolve into protracted discussions of warranted inclusion or exclusion. When oppression is rigidly defined through the identification of a set of necessary (and sufficient) conditions odd sets of counterfactuals emerge and demand that one engage in bullet-biting to either include or expel groups from the category of the oppressed. Take for example Kenneth Clatterbaugh's analysis of feminist theories of oppression.<sup>19</sup> In part, Clatterbaugh outlines what he calls "limitation theories" of oppression. For Clatterbaugh, "the basic idea [of limitation theories of oppression] is that when options are denied to individuals in virtue of membership in a group, that limitation constitutes oppression."<sup>20</sup> Clatterbaugh rejects such conceptions of oppression (which he attributes to Marilyn Frye and the early work of Alison Jaggar) because there are "obvious cases of limitation that are not oppression" and this leads us to the spurious belief "that everyone is oppressed."<sup>21</sup> As an example of these abundant and "obvious" cases he cites various examples including the limitations imposed on "well-known Hollywood personalities" who "cannot travel freely in the city or eat at a favorite restaurant without a crush of admirers."<sup>22</sup> Clatterbaugh deploys this example as a form of *reducto ad absurdum*, and obviously does not think that celebrities are oppressed *qua* their célébrité, and uses this odd counterfactual to dismiss 'limitation theories' as being built on unclear and indefensible conditions for defining oppression. For Clatterbaugh, such counterfactuals (and the

---

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Clatterbaugh, "Are Men Oppressed?," in *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in the Light of Feminism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, eds. Larry May, Robert Strikwerda, and Patrick D. Hopkins (Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Clatterbaugh, "Are Men Oppressed?," 291.

<sup>21</sup> Clatterbaugh, "Are Men Oppressed?," 293.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

*reductos* they create) clear the path for the advancement of his view of oppression (which he dubs “dehumanizing theory”). What is ultimately ironic about Clatterbaugh’s argument is that such counterfactual banter, which he uses to dismiss one attempt at a unified theory of oppression, actually works as a *reducto* to all forms of oppression established on strict categories of necessary and sufficient conditions. The critical response to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions is the testing of these conditions against innumerable counter-examples, no matter how contrived. Discussions which begin as attempts to understand the reality of lived oppression devolve into utterly fantastical discussions of examples so-far removed from the experience and reality of oppression that these theories must either accommodate counterfactuals into their criteria (making their conception of oppression “purely theoretical”) or engage in bullet-biting such that their conception of oppression omits cases of fantastical oppression.

Similar self-critiques can be found in the ever evolving work of Ann Cudd. Cudd has written prolifically on oppression and often her work revisits her own ideas such that, beyond the obvious ever necessary work to clarify and refine ideas which all theorists face, she continually and subtly alters her conception of oppression such that it can handle marginal cases. In 1994, Cudd posited four necessary and jointly sufficient criteria of oppression.<sup>23</sup> These four "criteria of oppression" were: (1<sub>a</sub>) "oppression must involve some sort of physical or psychological harm," (2<sub>a</sub>) "Oppression applies in the first instance to groups who are identifiable independently of their oppression," (3<sub>a</sub>) "Some persons benefit, (or think they do), from the oppression," and, (4<sub>a</sub>) "Oppression must involve some coercion or force." By 2005, Cudd had refined these four criteria to four

---

<sup>23</sup> Ann Cudd, “Oppression by Choice,” *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 25: s1 (1994).

"conditions" which are identifiable in oppression.<sup>24</sup> These four conditions are: (1<sub>b</sub>) the harm condition: "individuals are harmed by institutional practices (e.g., rules, laws, expectations, stereotypes, rituals, behavioral norms)," (2<sub>b</sub>) the group condition: individuals suffer harms in (1<sub>b</sub>) because of their membership (or perceived membership) in a social group," (3<sub>b</sub>) the privilege condition: "there is another social group that benefits from the institutional practice in (1<sub>b</sub>)," and, (4<sub>b</sub>) the coercion condition: "there is unjustified coercion or force that brings about the harm." While each of these conditions closely mirrors the four criteria she outlined over a decade before, these conditions are subtly altered. For example, in her later work Cudd had moved to from a strict criterion of benefit (3<sub>a</sub>) to a broader understanding of benefit as a result of privilege (3<sub>b</sub>). Similarly, the fourth condition, while mirroring the fourth criteria, moved from defining oppression via strict coercion (as a matter of available choices) to *unjustified* coercion. Here, Cudd found that without overtly tying the coercion criteria to an established theory of justice (which she imports from most directly from Rawls and less directly from liberalism in general), the criteria of coercion allowed-in too many counterfactuals to accurately capture oppression and therein distinguish oppression from other social forms of preference and choice limitation.

My point in noting this evolution of ideas in Cudd's work is not to critique her changes or justify why she saw the need alter her views in her later and more mature work, but rather to show that rigorous work on a comprehensive theory of oppression (which to my mind, no one has been more rigorous than Cudd) predicated on necessary and sufficient conditions comes at a heavy cost; namely that counterfactuals, and how

---

<sup>24</sup> Ann Cudd, "How to Explain Oppression: Criteria of Adequacy for Normative Explanatory Theories," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 35:1 (2005).

one deals with such marginal cases, must become the primary focus of such work. Continually clarifying and therein either allowing-in or shutting-out X or Y from the concept of oppression such that the concept of oppression can remain a defensibly rigid designator has become the central focus of Cudd's analysis.

Deeply related to this problem emerges a second problem within Cudd's work on oppression. Cudd expressly ties her theory of oppression to a liberal (if not libertarian) moral framework. While this move severely limits the ways individuals and states can engage in resisting and dismantling the social and economic apparatuses of oppression, it also means that Cudd (over)emphasizes aspects of oppression such that they are able to coincide with a liberal worldview.<sup>25</sup> For Cudd, the evolving conception of oppression her work presents remains centrally focused on individuals, rights violations, and the manipulation of what could otherwise be unfettered choices made by the oppressed. While the liberal framework Cudd works within provides the necessary normative tools for assessing these lost values, and determining that it is oppression which causes these losses, as morally wrong, it also works descriptively. Cudd defines oppression with the same moral tools she uses to normatively assess oppression. As a liberal, Cudd sees the coercion of choice as a central transgression and descriptively mounts a definition of oppression as a form of coercion. The result of this is that both the descriptive analysis

---

<sup>25</sup> Cudd, in her book *Analyzing Oppression* (Oxford University Press, 2006), proposes five strategies for combating oppression. These five avenues are (1) rhetorical and symbolic strategies (which includes both the use of "purely cool rational uses of persuasive speech" and "passionate and creative uses of speech, poetry, art, photography, film, and theater" (202)), (2) economic strategies (which includes union strikes, consumer boycotts, and the expansion of micro-credit agencies), (3) armed struggle (which must be limited to just war ethics), (4) legal strategies (which includes the passage of laws like ERA and Civil Rights Act), and, (5) resistance to indirect economic and psychological force (which captures the ways that the oppressed can (and must) actively work to counteract stereotypes and the obligation to openly disobey oppressive social norms). Critics such as Helga Varden have claimed that this limited list, which remains safely tied to liberal conceptions of rights, "hamper[s] [Cudd's] ability to provide the arguments necessary for the conclusions she draws concerning how to fight oppression." Helga Varden, "Critical Commentary on Ann Cudd's *Analyzing Oppression*, *Symposia on Gender, Race, and Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 7.

and the advancement of normative goals must remain situated within a singular theoretical framework and thus unlikely to curry favor with those who reject this framework.

In both the work of the Marxists and the analytic philosophers (such as Cudd) we can see how comprehensive theories of oppression face serious, if not insurmountable, hurdles. In both cases, serious critiques emerge to challenge the conceptions of oppression they advance and, interestingly, the emergence of these ruinous critiques was doomed to happen. To advance an ironclad, all-encompassing, and universal theory of oppression is to demand rigid compliance from various forms of oppression into a unified theory. The demand of compliance, as outlined above, results in either dogmatic sublimation of alternative views (as in the case of the Marxist) or the endless devolution into counterfactuals. In either case, any account of oppression which seeks to work beyond mere descriptive analysis or analytical ontology becomes distracted or handcuffed to these discussions. The ability to theorize about what is to be done, or how oppression impacts moral understandings, is placed into a secondary position behind the immediate task of first understanding, in total, what oppression truly is. In this way, a strong theory of oppression hinders the ability to analyze oppression within a moral framework.

Not only can a strict theory of oppression hinder moral work on the topic, it seems that such a comprehensive view is unnecessary for proceeding into discussions about the moral implications of oppression and the moral demand to respond to oppression. It is not the case that all, or even a majority of, philosophical work on oppression suffers fatal flaws derived from attempts at a crafting comprehensive theories of oppression. In fact,

most of the work done on the topic of oppression has been done without a robust theory. Seminal works on the topic of oppression, such as Frye's work *The Politics of Reality*<sup>26</sup> and Young's "The Five Faces of Oppression," make remarkable insights into the reality of oppression and help position oppression as a paramount moral and political evil without either first establishing a rigid and clear conception of oppression or relying on such a strict model. Other protracted accounts of oppression and its harms, such as Tessman's work on oppression as it intersects with the virtues<sup>27</sup> and Harvey's work on the way oppression is "civilized" into society through things such as humor and role expectations,<sup>28</sup> do not need a codified and foundational account of oppression. In each of these works we can see that theorizing about oppression need not begin, nor rest on, a rigid and strict conception of oppression. Thus, no such attempt at a unified theory of oppression will be established or forwarded here in this work. It is not the goal of this chapter, or this entire project for that matter, to conceptualize what oppression *really* is but rather to trace oppression's considerable moral influence and establish resistance to oppression as morally necessary.

The move to omit *a* theory of oppression from a work expressly focused on oppression and moral resistance does not free one to simply move forward to analyzing oppression and its harms and then working to establish the need for moral resistance. One cannot simply distance a work on oppression, such as this, from the otherwise different project of working on an exhaustive description of oppression and then freely and liberally use the term oppression without using it with reckless abandon. To this end it is necessary to outline an operating conception of oppression which can serve to launch

---

<sup>26</sup> Marilyn Frye, *Politics Of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (The Crossing Press, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> J. Harvey, *Civilized Oppression* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

the moral work which is at this project's core. It is to this task that the remainder of this chapter will be focused.

## Section 2 - A Broad Understanding of Oppression

The conception of oppression which will be deployed here, and then used throughout this project, begins by identifying oppression as an emergent social phenomenon which is deeply entangled with unjust social structures. These unjust social structures allow and support the existence of oppression. In essence, unjust social structures can be said to 'aid and abet' actions and instances of oppression, and it is this intermeshing of oppression with unjust social structures which helps differentiate instances of oppression's manifestation from other seemingly similar cases of harm, abuse, and disadvantages. The unjust social arrangements which I have in mind here include (a) the patriarchal power relations between men and women, (b) heteronormative assumptions which normalize heterosexuality and subsequently demonize other expressions of sexuality, (c) racist or racialized views of people, and, (d) classist divisions between economic groups. It is these unjust social arrangements which give rise to the paradigmatic examples of oppression; namely sexism, heteronormativity, racism, and classism.

The complex interplay between existent social arrangements and oppression is evidenced by the considerable array of linguistic ambiguity in the terms surrounding "oppression." Often the term 'oppression' is used in a nounal form and done so to pick-out the general existence of a coercive and destructive force. But 'oppression' also

carries a verbal form (as in “to oppress”) which indicates the deployment (in action) of such coercive and destructive forces, as well as an adjectival form (as in “oppressive”) which describes something as pertaining to oppression (in its nounal form). These linguistic variations, when deployed, might be seem to be working to advance a singular definition of oppression. To describe something as ‘oppressive’ might seem to indicate that it is predicative of an ontological category which can be understood ‘above and beyond’ its instantiations. Similarly, to use oppression in its verbal form might seem to indicate that oppression simply exists as a category or type of action (or even intention). In either of these cases, the use of the varied linguistic forms of oppression might be taken as evidence of a conception of oppression which omits (or at least downplays) a myriad of others ways oppression exists.

This linguistic ambiguity leads to confusion as to what ‘oppression’ refers; is oppression properly predicated of a unique system of disadvantages which is socially distinct from other forms of systematic harm, or is it properly predicated only to those actions which disadvantage and harm others, or rather does it indicate the experience of oppression in the lives of the oppressed? In short, it would appear that each of these is true yet each, individually, fails to encompass the reality of oppression. In some ways it is proper to describe something as oppressive when it is an instance of a larger unjust social arrangement and in other ways such a use of the term oppression fails to distinguish instances of oppression from the structural mechanisms which create the circumstances for such instances of harm.

The picture of oppression which this project deploys is that oppression is an amalgamation of all these concepts. Oppression cannot be reduced to merely the discrete

instances of oppressive actions and forces, but at the same time cannot be understood without accounting for the vast plurality of actions and forces which together create a social web of disadvantage, harm, and abuse. In this way, it is often helpful to talk about “manifestations of oppression” when considering the concrete examples and instances of social harm and abuse, and other times it is necessary to talk about oppression in a general and encompassing way to capture the totality or milieu of such a social existence. In a similar way, it is often necessary to talk about oppression as it affects classes of people (such as in the claim that “women are oppressed”) but this does not deny that this oppression exists only in the ways that individual women directly experience the systematic effects of unjust social arrangements.

A conception of oppression such as this, which operates and exists at both the superstructural level of general societal arrangements which negatively affect groups while at the same time only manifest in the concrete experience of oppressed people, helps us, at this initial stage, to differentiate between seemingly similar actions which vary in their relation to oppression. Take, for example, the actions of a physically abusive partner. When the victim of domestic violence coincides with larger unjust social arrangements, the actions of the abuser can be described as oppressive. When the victim of abuse fails to be a member of a socially disadvantaged group, the actions of the abuser fail to be oppressive, although no less harmful and deplorable. While domestic violence is perpetrated by both men and women, and the gender of the perpetrator may not play a substantial role *in the moment* of abuse, it is surely the case that the gender of the perpetrator, in relation to the gender of the victim, carries with it a wide range of damning effects. Domestic violence perpetrated by men against women is aided and

supported by patriarchal social arrangements which contribute to victim silencing, are supported by beliefs of prerogative and provocation, and result in eschewed paths for legal recourse (to name just a few). In this way, two seemingly similar instances of domestic violence, differentiated by gender, must be assessed differently *qua* that which qualifies as oppressive.

From this broad picture of oppression as deeply entangled with unjust social arrangements it is possible to further identify five salient features of oppression. These features are (1) oppression affects individuals *qua* their membership in social and economic groups, (2) oppression is harmful to the oppressed, (3) oppression is not a state chosen by the oppressed but rather a state imposed upon them, (4) oppression exerts its harmful influence over a protracted period of time, and, (5) oppression cannot be reduced to any single facet and exists as a confluence of factors, harms, and social structures. By flushing out these salient features the broad picture of oppression being advanced here is given further depth and clarity. So it is to these salient features that attention must be turned.

1. Oppression is a social phenomenon and affects individuals *qua* their membership in social and economic groups

Because oppression emerges as intimately bound-up with unjust social arrangements, the social nature of oppression, meaning that it affects individuals and does so *qua* their membership in social and economic groups, is the most striking feature of oppression. This social nature of oppression is evidenced in the literature on oppression as it is the most common thread found throughout this literature. While one can talk about an

'oppressed individual,' it is not the case that the oppression that they experience is leveled against them in a singularly individualistic way, but rather that they exist as a member of an oppressed group.<sup>29</sup>

These social (and economic) groups to which oppression manifests are not merely collections of individuals. Individuals may be grouped in countless ways, either through self-association or by another's categorization, yet each and every type of categorization need not be understood as a group. Here it is helpful to distinguish a difference between 'groupings' and 'groups.' A grouping of individuals may be done through any number of characteristics whereas individuals are identified as similar to others through some shared characteristic or trait. Groupings need not be significant to either the individual grouped or to the one categorizing individuals as part of a group. For instance, individuals may be grouped by hair color or dominant handedness, and these groupings, to greater or lesser degree, may be said to accurately categorize individuals.

While groupings may be more or less morally arbitrary, 'groups' are deeply connected to the ways that an individual's identity is constructed. Groups are constituted around shared norms, beliefs, ways of knowing, and collective history and thus play important roles in how one experiences life, how one understands and comes to knowledge, and how one views their collective past. Participation in a group, whether self-chosen or not, has a constitutive impact on individuals, whereas groupings of individuals merely identify common or shared traits.

---

<sup>29</sup> To my mind there is no clearer explanation of the role of social groups in oppression than the account given by Young in "Five Faces of Oppression," and this discussion of the social nature of oppression, as identified as a salient feature, mirrors her work.

In some cases the social groups of which one is a member is a matter of choice and self-identification. Individuals who adopt a particular religion may be said to choose the norms, beliefs, and understandings of a religious tradition and thus voluntarily transform themselves into a member of a specific group. In other cases, the placement of individuals into social groups can be done through colonial gaze of others. Indigenous persons, in the United States, may have seen themselves simply a collection of different peoples, but the arrival of colonial forces created the single category of "Indian" or "Native" whereas the norms, beliefs, and histories of indigenous people were transformed into a social or cultural group through its identification as "the other." It is in this identification of "the other" that the relational nature of group-to-group dynamics can be seen. Social groups emerge in relation to other social groups.

While social groups not only classify but also constitute individuals, social groups are fluid and dynamic and individuals can participate in a plurality of social groups. Social groups change and shift, affecting inclusion and exclusion parameters, and do not exist as unchanging fixed categories.

It is within the dynamics of social groups that oppression operates. When a social group, and the norms and identities it constitutes, is placed into a subordinate position within a dominant social framework of normalization the subordinate group is subject to oppressive forces. These systematic forces which coerce, subjugate, and prejudice a social group are hallmarks of oppression. While an individual in a subordinate social group will directly experience the force of oppression, it is their participation in a social group which makes them oppressed. It is not the case that the oppression that one experiences is leveled against them as a unique individualized target of prejudice, but

rather the individual is subject to oppression *qua* their inclusion within an oppressed social group.

As mentioned earlier, this social nature of oppression is the most common and shared thread found throughout the work of different theorists and in different theories concerning oppression. While different theorists have emphasized different types of social or economic groups, all stress that it is into the social dynamics of the subordination of social (or economic) groups that oppression exists.

## 2) Oppression is harmful for the oppressed

The most obvious salient feature of oppression is that it is harmful for those oppressed. It would seem that the identification of harm is often the first step in identifying oneself as an oppressed person and is the most directly experienced effect of oppression in the lives of the oppressed. Oppressed people experience the harmful effects of oppression directly and often it is the naming of these harms which reveals the individually-experienced harm as present in the lives of people of a particular social or economic group. In this way, the harms of oppression are not only real, but the experience of these harms can serve as an epistemic base for the oppressed to identify their oppression.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> It is worth clarifying, here, that this claim that the epistemic experience of oppression's harms might aid the oppressed in seeing their harms as systematically affecting a group (and not just the unfortunate lot of an individual) does not, in itself, constitute a verification of oppression's existence. While some, such as Judith Tormey, take this experience as positive verification, I do not want to make such a move. See "Exploitation, Oppression, and Self-Sacrifice," in *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation*, eds. Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky (Putnam, 1976)./

The most discernable of harms caused by oppression are the physical and economic harms leveled against the oppressed. The living conditions of the global working class and the systematic use of targeted violence are easily recognizable and often the harm most chronicled through the media. The recent killing of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man choked to death by a white NYPD officer, and the union busting tactics of Coca-Cola which have left at least four union leaders dead in Colombia both exemplify not only the reality of oppression's use of physical harm, but also the way that this harm is easily transmitted across the globe through images, eye-witness reports, and accounts of first-hand experience. In a similar way, the economic reality of poverty and wantiness is easily identifiable and demonstrable when looking at the lives of the working class. In many ways it is easy to see poverty and see the ways that groups of people are deprived economic opportunities and benefits, and therein harmed.

Less apparently obvious are the ways oppression inflicts harm on individuals in non-physical and non-material ways. The oppressed, in addition to these physical and material forms of harm, are also subject to a myriad of emotional and psychological harms. Oppressed people can suffer from an eroded sense of value, be emotionally manipulated into states of irascibility, and (through material manipulation) kept in states of ignorance. These types of emotional and psychological harm experienced by the oppressed, while less apparent, are no less damaging and detrimental than the obvious cases of physical harm and must be counted for when considering oppression's harms.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Theresa Tobin's recent, as well as forthcoming, work on spiritual violence gives rise to what might be called "spiritual harm." This type of harm, as a *distinct form* of harm from the emotional and psychological harms briefly touched upon here might also warrant inclusion. I do not, neither here nor in chapter two, take-on the issue of spiritual harm (or spiritual violence), but Tobin's work on this topic seems to suggest strongly that spiritual harm is unique, real, and connected to oppression.

It should be said that different individuals as well as different oppressed groups will experience these harms in a variety of ways and to a variety of degrees. These harms can be experienced acutely or chronically, and may vary between individuals or groups. It seems impossible to identify a singular experience of oppression's harm, or even identify an exacting measurement of the damage these harms 'ought' to inflict on different individuals or groups if they are to be victims of oppression. Yet, between different oppressed groups there does exist a common tie of harm, and the various effects of oppression must be seen, at least in part, as an overlapping tapestry of harm. While the forms of harm caused by oppression are chronicled, in detail, in chapter two, it seems sufficient to say here that oppression *is* harmful and that oppression harms the oppressed in a plurality of ways.<sup>32</sup>

### 3) Oppression is not, in and of itself, a chosen state of existence by the oppressed

This third salient feature of oppression, which identifies oppression as an imposed and unchosen state by the oppressed, is a natural outcropping of the ways that oppression affects individuals *qua* their membership in social groups. Since many of the social groups to which one may belong, which are subject to unjust arrangements, are not necessarily voluntary associations, the oppression which affects the members of these groups cannot be said to be chosen by oppressed. In this way, the ascendancy of dominate social orders is imposed upon the subordinate group and not the object of choice.

---

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that there may also be ways that oppression damages those individuals who are not oppressed but benefit from oppression. While there might be some truth to such a claim, the potential harms oppression may have on "the oppressors" will not be explored or documented in this project.

To this claim there might be some who argue that there are cases where a group chooses subordination and can be said to, as a social group, choose their role as oppressed. Take for example a religious community of women in which the wider religious community mandates the subordination of women to men in both the religious and social aspects of life. Here, the dutiful women actively participate in their subordination and oppression and choose to remain in such a position of subservience. Such examples exist in many religious communities and it might be claimed that such examples undercut the claim that oppression is always imposed upon the oppressed and never a chosen state of affairs by the oppressed.

It is my belief that these communities do not represent people choosing to be oppressed, although their choices do allow for their oppression. In such cases the subordinated groups are surely choosing to exist within a set religious group defined by norms, beliefs, and values. Such a group of religious women would be choosing to accept the norms of a type of religious devotion, which in turn is oppressive, but they are not choosing to be oppressed for the sake of being oppressed. Communities such as these may come to accept their subordination as a necessary part of a religious doctrine, but it is the religious doctrine which is the object of choice. A group or community may come to accept its subordination or oppression within a larger community, but this acceptance is not equivalent to having the group's subordination be the end that they seek through their actions or choices. A similar case can be made in other such instances of seemingly self-chosen oppression. Take for example a woman who decides to have a biological child and further decides to work at home as a care worker for her offspring. This woman may be reinforcing gender stereotypes of domesticity and motherhood by her

actions but her choice is not motivated by the desire to reinforce these stereotypes. It would seem that given the (albeit fictitious option) to have a biological child and raise the child herself without this action feeding into sexist stereotypes of domesticity, this individual would prefer this option. Here, in this contrived yet real example, we can see that the sexist norms which mandate women to be mothers to remain authentic in their femininity is not the object of *her* choice, but rather the accidental byproduct of her choice. The same seems true for other forms of oppression. Oppressed individuals may be reluctant to abandon oppressive structures the oppressive structures themselves are not the objects of choice. Thus many African Americans chose to remain in debt-bondage to their former slave owners long after their legal emancipation, yet it was not their debt-bondage that was the object of their choice but rather the relative security of existent conditions weighed against the unknown which meant choosing such arrangements. The racism was imposed, and all things being equal, was not the object of choice of the oppressed.

It needs to be clear that I do not want to dismiss or deny the important ways in which oppressed individuals may become participants (either actively or passively) in their own oppression. I simply want to claim that oppression, or being in an oppressed state, is not the object of choice by the oppressed as an end that they actively seek. In this way, oppression is imposed upon subordinate groups as part of a paradigm of hegemony.

#### 4) Oppression exerts its harmful influence over a protracted period of time

Time, and temporal continuance, also plays an important role in understanding oppression and must be seen as one of its salient features. On one hand, this feature of time can be understood as the duration of an oppressive structure, and on the other we can see how oppression affects individuals over protracted periods of time. To this first feature, oppression, as a systematic confluence of forces, persists over a relatively long period of time. Because oppression works, in part, by manipulating social and economic mores, and by establishing and using moral attitudes, oppression is an enduring force. Oppressive systems do not arise overnight, nor do they subside and die in a moment. Forms of oppression are prolonged and exert their harmful influence sustained periods of time. This durational life of oppression ties to the second way which the temporal nature of oppression must be understood. In this second way, oppression is not something that individuals pass in-and-out of, and being oppressed is not a transient state. Much like how oppression persists over long periods of time, individuals perdure as oppressed people.

Identifying oppression as enduring and temporally persistent helps distinguish it from other forms of related political and social wrongs often conflated with oppression. Oppression should be distinguished from other unjust arrangements such as exploitation, servitude, being downtrodden, and being held in bondage (to name just a few). While these social and economic arrangements are often the hallmark of oppression, they do remain distinct. Evidence for this move to distinguish oppression from other forms of injustice is exhibited in the ways one can be said to be removed from an unjust social

arrangement yet not be liberated from oppression. Here, one can look to cases where individuals or groups have (even temporarily) extracted themselves from unjust social conditions yet, never the less, remained oppressed. Take for example the workers at Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors. In 2008, UE workers (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America) were informed that the company was immediately closing their production plant.<sup>33</sup> Workers announced that they had no intention to see the plant close, occupied the facilities, and continued assembly production. After garnering much media attention, the plant remained open and in use until it was bought by Serious Energy (a rival company). These workers, running the plant collectively and as a collective, were successful at (temporarily) freeing themselves from the exploitation of management yet were not free from being oppressed members of the working class. A similar example can be seen by returning to the previously mentioned example of US chattel slavery and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. While the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment effectively ended chattel slavery in the US, the newly "freed" African Americans were not liberated from the oppression. In both of these cases we can see how individuals or groups can be said to have escaped one unjust arrangement (be that 'exploitation' in the case of Republic Windows and Doors and 'legal bondage' in the case of newly freed American slaves) yet remained firmly under the thumb of oppression. While it is true that individuals suffering under oppression are exploited and often in some form of bondage, it remains the case that one can free themselves from these arrangements without being liberated from oppression.

---

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed description of the initial work of the UE to keep Republic Windows and Doors open, as well as its operation until dissolution, see Alejandra Cancino, "Former Republic Windows and Doors Workers Learn to be Owners," *The Chicago Tribune* (November 6, 2013),

These examples illustrate the ways that oppression, and being oppressed, must be distinguished and, partially, disentangled from other ways in which unjust social arrangements manifest. The move to highlight the temporal longevity and ability to perdure as salient feature of oppression helps us do just this. While it is not possible to establish an ‘oppression-or-not’ clock or calendar, the paradigmatic examples of oppression reveal a salient feature of lasting continuance. In addition, oppression’s perdurance also helps explain why attempts to “root out” and eliminate oppressive structures requires an attention to this longevity.

5) Oppression cannot be reduced to any single facet and exists as a confluence of factors, harms, and social structures

The fifth and final salient feature of oppression that needs to be highlighted is the nonreducible nature of oppression. By identifying oppression as ‘nonreducible’ is to claim that oppression cannot be parsed down to any one salient feature or any individual moral transgression, evil, or moral harm. As revealed by the paradigmatic examples, oppression emerges as a systematic confluence of forces, and the reality of oppression is that it resists being diminished to a singular moral wrong.

To reduce oppression to a single moral evil, or even a short-list of moral transgressions, is to deny the systematic nature of oppression. The existence of oppression is one of a wide range of social, political, and economic influences which exerts its damning influence on oppressed peoples in a variety of political and moral ways. So to pin oppression as simply, for example, a series of unjust structured political

arrangements is to overlook the vast array of ways which oppression operates beyond the confines of juridical injustice. Similarly, to reduce oppression to being merely the result of the immoral and unjust actions of an oppressor is to overlook the important ways that individuals will be privileged through the existence of oppression yet not be the evil and maniacal overlord who intends the enslavement of others. Oppression, both in its causes as well as in its effects, defies attempts at reduction and its systematic nature is one of complicated factors. It is in the identification of this fifth salient feature which keeps reductive accounts of oppression from being advanced and seeks to keep the reality of oppression's systematic nature in place.

### Section 3 - Conclusion

The understanding of oppression being advanced here is that oppression is a perduring, harmful, and unchosen state which affects individuals *qua* their membership in social groups and which, in turn, is supported by, and entangled with, unjust social arrangements. This picture of oppression is born out of the paradigmatic examples of oppressive structures like racism, sexism, classism, and heteronormativity and works to keep these paradigmatic examples at the center of its understanding. This admittedly broad conception of oppression navigates the terrain between, on one hand, strict theories of oppression (and the pitfalls they entail), and, on the other hand, an overly loose conception of oppression which lacks critical engagement.

In the end, the picture of oppression being used here may not be equipped to universally address potential counterfactuals, or systematically distinguish oppression

from the social arrangements which work to support the existence of oppression. To this charge, I will freely admit, although it is necessary to temper this charge by reiterating two important points made earlier. First, an all-encompassing, ironclad, unwavering theory of oppression is not the aim of this chapter, or this project. The focus of this project is to analyze the harmful effects of oppression in the lives of the oppressed within the framework of virtue ethics and then work toward the establishment of our responsive obligations to oppression within this framework. Second, an ironclad and universal theory of oppression is not necessary for such work to proceed. This general conception of oppression, which mirrors other such descriptions that eschew and forsake all-encompassing theoretical attempts, creates a broad yet thick understanding of oppression which can be further analyzed through the theoretical framework of Aristotelian (and neo-Aristotelian) virtue ethics. Through the lens of virtue ethics the harms of oppression on the oppressed, which were briefly touched upon in this chapter, can be brought into sharp focus and can be chronicled in detail. It is the result of the descriptive exploration of analyzing oppression's damning harms that works to motivate the need for individuals and communities to engage in resistance struggles. But before looking at the morally available resistance to which people are obligated, this descriptive analysis of oppression's influence on the oppressed, done from within the virtue theoretical framework, must occur and it is to this task that the next chapter is focused.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IDENTIFYING THE WRONGS OF OPPRESSION IN VIRTUE ETHICS

I take it as given that oppression is, *prima facie*, morally wrong and it inflicts moral damage upon those who suffer under its influence. This chapter will move from this *prima facie* claim to substantiate the ways that oppression harms individuals as understood by virtue ethics. This harm is inflicted on a multitude of levels and, for the virtue ethicist, can be divided into a three-part categorization; oppression's effect on the acquisition of virtue, oppression's manipulation of external goods, and oppression's necessitation of base and shameful actions. Corresponding to these three categories, this chapter has been divided into three sections which relate to three nexuses of harm caused by oppression.

Each of these sections utilizes etiological arguments which trace the influences of oppression to the harm leveled against oppressed individuals. In short, oppression limits the availability of flourishing and warps individuals characters into states of viciousness. The labeling of these states as "vicious" may sound odd at points because, as it will be shown, the damage leveled against individuals is often not chosen or volitional. Yet, the etiological explanation of oppression's coercive force directly results in individuals being pressed into harmful states of vice.

By showing how, in these three arenas, oppression curtails flourishing, we are able to generate an Aristotelian obligation to resist oppression as oppression denies flourishing to not only individuals but also entire communities of people.

## Section 1 – Oppression as a Limitation of Virtue

It is clear that external influences are capable of effecting changes in the emotional and psychological states of moral agents. Oppression, as a force, affects the moral character of individuals and thus the existence of oppression limits individuals in their ability to be virtuous. This can be seen both in relation to the moral virtues as well as the intellectual virtues. Here, I wish to show how this is the case. In general, we need to see how virtues are affected by oppression and this effect manifests in three broad ways. First, some virtues are made a practical impossibility for oppressed individuals and the possibility for the achievement of these virtues is eliminated. Second, some virtues are affected in that their acquisition is made extremely difficult for the oppressed person. In a third way, some virtues become what Tessman has called “burdened,” in that the proper and appropriate mean for the virtue is extreme.<sup>34</sup> In this third case, the agent does in fact inculcate a virtue as opposed to a vice but the virtue, due to the existence of oppression, is damaging and dangerous to its possessor. To illustrate how the virtues are (a) eliminated, (b) affected, or, (c) burdened, the specific moral virtues of temperance, courage, and so-called “good-temperedness,” along with the intellectual virtues of wisdom and knowledge, will be outlined. These virtues illustrate, in specific detail, how the virtues are unduly manipulated by oppression in these three ways. This manipulation of virtue curtails agents in their habituation of these moral virtues and limits the availability of virtue and therefore flourishing. In each of these instances (and in reference to both types of virtue), it is essential that we see how oppression acts as a

---

<sup>34</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 2005, and, “Burdened Virtue of Political Resistance,” in *Feminist Interventions in Ethics and Politics*, eds. Barbara S. Andrew, Jean Keller, and Lisa H. Schwartzman (Rowmann and Littlefield, 2005).

causal force which inhibits individuals from developing the virtues necessary for the achievement of happiness (flourishing).

#### A. Temperance

Let us first turn to the virtue of temperance, as it is through temperance that we can see how some virtues are made a complete impossibility by the existence of oppression. To understand how oppression makes temperance impossible for the oppressed it is necessary to first outline Aristotle's conception of temperance (and therein his understanding of appetites).

Aristotle differentiates, at *Nicomachean Ethics (NE)* 1118b8, two different senses of appetite; "common appetites" and "peculiar appetites."<sup>35</sup> Common appetites are described as "natural" and connected to our base physical existence while peculiar appetites are described as preferences related to taste and individuated desires for particular foods. The desire in common appetites is physiological in nature and rooted in our need for food as a means for sustaining our physical existence. Peculiar appetites appear, for Aristotle, to be not physiological in nature but rather preferential to taste.

Charles Young argues that "[Aristotle's] distinction between common and peculiar appetites is better seen, not as a distinction between two different kinds of appetite, but rather as a distinction between different grounds for our having the appetites we do."<sup>36</sup> I agree with Young and resist moves to distinguish two different types of appetites. Such a move is not supported by the text. To claim that there are two different types of appetites

---

<sup>35</sup> The entire project uses the W.D. Ross translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Any use of different translations, when used for points of comparison, will be noted at that time.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Young, "Aristotle on Temperance," *The Philosophical Review* 97, no. 4 (1988), 531.

would require the identification of two independent virtues to govern these two types of appetites. Aristotle would have to distinguish different (but related) virtues of temperance as he does with generosity and magnificence in chapters one and two of Book IV. Since Aristotle does not do this it is disingenuous to the text to claim that his descriptions of common and peculiar appetites are meant as a difference in kind.

If we accept Young's account, as I suggest that we do, we are given a picture of temperance by Aristotle which responds to our layered and complex relationship to food. At a basic level we desire food for survival, but our desire for food does not simply reduce to physical need and can, after the physiological need is met, become preferential for pleasure and enjoyment.

Interestingly, these two sources of desire regarding food require that we provide two corresponding accounts of intemperance, particularly in relation to situations where these desires are unsatisfied. When peculiar appetites go unfulfilled we are left with what Aristotle calls a "craving" (1118b10). These cravings are a form of profligacy and beyond the mean of temperance. The specific criteria of time, place, degree, manner, and motive (1106a22, 1109a26) in relation to the doctrine of the mean yield an assessment of such errant desires. For example, one may experience a peculiar appetite for a food which is ethically repugnant (such as foie gras or veal), or have a peculiar complaint at an inappropriate time (such as complaining that the food at a funeral is not to your liking). In this way, we can be intemperate in regards to our peculiar appetites and this intemperance is explained through the enumerated criteria of the doctrine of the mean found repeated in Book II.

On the other hand, when common appetites go unfulfilled we are left having to provide a different moral analysis. While the conditions of time, place, manner, and motive remain morally relevant, common desires are first weighed against the criteria of satisfaction. That is, the primary moral question of our physiological desires for sustenance relate to the ability to realize these desires through survival eating. When common appetites are met our immediate desires for food are satiated. This satiation is temporary and these desires will reemerge at a later time when our bodies again desire nourishment. In this way, common desires can be called 'hunger.' While possibly complicated by peculiar cravings for a particular food when we are hungry, the common appetites are satisfied not through particularly desired foods but rather by eating *some* food. To satisfy a common desire, food must be consumed. For common appetites, it is only after the possibility of satiation is made manifest that we can raise further evaluative concerns about the conditions of these desires.

Thus, Aristotle claims, "in the natural appetites [read: common desires] few go wrong, and only in one direction, that of excess" (1118b15). Aristotle seems quite correct in claiming that there is, but with one exception, only errors of excess in regards to common appetites. The error of deficiency in regard to our common appetites would only arise in individuals who, do to physiological<sup>37</sup> or psychological<sup>38</sup> disorders and

---

<sup>37</sup> Specifically, this is the medical condition of cachexia. Cachexia, sometimes called "chronic wasting disease," is "a complex metabolic syndrome associated with underlying illness and characterized by loss of muscle with or without loss of fat mass," Evans, W. J., Morley, J. E., Argilés, J., Bales, C., Baracos, V., Guttridge, D., Jatoi, A., Kalantar-Zadeh K., Lochs, H., Mantovani, G., Marks, D., Mitch, W.E., Muscaritoli, M., Najand, A., Ponikowski, P., Fanelli, F.R., Schambelan, M., Schols, A., Schuster, M., Thomas, D., Wolfe, R., Anker, S.D. (2008). "Cachexia: A New Definition." *Clinical Nutrition* 27, no. 6 (2008), 794. Cachexia is a medical condition which is the result of larger illnesses, sickness, or disease where individuals experience a radical reduction (or elimination) of the natural desire for food. While most often associated with cancer, it also occurs in patients with pulmonary disease, chronic kidney disease, sepsis, and even Crohn's disease. If, via medication, patients cannot regain their nutritive desires they must be fed through gastric tubes or other artificial means.

diseases, would not possess the natural instinct for nourishment. Where Aristotle is patently wrong is in his claim of rarity concerning this vice of excess. In fact, it would appear that the countless people who suffer in poverty experience this excessive desire. When the basic need for food goes unfulfilled, placing individuals in a state of starvation, or is fulfilled without the requisite nutrients needed for proper functioning of the body, as in malnutrition, the individual suffers from an excessive desire for food. As odd as this sounds, underfed, starving, or malnourished people are physiologically forced into a state of wanton intemperance, and this intemperance is one of excess. Considerable clinical research in nutrition, psychology, and physiology can attest to this counter-intuitive claim.

Ansel Keys, as lead researcher, headed the Minnesota Starvation Experiment which sought to explore and explain the psychological and physiological effects of food deprivation.<sup>39</sup> During the experiment, which began in 1944, subjects were placed on progressively restrictive diets and their psychological states were detailed. First subjects were put on a 3,200 calorie per day diet to determine their "ideal weight." Following this initial period (which was, for most subjects, a caloric restriction from their everyday eating habits), subjects had their caloric and food intake severely restricted for 24 weeks where they were allowed to return to "normal eating habits" only after they had achieved a weight-loss goal of dropping 75% of their initial body weight. During the 24-week

---

<sup>38</sup> It is possible that eating disorders such as anorexia represent a psychological disorder which results in insensitivity to food. While acknowledging this possibility I am wary about reducing eating disorders to mere food insensitivity. Research into eating disorders, such as anorexia, has shown that these conditions are rooted in "emotional, physical, and spiritual wounds" which merely manifest in one's relation to food. Carol Emery Normandi and Laurelee Roark, *It's Not About Food: End Your Obsession with Food and Weight* (Penguin Putnam, 1999), xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Polivy, "Psychological Consequences of Food Restriction," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 96, no. 6 (1996).

starvation period, subjects ate minimal diets of potatoes, bread, and pasta thus mimicking the eating conditions faced by soldiers and civilians during World War II. Keys found that when the subjects were placed into a state of starvation they "became increasingly focused on food; they collected recipes, hung pinup pictures of food, and changed career plans to food-related activities such as becoming a chef."<sup>40</sup> Keys found that extreme food deprivation results in not only an increase in the desire for food, but also an increase in intensity of desire. Once subjects achieved their weight-loss goal, they were placed upon unrestricted diets for 12 weeks where they were permitted to eat unlimited amounts of food of their own choice. Keys found that during this unrestricted eating period subjects over-ate, gorged, and binged, and in some cases even stole food when food supplies were readily available. Similar results were found by researchers questioning Canadian prisoners of war who had been subject to food deprivation during their incarceration.<sup>41</sup> Interviewees reported patterns of binge eating which continued from the time of their initial release and well into their civilian life after the war.

Whether in cases of voluntary starvation (as exhibited during the Minnesota Starvation Experiment) or involuntary starvation (as exhibited by Canadian POW's), the effect of food deprivation seems to be the development (and maintenance) of excessive common desires for food. While Aristotle notes, and criticizes, "belly-gods" (or "those people... that fill their belly beyond what is right," 1118b19) as an example of intemperance, what he does not see is that the same excessive desire for food is found in those who are systematically denied access to food. The only difference, *qua* temperance, between the belly-god and those experiencing starvation appears to be the

---

<sup>40</sup> Polivy, Psychological Consequences," 598.

<sup>41</sup> Jean Polivy, Sharon B. Zeitlin, C. Peter Herman, and A. Lynne Beal, "Food Restriction and Binge Eating: A Study of Former Prisoners of War," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 103, no. 2 (1994).

ability to satisfy the excessive common desire. In both cases, there exists an errant desire of excess relating to common desires and the existence of this excessive desire results in intemperance.

This discussion of the virtue of temperance demonstrates the ways that oppression can deny the availability of virtue and therefore limit flourishing but the significance of this example extends beyond merely elucidating this point and holds further special significance in this discussion. The special significance of temperance in relation to oppression comes from the important ways in which this specific virtue intersects with the practical maintenance of power and oppression. Rolf Künnemann and Sandra Epal-Ratjen, writing on behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, highlight what they call "food-related oppression" claiming the manipulation of food is one of the most common ways that individuals and groups are held under manipulative and oppressive control.<sup>42</sup> Further, they claim, "control over the access to food and food-producing resources of other people and peoples is one of the most fundamental sources of power over them."<sup>43</sup> The immoral misuses of this power are forms of oppression, and there are important definitive correlations between oppressive political structures and their manipulation of food and food availability.

In the most bold and egregious forms, food is directly and intentionally targeted as a weapon of political and social control and thus can be used as a vehicle for enforcing and maintaining oppressive structures. Food, due to the bare necessity that it serves, is a particularly effective tool for subjection and manipulation. One striking and paradigmatic example of this can be seen in the distribution (or lack thereof) of food by

---

<sup>42</sup> Rolf Künnemann and Sandra Epal-Ratjen, *The Right to Food: A Resource Manual for NGO's* (AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, 2004), 18.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

syndicated warlords during the civil war in Somalia. In 1991, after losing the backing of the Russian Soviets, the communist government of Somalia was overthrown and the country erupted into a brutal civil war. The civil war was primarily fought between two militias, one led by Ali Mahdi Mohamed and the other Mohammed Farah Aidid. Both men, commonly described as "warlords," used the systematic withholding of food to further their cause.<sup>44</sup> One of the immediate results of the outbreak of the civil war was a widespread famine which, according to the UN, caused over 240,000 deaths.<sup>45</sup> The UN created a special taskforce, named United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) to respond to the pressing needs of civilians. In conjunction with US forces who carried out their own "humanitarian" missions, the UN attempted to supply food to relieve the effects of the famine but their attempts ultimately failed. The failure of this humanitarian aid was due to the fact that food relief efforts were funneled primarily through the warring factions. Aidid and Mohamed both accepted food from the UN and distributed the food to civilians as a reward for support for their faction. Civilians were given a choice between supporting one of the aligned militia groups and aiding the war efforts or starvation. This direct withholding of food from the civilian population represents the most severe form of oppression manifest through food manipulation.

Beyond cases of intentional and forced food manipulation, such as those represented by the case of the Somali civil war, the existence of so-called "food deserts" also works as a tool of oppressive food manipulation. The term "food desert," first used in the 1990's in Scotland, does not currently have a uniform or agreed upon definition and

---

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Reese, Oscar Gandy, and August Grant's, *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World* (Routledge, 2001) provides a lengthy case study of the use of the term "warlord" in reference to Mohamed and Aidid as used by major media outlets in the Western world. The consensus is that this term was not only widely used, but used accurately.

<sup>45</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: A Situation Analysis," WRITENET (2000), 3.

the term encompasses a wide range of related topics.<sup>46</sup> Some define food deserts based upon availability and affordability of healthy food,<sup>47</sup> while others define food deserts as locations where food options are limited to types of businesses of limited employees.<sup>48</sup> In short, a food desert is a geographical area in which healthy food availability is limited and food options are predominately served by convenience stores and fast food services. The term "food desert" is contrasted with "food oases" where a food oasis is a location where a plurality of healthy food options exist at affordable prices. In food deserts there may be an abundance of food and an abundance of food outlets, but by-and-large it is only highly processed "empty calorie" food, rich in fat, sugars, sodium, and hydrogenated oils, all of which have deleterious health effects. Fresh vegetables, fruits, and nutritious alternatives are scarce, if available at all. Food deserts have become an important topic of scholarship for urban planners, public health officials, civic engineers, dietitians, and activists because almost all studies and surveys of food deserts show that food deserts exist disproportionately in economically poor areas, be they rural or urban,<sup>49</sup> and disproportionately affect people of color.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Steven Cummins and Sally Macintyre, "'Food Deserts' – Evidence and Assumption in Health Policy Making," *BMJ* 325, no. 7361 (2002).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Deja Hendrickson, Chery Smith, Nicole Eikenberry, "Fruit and Vegetable Access in Four Low-Income food desert communities in Minnesota," *Agriculture and Human Value* 23 (2006).

<sup>49</sup> See Linda Alwitt and Thomas Donley's, "Retail Stores in Poor Urban Neighborhoods," *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 31, no. 1(1997), and, LaVonna Blair Lewis, David C. Sloane, Lori Miller Nascimento, Allison L. Diamant, Joyce Jones Guinyard, Antronette K. Yancey, and Gwendolyn Flynn's "African Americans' Access To Healthy Food Options in South Los Angeles Restaurants," *American Journal of Public Health* 94, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>50</sup> See Marva Lewis and Joy Osofsky's "Violent Cities, Violent Streets: Children Draw Their Neighborhoods," in *Children in a Violent Society*, ed. Joy Osofsky (Guildford Press, 1995), and, Jason P. Block, Richard A. Scribner, and Karen B. DeSalvo's "Fast Food, Race/Ethnicity, and Income," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 27,no. 3 (2004), and, Kimberly Moreland, Steve Wing, and Ana Diez Roux's "The Contextual Effect of the Local Food Environment on Resident's Diets: The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 11 (2002).

While it is clear that victims of starvation do not have their food needs met, and therefore are intemperate, it is, on the surface, less clear how food deserts relate to common desires. It might appear that food deserts, and the coerced unhealthy choices they impose upon residents, relate to peculiar desires, yet it can be shown that food deserts create a similar intemperance of excess to starvation in relation to common desires. Common desires are distinguished from peculiar desires in their root cause, and the root cause of common desires for food is physiological in nature. Physiologically, the body desires, for health and maintenance, certain nutritional qualities. Proteins, complex carbohydrates, and nutrients are all desired by the body for healthy function and these nutrients are exactly what is often missing in diets constructed within food deserts. While a preference for romaine lettuce over green-leaf lettuce is a peculiar desire, the need and desire for produce is common. In food deserts, these basic biological needs are not being met, and the common desires not satisfied. If physiological desires are not met, individuals are left wanting. It is this wanting for that which cannot be fulfilled that marks the vice of intemperance.

Shown through the cases of both the Somali civil war and existence of food deserts, individuals and communities suffering under oppressive systems of food manipulation are left with their appetites unfulfilled. In Somalia, the unfulfilled common appetites resulted in starvation, malnutrition, and, all too often, death. In American food deserts, the unfulfilled common appetites result in malnutrition, public health crises, and, in some cases, premature death. If the clinical research into starvation and malnutrition is correct, and people who exist with their common appetites left unfulfilled experience an

increase in unsatisfied desire, then both of these oppressive circumstances perpetuate vice.

There are important differences between the starvation experienced in Somalia and the needs left unfulfilled by food-deserts, and it needs to be made clear that the parallels being drawn here between these cases are not done to equate, in total, the experiences, the suffering, or the consequences of each case. It's plain to see that victims of forced starvation suffer in their gluttony exponentially more than do individuals living in food-deserts. And individuals in food-deserts may "quiet" their common desires through eating undesirable food whereas the victims in Somalia lacked this possibility. Additionally, those trapped in food-deserts possess, to some degree, an ability to (even temporarily) leave the area which cannot fulfill their needs whereas Somali civilians lacked this possibility.

While we must acknowledge these differences, the physiological (and moral) evaluation remains. If an individual exists with their common and physiological needs unmet, they are pressed into a state of vicious excess which is subject to evaluation by virtue ethics. The oppressive structures which manipulate food availability create an atmosphere where the virtue of temperance is made impossible and thus these oppressed people are morally harmed. Further, it is the oppressive regimes and circumstances which necessitate this harm.

## B. Courage

The effect that oppressive structures have on virtues is not limited to making them impossible for oppressed people. While temperance may be made a practical impossibility for those suffering under the conditions of oppressive regimes, other virtues are affected by the existence of oppression, yet not to the point of complete unavailability. Some virtues, due to the existence and effect of oppression, are onerous and their development appears to verge on the supererogatory.

One particularly powerful and poignant instance of this limitation of virtue can be seen in the manipulation of fear through systematic violence. Ann Cudd, in her thorough exploration of oppression, claims that “violence is and has always been a critical component in the origin and maintenance of oppression.”<sup>51</sup> Cudd sketches and chronicles the complex ways in which violence, both overtly and implicitly, is utilized as a tool for maintaining oppression, concluding that we can see the power, influence, and ramifications of violence in systematic oppression by looking at the “statistical evidence that a group acts in a more constrained or less beneficial way” due to their exposure to said violence.<sup>52</sup> Here, I would like to provide some statistical evidence of just this sort which connects oppression and violence and substantiates the effects of exposure to violence on the availability of virtue. While Cudd's project is to chronicle the connection between violence and oppression, her conclusion of groups being forced to act in “more constrained or less beneficial way[s]” has broad implications for virtue ethicists and our understanding about the availability of virtue.

When talking about violence it is essential that one distinguish between acute and chronic violence. Acute violence occurs when individuals are faced with temporally

---

<sup>51</sup> Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 85.

<sup>52</sup> Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 91.

limited situations of violent interaction. This violent interaction arises, occurs, and dissipates within a measurable time and the violence experienced by individuals is limited to this temporal window. Chronic violence, on the other hand, is the persistent exposure to violence where the violence experienced by the individual is not limited to any specific moment but rather experienced as perduring and continual. Acute violence, according to psychologists Jinan Usta and Jo Ann Farver, is typified by the 1992 Los Angeles riots or sniper attacks in school yards.<sup>53</sup> Chronic violence, on the other hand, is “where shootings, stabbings, gang activities, and being robbed re-occur with unpredictable frequency.”<sup>54</sup> Joy Osofsky defines chronic community violence as the “frequent and continual exposure to the use of guns, knives, drugs, and random violence.”<sup>55</sup> In both the case of acute and chronic violence the exposure to violence affects the fear response of those exposed.

This move to distinguish between acute and chronic violence (or acute situations of fear from chronic situations of fear) is vaguely present in Aristotle's description of courage. In describing courage, Aristotle quickly rattles off an extensive list of times or situations where courage is needed; moving quickly between the chronic (facing the challenges and possibility of poverty [1115a11, 1115a17], facing disease [1115a29], and experienced in the lives of sailors at sea [1115a29, 1115b1-3]) and the acute (in facing situations of disgrace [1115a11], the possibility of quick and eminent death [1115b5], times where one is flogged for a crime [1115a20], facing an insult to one's family [1115a22] and situations of battle [1115a30]). While Aristotle expressly notes the need

---

<sup>53</sup> Jinan Usta and Jo Ann M. Farver, “Is there Violence in the Neighborhood? Ask the Children,” *Journal of Public Health* 27, no. 1 (2005), 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Joy Osofsky, “The Impact of Violence on Children,” *Domestic Violence and Children* 9, no. 3 (1999), 34.

for courage in all of these situations, and in the face of both types of violence, what he fails to address is the scope and depth of the effect that both acute and chronic violence have on individuals in their *development* of the virtue of courage. While it is true that each of these situations requires courage, and courage can properly respond to each of these situations, what Aristotle does not address is how these situations transform individuals in their moral development. Courage must be developed in response to chronic and acute violence as it is in these circumstances that fear is, and should be, experienced and therefore where courage is exercised. It is in violence's transformative effect that the availability of courage is limited and warped.

The negative effects of acute violence are abundantly clear, and it does not seem necessary here to outline, in depth, the severity and details of harm one can experience by being the victim of a violent crime or situation. In fact, a full exploration of the psychological and emotional damage that acute violence carries is a full project unto itself. It seems sufficient here to merely point out that being party to acute violence typically results in, during the short term, shock and denial, while longer term harms include "unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches and nausea."<sup>56</sup> It has even been shown in multiple studies that being a third-party to acute violence can, and often does, result in the same harmful outcomes.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, the negative effects of chronic violence require a deeper explanation and this is so for three reasons. One, there has been considerably less

---

<sup>56</sup> American Psychological Association, "Trauma" (2013).

<sup>57</sup> For an extensive literature review of these studies see Lorraine E. Ferris, Jane Sandercock, Brian Hoffman, Marvin Silverman, Harvey Barkun, John Carlisle, and Cheryl Katz's "Risk Assessment for Acute Violence to Third Parties: A Review of the Literature," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 42, no. 10 (1997).

research done into the effects of chronic violence; two, this research is less well known; three, chronic violence has the most effect on oppressed people.

To explain the harms of experiencing chronic violence, children are of particular importance as it is through their psychological and moral development that we can see the long-term harmful effects of exposure to violence. Usta and Farver claim that "isolated events are thought to have less serious effects on children because they are short in duration, after which things can 'return to normal.' However, children's reactions may be more adverse when the violent incidents are intense and recurring."<sup>58</sup> Chronic violence is more serious than acute in that the continual harmful effects create a situation where things cannot "return to normal" and the harms experienced by the individual are lasting and transformative.

Research studies done on Lebanese children in Beirut,<sup>59</sup> children on Chicago's South Side,<sup>60</sup> children in Boston,<sup>61</sup> children in Washington D.C.,<sup>62</sup> and children in New Orleans<sup>63</sup> all show that preschool and school-age children exposed to chronic violence exhibit symptoms of (or similar to) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These young children experience sleep disturbances, have difficulty paying attention and concentrating, and often "are less likely to explore."<sup>64</sup> These different studies chronicle a uniformity of harms experienced by young children living in neighborhoods of chronic

---

<sup>58</sup> Usta and Farver, "Is there Violence," 4.

<sup>59</sup> Usta and Farver, "Is There Violence," 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Carl C. Bell and Esther J. Jenkins, "Community Violence and Children on Chicago's Southside," *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993).

<sup>61</sup> Betsy McAlister Groves, Barry Zuckerman, Steven Marans, and Donald J. Cohen, "Silent Victims: Children who Witness Violence," *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association* 269, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>62</sup> John E. Richters and Pedro Martinez, "The NIMH Community Violence Project: I. Children as Victims of and Witness to Violence," *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993), and, John E. Richters, "Community Violence and Children's Development: Towards a Research Agenda for the 1990's," *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993).

<sup>63</sup> Lewis and Osofsky, "Violent Cities, Violent Streets."

<sup>64</sup> Osofsky, "The Impact of Violence," 37.

violence. Where the studies diverge is in their assessment of these harms as the children enter adolescence. Some adolescents, who live with chronic violence, exhibit excessive aggressiveness, irritability, anxiety, and disproportionate drives for revenge seeking. Other adolescents, from the same or similar communities, grow emotionally numb, become non-reactive to continued violence, and are anesthetized and desensitized. It appears that a majority of children exposed to chronic violence develop behavioral traits of either (a) numbness and indifference, or, (b) aggressiveness, irritability and vengefulness. While varying positions have been outlined for the cause of this divergence,<sup>65</sup> researchers note that these divergent behavioral states are carried on into adulthood.

While the source (or cause) of the divergence in behavior of adolescents (and adults) exposed to chronic violence remains the subject of psychological investigation, the two identified states of character (via the divergent behavior between numbness and aggressiveness) are important for understanding of courage and confidence. If the result of experiencing chronic violence is either numbness and indifference or aggressiveness, irritability or vengefulness, either state is one of tremendous moral damage. In fact, these two divergent states appear to align with a virtue assessment of courage in that it appears that people come to have their fear warped into either rashness or insensitivity, and both are states of vice which are expressly accounted for by Aristotle. Aristotle describes courage as the moral virtue pertaining to fear and confidence (1107b1), and like all other moral virtues operates as a mean (1107a20-25). While governing the feeling/capacity for fear, an appropriate and moderated response to fear must be accompanied by confidence

---

<sup>65</sup> Osofsky, for one, argues that while this divergence in behavior relies on a plurality of factors (ranging from emotional sensitivity to intelligence), the "key factors" which differentiate the divergent effects are the existence of quality parenting and/or community 'safe havens.'

to be properly called courage. Courage is not simply standing steadfast in a fearful situation, but doing so knowing that one can achieve a worthy end. It is controlled fear that allows one to remain physically present in fearful situations (or at least not immediately tuck-tail and run at the first sign of danger) and confidence that allows for the courageous person to persist in these conditions. This combination of proper fear and confidence *is* courage and to develop the virtue of courage one must, in the words of Daniel Putnam, "[exercise] deliberative choice in the face of painful or fearful circumstances for the sake of a worthy goal" and have "faith in oneself to act for the best in threatening circumstances for the sake of a worthy goal."<sup>66</sup> It is specifically this virtue of courage, as the combination of the proper control of fear and proper use of confidence, which is directly affected by violence. The exposure to chronic violence, punctuated by acute violence, warps and transforms the individual's fear response and erodes confidence. The divergent behavior presented in the current psychological literature of adolescents who were, when children, exposed to chronic violence quantifies and substantiates the moral erosion of confidence and the warping of fear. For the virtue ethicist, the behavior exhibited by these exposed individuals is not merely indicative of psychological states of trauma, but is of further importance in that it is tangible proof of the harmful effects of oppression's use of violence on people's states of character and the virtue made (un)available to them.

What differentiates this example of courage from the example of temperance is that even with prolonged exposure to chronic violence, individuals may be able to develop proper courage. Examples of individuals developing (and deploying) courage while suffering under the material conditions of oppression and violence can be seen in a

---

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Putnam, "The Emotions of Courage," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2001), 463-464.

vast array of arenas involving social, political, and economic justice movements. Union organizers (such as Frank Little and César Chávez), civil rights activists (such as Rosa Parks and Medgar Evers), anti-war activists (such as Sophie Scholl, Dr. Kurt Huber, and other members of the 'Weiße Rose'), theological activists (such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff), and even sports figures (such as Jackie Robinson and Megan Rapinoe) faced conditions of overwhelming violence and oppression yet were, remarkably, able to cultivate and deploy courage. Each of these individuals cultivated courage in circumstances of violence and oppression enabling them take strong political and moral stances in the face of overwhelming backlash. Individuals such as these are rightly held up as heroes due to the extreme nature of the circumstances which they faced while both developing and using their courage. These heroic individuals not only help inspire others to struggle for justice, but also show that the cultivation of courage remains possible, but extremely and onerously difficult, in the circumstances of chronic violence.

While it is important to see how courage remains possible while enmeshed in oppressive structures, it is equally important to see that the ability to cultivate courage while in these circumstances is excessively difficult, and success borders on the supererogatory.

### C. Proper Anger

To this point we have seen how oppression affects virtue in that in some cases it makes their acquisition extremely difficult, if not supererogatory. Other virtues (or would-be virtues), such as temperance, may be affected to such an extreme degree that

their acquisition is impossible while suffering under oppression. In these ways, oppression acts as a causal force which coerces individuals into non-virtuous states. Yet, there are some instances where oppression actually aids in the development of virtue, yet the virtue developed in response to oppression may tend toward the extreme. This then is a third way in which virtues are affected by oppression. These virtues, which Lisa Tessman calls "burdened virtues," differ from the above examples of temperance and courage in that the above cases describe how an agent can be habituated by oppression (or oppressive forces) into vice, whereas the burdened virtues are, in fact, extreme, yet virtuous.

Tessman describes burdened virtues as those "traits that while practically necessitated for surviving oppression or morally necessitated for opposing it, are also costly to the selves who bear them."<sup>67</sup> People faced with oppression, of themselves or others, are faced with a dilemma; either accept their lot in life, and resign themselves to a life bereft of flourishing, or, resist oppression in the hopes of achieving happiness. For Tessman (and myself), "the alternatives to resisting oppression are unacceptable," and thus oppressed people are forced to develop traits which allow them to adequately resist and survive oppression.<sup>68</sup>

One of the strongest examples of a burdened virtue is that of proper anger. Here, I wish to outline Aristotle's conception of anger, as an emotion, as well as the virtue that governs this passion. Given an understanding of this Aristotelian virtue we can then turn to contexts of oppression and see how this virtue is burdened and the harmful cost that

---

<sup>67</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 131.

the individual must pay for inculcating such a virtue within the circumstances of oppression.

Aristotle describes, on multiple occasions (1103b19, 1105b21, 1106b18, 1135b20, 1147a14), anger as a passion or feeling. For Aristotle, this feeling of anger admits of an excess, a deficiency, and also a mean. Thus, there is a virtue which applies to this specific passion. The virtue governing our feelings of anger is called "good-temperedness" (by Ross) or "mildness" (by Irwin) and is situated between irascibility, as the vice of excess, and inirascibility, as the vice of deficiency (1108a4-9).

On two occasions Aristotle claims that the virtue governing anger is hard to name. At 1125b27, he claims "the middle state [of anger]... [is] unnamed" and the extremes are "almost without a name." At 1108a4, he claims that the mean state of anger, along with the two related vices, "can scarcely be said to have names." Thus, what Irwin translates as 'mildness' and Ross translates as 'good-temperedness' is, even for Aristotle, an odd naming convention. I find both of these labels less than satisfactory and prefer to call this virtue 'proper anger.'

My discontent with the naming conventions given by Irwin and Ross stems from the way these terms appear to reduce the virtue governing anger to something closer to meekness than justified anger. While it is the case that Aristotle claims that "good temper in the middle position... inclines towards the deficiency," it does not seem fully warranted to reduce, even linguistically, proper-anger to something akin to timorousness or mildness. Aristotle does claim that anger is properly directed and experienced when done "at the right things and with the right people..., and [for] as long as [one] ought" (1125b32-33). Further, the person who is defective in anger, or the inirascible person, is

"thought a fool" for "not [being] angry at the things they should be angry..." (1126a4).

The language here is clear: there is proper anger. Given that Aristotle believes that there is a time, place, manner, duration, and degree for righteous anger it seems disingenuous to imply that individuals ought to cultivate a sense of mildness. Rather, individuals ought to cultivate a sense of proper-anger which is subject to the standard constraints of the other moral virtues.

One might object to the conception of anger being advanced here on the grounds that Aristotle does, in no uncertain terms, not only warn us about the dangers of excessive anger but also links it to incontinence in Book VII, Chapter 5. It might be claimed that these two pieces of textual evidence indicate that 'mildness' (as tending toward meekness) captures the spirit of Aristotle's warnings and is a more apt understanding of this virtue than 'proper-anger.' Such a reading of Aristotle does not seem beyond the bounds of reason and is, to my mind, the traditional reading of anger in Aristotle. Yet, I do feel that this position fails to account for two important points. First, Aristotle's warnings regarding anger do not seem unique but rather merely hark back to his discussion of natural tendencies in Book II, Chapter 9. Here Aristotle asserts that in addition to each individual's natural tendencies towards one extreme or the other regarding any particular virtue, each virtue admits an objective natural tendency. These natural tendencies of the virtues are those extremes which are "more erroneous" and easily fallen into than their opposite extreme (1109a33). Anger, like all virtues, admits a more dangerous extreme, yet the existence of this more erroneous vice need not push our conception of the mean of anger to 'mildness' any more than the natural tendency of courage toward cowardice should push us to accept rashness as more akin to the virtue. Secondly, while Aristotle

does connect anger to incontinent states, he does this with a number of different passions including greed and honor (1148b13), cowardice (1149a5-7), intemperance (1149a23), and, (in fact) "every excessive state" (1149a5). While anger does make this list, and is tied to a form of incontinence, it does not seem that Aristotle draws this connection in a way that would indicate a special relationship. The connection of irascibility to incontinence is merely an illustration of the multitude of ways in which one may be incontinent, and as such cannot be used as support for the belief that the spirit of meekness should be read into Aristotle's account of 'proper anger.'

It is because righteous anger exists as a virtue that the harmful and warping conditions of oppression result in this virtue becoming distorted. The warping of anger, unlike the effects oppression levies against courage and temperance, is to burden this virtue and the individual who bears it.

Following Marilyn Frye,<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Spelman,<sup>70</sup> Audre Lorde,<sup>71</sup> Diana Meyers,<sup>72</sup> María Lugones,<sup>73</sup> and bell hooks,<sup>74</sup> Tessman chronicles the ways in which anger (and even rage) play a pervasive role in the lives of the oppressed. From lesbian separatists to black nationalists, anger plays an important role in the lives of the oppressed in that it "signals a recognition of the wrongness of the subordination and refusal to accept it."<sup>75</sup>

Beyond merely reacting aptly to subordination, Tessman points out that anger also plays

---

<sup>69</sup> Frye, *Politics of Reality*, 1983.

<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Spelman, "Anger and Insubordination," in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, eds. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (Unwin Hyman, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider* (Crossing Press, 1984), and, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger," in *Sister Outsider* (Crossing Press, 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Diana Meyers, "Emotions and Heterodox Moral Perception: An Essay In Moral Psychology," in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Meyers (Westview Press, 1997)

<sup>73</sup> Maria Lugones, "Hard-to-Handle Anger," in *Overcoming Sexism and Racism*, eds. Linda Bell and David Blumenfeld (Rowmann and Littlefield, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (Holt, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 118.

an important epistemic role. "[A]pproaching the world with a rancorous emotional attitude as opposed to a more genial or "nice" one enables one to feel what one is not expected or permitted to under dominant values."<sup>76</sup>

Anger allows the oppressed to acknowledge their oppression, condemn the oppression, and see further ways in which oppression harms them. Proper anger, as outlined by Aristotle, is to be measurably felt and expressed by individuals in proportional response to warranted circumstances. For those suffering under systematic oppression, the proper time for righteous anger is the duration of the oppression. This makes the experience of proper anger close to a perpetual feeling. Further, the experience and feeling of anger, as virtuously controlled, must be proportional to the injury occurred. For the oppressed, the degree of anger that is proportionate to the injustice of oppression not only pulls away from the 'mildness' claimed by Irwin's naming convention but urges us well into irascibility if not rage. Here, Aristotle's claim about "the fools" who do not feel anger seems especially poignant and the "if you are not outraged then you aren't paying attention" rallying cry of consciousness raising activists seems to capture proportionate response to the experience of oppression. Beyond mere foolishness, those who do develop proper anger as a proportional response to injustice fail to have the virtue. Those individuals who keep their anger firmly rooted in the abstract mean tending toward inirascibility as Aristotle suggests do not have the virtue of proper anger. They fail to have the appropriate emotional response to the circumstances they find themselves in, and thus fail to have the virtue. Much like the firefighter or soldier who maintains a pedestrian conception of courage while facing death, the oppressed individual who maintains a mild form of moderated anger cannot be said to be

---

<sup>76</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 119.

virtuous. The appropriate and proportional response to the extremes of oppression manifest as excessive virtues and thus, these extreme virtues are 'burdened.'

These burdened virtues carry a heavy cost for those who bear them and it is this cost that Tessman sees as acting to "complicate this generally positive appraisal of oppositional anger."<sup>77</sup> Tessman maintains, rightly, that while the anger experienced by the oppressed is excessive it is not extreme. In fact, excessive anger in the circumstances of oppression more than fulfills the demands of virtue in that it occurs at the right time, in the right way, and can be directed at the right target. Yet while virtuous, this trait of cultivated anger (or even rage) "create[s] a tension" because while it "enables resistance (and thus may further an eventual goal of flourishing for all), [it] disables a good life for their bearers."<sup>78</sup> Developing proper anger in response to oppression, and becoming irascible, is psychologically harmful yet necessary. These burdened virtues, while necessitated by oppression, are regrettable. All things being equal, we do not want to be piqued, irascible, or indignant, but precisely because all things are not equal, we must become exactly these things. For Tessman, the virtuous agent with habituated burdened virtues can come to regret the self they have become, yet also understand that the circumstances of their existence necessitate this revolutionary self. For Tessman, "there should be no glory in resistance to injustice, just a sad and regretful recognition of its necessity."<sup>79</sup> This sad regret comes as the moral remainder of the burdened virtues and is paid for by the oppressed.

In this third way, victims of oppression are put into a catch-22. The very tools needed to fight their enslavement or oppression and achieve happiness are the means

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 115.

<sup>79</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 131.

which keep them from happiness. This is a no-win situation for the oppressed and in conjunction with the elimination of some virtues (as outlined above via temperance), and the moving of other virtues into the realm of the supererogatory (as outlined above via courage), demonstrates a third way which virtues (and their bearers) are harmed by oppression.

#### D. Intellectual Virtues

Through the examples of temperance, courage, and anger we can see the three different ways in which virtues are eliminated, limited and affected, and burdened for oppressed people. Moving beyond the moral virtues, the intellectual virtues are also curtailed by oppression. One of the salient features of oppression is the unequal distribution of goods beyond the bounds of fortune. As indicated above, this may concern the availability of food, but is not limited in form to any particular good. The intellectual virtues, for Aristotle, require cultivation via teaching and learning, and thus education is essential for their formation and development. This education can take the form of schooling, but also mentorship and upbringing. In each of these ways, if others are the victims of oppression, and this oppression has a negative effect on their characters, then the teachers, mentors, and care-takers needed for the development of intellectual virtues will be either limited or nonexistent. We know that oppression denies equal access to education of equal quality, but we need to see that oppression also affects other forms of ‘teachers’ who are needed for the achievement of intellectual virtues. Sally Haslanger, in her account of oppression, comments on the work of Dorothy

Roberts, who argues that the current child welfare policy of the United States is racist.<sup>80</sup> One of the core claims made by Roberts is that “Black children are more likely to be separated from their parents than children of other races” and thus “Black children spend more time in foster care” and therefore Black children “receive inferior services.”<sup>81</sup> If Black families are subject to undue scrutiny by social service agencies and this scrutiny results in the destruction of a high number of Black families and the institutionalization of Black children, then it seems more than plausible that these children will lose the necessary education and training which are required for the achievement of intellectual virtue. I am not arguing that the nuclear family is the only necessary means for the development of intellectual virtue or that children in dangerous homes should be left in these homes because family structure trumps safety and welfare. Rather, what Roberts’ account shows is that this undue burden placed upon Black families undermines not only the individual families but also the Black community. These children, who become wards of the state, lack a community (and therein educators and parents). While unjust, the harm of this hyper-scrutiny and the undue willingness to place Black children into underfunded group-homes transcends concerns of justice for the virtue ethicist and must be seen as a way in which oppression limits or burdens individuals in their achievement of, in part, the intellectual virtues.

---

<sup>80</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (Basic Books, 2002). Cited by Sally Haslanger, “Oppressions: Racial and Other,” in *Racism, Philosophy and Mind*, eds. Michael Levine and Tamas Pataki (Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Haslanger, *Oppressions*, 115.

### E. Honor and Esteem

If the causal force of oppression is destructive in that it is detrimental to an individual's character and thus limits flourishing in individuals, it must also be true that this damage caused in the lives of others continually negatively affects others. In the Aristotelian moral framework there are goods of the soul which are accorded by others which are necessary for flourishing and these goods are either denied or perverted by oppression through the corruption of others. One significant and important way that the corruption of others affects the individual is through a corruption of honor and esteem. The assessment of honor and esteem plays an important social role within Aristotelian virtue ethics. Here, I wish to first outline Aristotle's conception of honor and esteem and show the important role that it plays in moral development. From here, I wish to show how this conception of honor is corrupted by oppression, and more specifically, how oppression damages entire communities of honor-bestowers and thus perpetuates the corruption of each member.

Aristotle adamantly claims that honor should not be the end to which our lives are aimed. Those who seek honor as a good-in-itself are chastised by Aristotle in Book I, Chapter 5, in what he calls "the political life." Aristotle claims that people of "superior refinement" often believe that honor is equivalent to happiness and thus honor is what we ought to identify as our end. For these individuals, being held in high esteem by others, and honored above all others, verifies their goodness. Aristotle responds to such a belief by pointing out that being honored does not, in fact, guarantee goodness because it "depend[s] on those who bestow honour rather than on... who receives it" (1195b24).

One may be honored by dishonorable people, and held in high esteem, yet have earned this privilege for all the wrong reasons. It seems reasonable to claim that the best car thief will be honored and respected by other car thieves in virtue of their supreme abilities, yet this honor is (clearly) ill-founded and does not demonstrate the goodness of this venerated individual. Returning to this claim in Book IV, Aristotle says that "[people] who are well-born are thought worthy of honour, and so are those who enjoy power or wealth; for they are in a superior position, and everything that has a superiority in something good is held in greater honour" (1124a21-24). These wealthy aristocrats assume that in virtue of their social and economic superiority they are deserving of honor and esteem. Yet Aristotle again points out that this is not the case because wealth and social superiority are not guarantees of virtue. For Aristotle, "the good [person] alone is to be honoured" (1124a25).

Honor is only properly bestowed to the virtuous individual in virtue of their goodness. Thus, for Aristotle, honor is described as "a noble object" (1116a29) and a "prize" (1123b35, 1163b3) which, when properly understood, is awarded as an accolade of virtue. When honor is properly bestowed as the reward of virtue it becomes placed among things which are good in themselves (1096b18).

Beyond merely being an awarded good for the achievement of virtue, honor can be bestowed on those, in a limited way, who seek virtue. In this way, honor can be used as a tool for moral development and growth. Aristotle points out that honor can be bestowed as a means for encouraging noble acts (1113b24-26) and can serve as a means of judging paths toward happiness (1097b1-4). In this way non-virtuous people can be given limited esteem by others to help reinforce correct behavior and actions. Thus, these

people, who "desire honour from good [people], and [people] who know," are able to "[confirm] their own opinion of themselves" as on a path of moral growth based on the "the strength of the judgment of those who speak [well] about them" (1159a16-23). In this way the honor and esteem of others acts as a tool for moral reinforcement, allowing individuals to verify that their actions and habits are working towards the achievement of virtue. This echoes Aristotle's beliefs about the need for good friends as one of the functions of good friends is moral reinforcement (11157b5ff).

Honor, and being esteemed, thus plays an important role in self-evaluation and self-assessment. It is through the assessment of others that individuals are, in an important way, given a tool for verification of positive moral growth and moral fortification. Because oppression makes people non-virtuous and the esteem required for virtue must come from virtuous people who provide esteem and respect *qua* your virtue then oppression limits proper self-assessment, self-evaluation, and self-esteem. Honor is warped and corrupted in an oppressive society, and the appropriate basis of honor and esteem is corroded. Given the importance of honor and esteem within the Aristotelian framework this corruption of honor via the moral corruption of others is a significant problem. The manipulation which oppression mandates runs much deeper than merely harming others in their individual pursuits of virtue but also limits honor and esteem by corrupting communities of individuals as bestowers of honor.

Consider the example of body-image and beauty norms as set for women of the western world. Naomi Wolf<sup>82</sup> and Ann Garry<sup>83</sup> have both outlined the harmful ways in

---

<sup>82</sup> Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (Harper Perennial, 2002).

<sup>83</sup> Ann Garry, "Sex, Lies, and Pornography," in *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, ed. Hugh LaFollette (Blackwell, 2002).

which the socially constructed beauty standards set for women place women into a “double-bind” or a “double standard.” The starvation imagery of beauty, and the need to “dress to impress,” create social categories of gender evaluation whereas women are not only tied expressly to their bodies but are evaluated and judged based upon their ability/willingness to conform to these standards. For Garry, women are placed into ongoing social schemas where their compliance to beauty standards allows for them to be judged as “good women” through their sexualization, but which at the same time also harms them as they are equally judged as “bad [sexualized] women.”<sup>84</sup> The women who refuse to comply with patriarchal beauty standards are negatively judged (and thus socially harmed), while those who comply become sexualized and, again, harmed. This, for Garry, is the crux of the double-standard. The creation and maintenance of beauty standards, which unduly and unfairly harms women, creates and maintains a social order where women are harmed by being held in poor esteem by others and thus not held as worthy of respect. This lack of social respect can also be internalized such that individuals who lack the respect of others may come to view themselves as unworthy of the very respect they are not given. Individuals systemically denied esteem lose not only the external and instrumental good of proper esteem used for moral development, but also may develop an internal disposition of negative self-assessment where they deem themselves not worthy of esteem in the first place. What is truly troubling, for the virtue ethicist, is that the double-bind of gender exploitation means that women are harmed, internally and externally, by conforming to social norms but also harmed by rejecting these social norms.

---

<sup>84</sup> Garry, “Sex, Lies,” 347.

If oppression limits not only the virtue of the individual but also the virtue of others, and does so to the point of vice, then the cultivation of many virtues appears impossible. For Aristotle, the acquisition of many of the virtues requires both the proper disposition of the individuals as well as the virtuous character of others. These influential others, most often typified by Aristotle as forms of friendship, aid individuals by providing support, strength, and moral knowledge needed for moral growth. In short, others are needed, in part, to properly bestow honor and esteem such that moral growth is encouraged in others. Since oppression damages those individuals around us which we need as bestowers of honor and esteem, then oppression's influence must be seen as a pooling of individual and community damage where communities and individuals of oppressed people are denied access to the means for the acquisition of virtue.

## Section 2 – Oppression and the Manipulation of External Goods

While it is essential to understand that oppression curtails flourishing by inhibiting agents from achieving and maintaining virtue, this alone is far from a complete account of the ways which oppression both harms and limits individuals as understood by virtue ethics. To fully understand how oppression curtails flourishing one must also account for oppression's detrimental effect via the manipulation and limitation of external goods. This is because, for Aristotle, external goods are (in addition to virtue) necessary for happiness. To demonstrate this there are three argumentative premises which must be outlined and explained. They are (1) external goods are necessary for flourishing (and while virtue alone is necessary for flourishing, it is not sufficient), (2)

Aristotle explicitly accounts for this within the *NE*, and his account is found in his description of “fortune,” “luck,” and “chance,” and, (3) fortune, or moral luck, cannot be understood as mere happenstance.

Aristotle, in Book I of the *NE*, claims that “it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment” (1099b1). This proclamation comes after Aristotle has defined the human good, via functionally accounting for human qualities (1097b25), as “the activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are (sic) more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete” (1098a17-19). While virtue, as an activity of the soul, is clearly necessary for (and privileged in) the achievement of happiness, virtue alone cannot guarantee flourishing. This is because, as we have indicated above, the virtues require agents to either use external goods (e.g.; liberality requires the agent to not only possess money but be willing to part with money for the good of another) or rely on the external goods of community/friends for development (e.g.; knowledge cannot be produced solipsistically, but requires teachers, mentors, and other virtuous people). Without the necessary external goods, an agent cannot develop or maintain virtue.

This view is not without its detractors. Paul Farwell argues that external goods cannot be essential for the development of virtue, and holds that a view such as the one presented here is implausible.<sup>85</sup> Farwell claims, that while external goods may be helpful for exercising some virtues, virtue *writ large* does not require external goods. Farwell hangs his argument on three rough premises. The first is that even without an abundance of external goods, virtue can still be exercised. Second, he claims that many virtues require no external goods for their acquisition. And third, that via Aristotle's example of

---

<sup>85</sup> Paul Farwell, “Aristotle, Success, and Moral Luck,” *Journal of Philosophical Research* 19 (1994).

Priam we must conclude that virtue must persist even when all external goods are removed. I wish to take this criticism head-on, and address these claims individually. In each case I show not only how Farwell is mistaken but how in seeing his failures we are given an account of the necessity of external goods for virtue.

Farwell first claims that while external goods can be used to engage in certain types of virtuous activity, the external goods are not essential for evaluating the character of an agent. Citing Aristotle's understanding of liberality and generosity, Farwell claims that the virtue of liberality need not be restricted to the wealthy due to the amount of money they choose to give away. Paralleling the famous story from Scripture (Mark 12:43, Luke 21:2), Farwell claims that "the poor [person] who gives a small amount of money may be more liberal than the rich [person] simply because he (sic) has less to give."<sup>86</sup> Here, Farwell is undoubtedly correct. Liberality, as a virtue, must be a willingness to part with money and cannot be tied expressly to the amount of money that is given. This is something that even Aristotle notes (1120b7). Yet this alone does not show that the external good of money is not necessary for liberality, it merely shows that the amount given is not sufficient for evaluating the state of character of the giver. If one had no money, then giving money would be impossible and one could not engage in acts of liberality.<sup>87</sup> Farwell wishes to hang liberality, in total, on the willingness of the agent to part with money, and this alone cannot be the case. The exercising of liberality requires not only this willingness but also a success condition whereas money is successfully given and thus hits the mark of the virtue. One may be willing to part with money, even for noble ends, but if they have no money to give they cannot be said to be

---

<sup>86</sup> Farwell, "Aristotle, Success," 47.

<sup>87</sup> This individual may be able to be generous in other ways, but the specific virtue of liberality does require the giving of money.

liberal as they are not giving. This is the game that many people play with the possibility of winning the lottery. Many may claim that when they win the lottery they promise to give a set amount or set percentage to charity. While possibly expressing noble hopes, without the actual lottery winnings these are empty promises and are not indicative of their liberality. Further, while small amounts of external goods, even on Farwell's account, are needed to engage in liberal acts, Farwell fails to see that this action does not constitute the virtue of liberality. To develop liberality, one must engage in liberal acts habitually and inculcate not only the desire but also, and more importantly, the willingness to part with money. While possibly developing generosity in other non-monetary ways, those without any expendable income cannot ritually commit liberal acts and cannot develop liberality. They may hope that their non-monetary generosity cultivates a sense of giving which may "spill over" into the giving of money when the rare opportunity of expendable money is available, yet without the actual giving of money liberality cannot be practiced and therefore cannot be developed into the virtue. In summary, Farwell claims, "a small amount of external goods does not prevent [the giver] from acting virtuously, and likewise a large amount of wealth or power underscores the need for virtue, since wealth and power have no ethical worth by themselves but depend on how the noble and virtuous person uses them."<sup>88</sup> What Farwell fails to see is how both the rich person and the "poor person" both have external goods, and use these external goods, even in his own language, to develop virtue.

Farwell's second argument is that there are "other virtues [which] require no special external goods: self-control and gentleness in temper for instance."<sup>89</sup> Here, I wish

---

<sup>88</sup> Farwell, "Aristotle, Success," 48.

<sup>89</sup> Farwell, "Aristotle, Success," 47.

to raise two objections. First, *if* Farwell is right in this claim, it is important to see just how numerically limited these virtues would be. *If* there is some limited set of virtues which are developed without any connection to external goods, the list would be quite short. For the individual who did develop these scarce virtues, there would be many more virtues which they would not be able to develop, and this hypothetical individual seems lacking in so many respects that to pronounce them virtuous seems a bastardization of Aristotle's conception of the complete life. Beyond this, there is a deeper problem with Farwell's argument. Farwell specifically cites two virtues, self-control and gentleness, and boldly claims "*no* special external goods" are necessary. To claim that external goods do not play a role in the development of these virtues is to deny any causal connection between external goods and these virtues, and this seems patently false. Looking specifically at the two virtues listed by Farwell, self-control and gentleness, there are plenty of important connections between them and external goods. Gentleness is surely influenced by one's upbringing, and if one's care givers (as an external good) help habituate these feelings in a child which, through time, can develop into virtue, then we cannot claim *no* causal influence. In a similar vein, self-control can be shown to connect to external goods. Self-control, manifest in acts of self-control, requires an availability of external goods to prompt and condition the agent such that they can refrain from these goods. Without the presence of an object which could be taken by an action lacking self-control it seems wholly impossible to claim this agent exercised self-control in not taking what was not present. For example, one cannot be said to be dieting or fasting when they have no food (or access to food); this person simply goes without. To claim that the real possibility of obtaining food is unnecessary for positing

an agent's self-control over their impulses would be to claim that agents can be said to control their impulses in the face of no other possibilities. Self-control, then, is both inculcated and enacted only in reference to the specific and real external goods available to agents.

The final argument presented by Farwell, and his most noxious, is that Aristotelian virtue ethics maintains a conception of steadfastness of character in the face of a radical loss of external goods and that this steadfastness of character shows that external goods have no influence on virtue. Here Farwell anchors his argument directly in Aristotle's claim that the virtuous person cannot be swayed from happiness even when the victim of extreme and repeated misfortunes. Aristotle most famously claims this in Book I, and raises the example of Priam whereas even in extraordinary circumstances Priam "can never become miserable" (1101a6). Priam loses family, wealth, and health yet fails to devolve into misery or vice.

I am sympathetic to Aristotle's arguments here and tend to agree that virtue, once fully developed, cannot be easily lost simply do to external constraints or circumstances. Thus, Aristotle's example of Priam seems quite *apropos*, but it is only because these individuals have had the necessary luxury to *develop* virtue that they cannot lose it. In the case of Priam, the individual suffering does so only after long periods of moral, physical, and financial prosperity and in this way these examples are necessarily backwards looking. Given the combination of luxury and privilege together with virtue, the loss of privilege does not necessitate the loss of virtue and true happiness. Yet this does not negate the claim that external goods are necessary for the development of virtue. In fact, this seems to show the exact opposite. It is precisely because of the abundance of

necessary external goods that these individuals were able to *become* virtuous and therefore steadfast in character. The goods were necessary for the virtue's development, and what Aristotle shows is simply that prosperity is not equivalent to virtue (or happiness). It would seem that Farwell fallaciously reasons that the inability for Priam to lose virtue is identical to that person who begins without external goods. This line of reasoning is both unsupported by the text as well as argumentatively bankrupt. When Aristotle returns to this discussion in Book VII, he not only notes that the external goods are necessary, claiming "this is why the happy man *needs* the goods of the body and external goods" (1153b17, emphasis added), but continues to say that even though happiness and virtue are intertwined we must not make the mistake of confusing the two. Aristotle concludes "because we need fortune as well as other things, some people think good fortune the same thing as happiness; *but it is not that*" (1153b21, emphasis added). Understanding this necessity of external goods allows us to understand why Aristotle claims that "happiness [flourishing] seems to need this sort of prosperity in addition [to virtue]" (1099b7). It is this necessity that Farwell fails to understand. Aristotle does provide a clear account, through numerous and repeated claims, that external goods are necessary for the development of virtue.

By necessitating external goods for the achievement of virtue, and therein flourishing, Aristotelian ethics must carry with it an analysis of the dispensation of these needed goods. While many of these goods can be acquired by agents in pursuit of the good life, there are many cases where the acquisition of these goods lies beyond the agent's control. Thus, Aristotle's conception of external goods carries with it a conception of moral luck of which Aristotle was very aware.

Aristotle's most detailed discussion of luck and chance are found not in the ethics but rather in the *Physics* (specifically II, 4-6). Here, Aristotle accounts for luck (in its various forms) as a type of accidental causation. This metaphysical, and strictly causal, account of luck and chance is taken up by Aristotle in the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) and extended to that luck which effects moral endeavors.<sup>90</sup> This discussion of luck and chance as it pertains to the moral sphere is later altered and softened by Aristotle in the *NE*.<sup>91</sup> While the *NE* does contain a conception of luck and chance it is a less technical conception than found in both the *EE* and the *Physics*. Specifically, what is missing in the *NE* is an attempt to regularly use the terms luck or chance in any rigid or schematized way. In contrast, in the *Physics* and the *EE*, Aristotle argues that luck and chance have specific applications and pertain to a categorized understanding of accidental causation relating to special subsets. In these other works "luck" coincides with deliberative reason and thus only occurs within the human realm while "chance" can effect animals, plants, or even rocks.<sup>92</sup> In the *NE*, these terms lose their strict designation and are used more interchangeably to identify those things, actions, and/or events which morally affect an agent and which are beyond the agent's control. Similar to his use of "luck" or "chance" to identify these non-intentional causal interventions, Aristotle also uses the term

---

<sup>90</sup> See Kent Johnson's, "Luck and Good Fortune in the *Eudemian Ethics*," *Ancient Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1997), and, Anthony Kenny's, *Aristotle and the Perfect Life* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>91</sup> I subscribe to the prevailing view that the *EE* is an early version of Aristotle's ethics and the *NE* is a later, more mature, text which represents more fully Aristotle's thoughts on ethics. See Brad Inwood and Raphael Woolf, *Eudemian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). While this is the most commonly held view, it is not without its detractors. See Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of the Relationship Between the Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>92</sup> Interesting, Aristotle describes the fortunate chance that effects rocks by citing Protarchus' view that "the stones of which altars are made are fortunate because they are held in honour, while their fellows are trodden under foot" (197b8-10).

"fortune."<sup>93</sup> In general, luck, chance, and fortune are simply used to identify "that which is not within an agent's own control and yet affects the agent in a morally relevant way."<sup>94</sup>

One specific, and oft cited, instance of Aristotle's identification of moral luck is found in his claim that beauty is necessary for the achievement of happiness (1099b3).<sup>95</sup> Without beauty, virtue seems either impossible or unduly difficult because beauty is socially needed for the development of friendship and love. The hideous person is likely to scare away potential friends and the psychological damage of being repulsive in the eyes of others will have a detrimental effect on this ugly person. Because aesthetic qualities, like Aristotle's other listed goods of "good family and goodly children," are not chosen by the agent but rather given to the agent, the distribution of these qualities is, for Aristotle, constituted by fortune.

In a broader and less specific example of moral luck, Aristotle claims:

Now many events happen by chance, and events differing in importance; small pieces of good fortune or of its opposite clearly do not weigh down the scales of life one way or the other, but a multitude of great events if they turn out well will make life happier..., while if they turn out ill they crush and maim happiness; for they both bring pain with them and hinder many activities. (1100b22-30).

---

<sup>93</sup> By and large, most of the uses of "fortune" in the *NE* are connected to those instances of moral luck which are beneficial to the agent (1124a30, 1124b19, 1125a32, 1153b23, 1171b17) and are contrasted with examples of "misfortune" (1100a6, 1100a17, 1153b19, 1155a11, 1171b5, 1176b1).

<sup>94</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> When discussing the physical attributes of "beauty" and "ugliness," Aristotle (at 1099b3-4, 1159b16) flips between the two as if they were mutually exclusive. Unlike Plato, who in the *Symposium*, discusses a wide variety of ways someone can be beautiful (or said to be beautiful), Aristotle seems to treat beauty and ugliness, in regards to physical attractiveness, as merely opposite conditions of physical appearance. While setting aside his discussions of beauty in regards to mimetic art (*Poetics*), mathematics (*Metaphysics V*), and "being" and "becoming" (*Topics* 102a6), Aristotle holds a dichotomous understanding of physical beauty and ugliness such that the presence of one negates the presence of the other. See John S. Marshall, "Art and Aesthetic in Aristotle," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 2 (1953). Thus, to claim that 'Aristotle holds beauty necessary for the achievement of happiness' is equivalent to claiming that 'Aristotle holds that being not ugly is necessary for the achievement of happiness.'

Passages such as this, in conjunction with his understanding of specific goods such as beauty, demonstrate that Aristotle understands that any ethical system which requires external goods for the achievement of happiness must accept that these goods are, in many cases, beyond the agent's control and therefore agents are subject, to a greater or lesser extent, to moral luck. This is by no means a unique insight by Aristotle. Conceptions of moral luck appear to have played a central role in the philosophies of Aristotle's contemporaries thus leading Aristotle to claims that "some identify happiness with good fortune, though others identify it with virtue" (1099b8-9). Aristotle distinguishes his view from those of his contemporaries by (correctly) identifying the reality of moral luck yet not reducing virtue and happiness to merely the product of fortune.

Aristotle's inclusion of moral luck, as one factor in the achievement of virtue and happiness, seems wholly correct yet his description of luck is also lacking. Identifying "luck," "chance," and "fortune" as existent factors beyond an agent's control is correct but it fails to account for the ways that these factors are subject to intentional manipulation. Here, the language of "luck" and "chance" seems to do a disservice in that may lead one to believe that external goods are merely distributed by happenstance. While surely some goods are distributed by happenstance, others are systematically apportioned and the moral good they serve is limited to those who find themselves in a position of privilege.

It is those goods which are allotted not by pure happenstance but by design which connects external goods to oppression. Social structures and regimes act as vehicles for the dispensation of external goods and oppressive structures can, and do, limit these goods to oppressed people. If the limiting of these goods is a barrier for the achievement

of virtue and happiness, and oppression acts to limit these goods, then oppression can act via the dissemination of external goods as a barrier for happiness.

The most obvious example of this oppressive manipulation of external goods is found in money and wealth. Disparity in wealth and capital divides economic classes and the wealth that individuals possess, or have access to, cannot be attributed to either willingness (or unwillingness) to gain on one hand, and, chance apportionment on the other. Poverty, something Aristotle refers to as an evil (1115a11), as near death (1116a13), and as a grave misfortune (1155a11), is often handed down generationally<sup>96</sup> and the economic privilege afforded to some is paid for by the poverty of others. The privilege of cheaper and more widely available goods has always relied on systems of economic slavery to produce and distribute these goods while keeping production costs as low as possible. We can see this in institutionalized systems of slavery and bondage where all wealth is taken from individuals and the fruits of their labor are sold for the economic benefit of not only the seller but also the buyer. Wage slavery works in, economically, similar ways such that workers are paid sub-living wages in order to keep the products they produce competitively priced for mass consumption. It is not merely happenstance that these individuals are placed into states of poverty, but rather a necessary and supported form of economic exploitation of a given mode of capital production and distribution. Disparities in wealth are not merely coincidental but economically designed and the moral good that money provides is distributed unequally between classes, races, and geographical regions.

Beyond money, many of the goods of the body that Aristotle highlights as morally necessary are influenced through the availability of external goods. While health is a

---

<sup>96</sup> See Ruby K. Payne's, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty (Fourth Edition)*, (Aha! Process, 2005).

bodily good needed for achieving virtue and happiness, access to health care is the necessary means for maintaining proper health and is an external good which works in service of the bodily good. Access to health care, and more specifically denied access to health care, is a manipulation of an external good which (in conjunction with access to wealth), can prohibit individuals from achieving the goods necessary for happiness. Similarly, as cited above, while beauty is a bodily good, the social expectations of beauty standards are external goods which are structured in such a way as to disadvantage individuals beyond their control.

A further way one can see the manipulation of external goods beyond the bounds of agent control is in the political structures of the state. Often, political structures assign goods to individuals based upon their membership. One's citizenship can be a matter of birth or choice, but when one is born with a citizenship designation which limits voting, access to social services, basic political freedoms (such as freedom of movement) these individuals suffer at the loss of these external goods. Mirroring Aristotle's claim for the need of "good birth" in a proper family, similar "good birth" is needed in citizenship affiliation. Being born a Palestinian is obviously beyond the control of a child born to Palestinian parents living in the Occupied Territories, but this person's restricted freedom of movement and governance is not merely a confluence of random factors but rather the denial of basic rights by an unjust and oppressive occupying authority. Similarly, being born an African American prior to the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution, which guaranteed voting rights to all citizens regardless of race or ethnicity, is morally unlucky but the moral harm perpetrated against these individuals was an intentional product of racist political structures.

In each of these examples, individuals suffer morally due to factors outside their control, and thus are victims of moral luck. But these harms are intentional, systematic, purposeful, and oppressive. It is circumstances such as these that demonstrate the moral harm that manipulated external goods levels against individuals. Once we see that these external goods are necessary for Aristotelian flourishing *and* that Aristotle accounts for the necessity of these goods *and* that it is not merely unexplained causal effects which limits these goods we can see how the manipulation of external goods is used to oppress people and how these oppressed people are curtailed in their pursuit of the good life.

### Section 3 – Oppression and Base and Shameful Actions

In this final section I will show how oppressive forces harm agents through the habituation of base and shameful actions. This third assessment, in addition to the above stated arguments concerning the affected/eliminated/burdened nature of virtues and the manipulation of external goods, helps substantiate a final way in which oppression's harms must be evaluated by virtue theory. In part, this section acts to show the shortcomings of Aristotle's view of base and shameful actions, but it also attempts to build on Aristotle's views in light of these shortcomings to advance a conception of base actions that accounts for the material conditions of oppression while also explaining the immense danger these actions cause.

In order to understand Aristotle's conception of base and shameful actions we must first see the complex nature of his assessment of "the base" as presented throughout the *NE*. Aristotle uses the term "base" throughout the *NE* but does so in no less than

three distinct yet related ways. In each of these ways he more often than not contrasts "the base" with "the noble." This recurring juxtaposition begins in Book II where Aristotle claims "there are three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the noble, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, [and] the painful" (1104b30). Here, Aristotle expressly contrasts "the noble" and "the base" and labels them as contraries. Following this schema, when he identifies the category of the base he continuously invokes this contrary relationship with the noble (see 1113b9, 1117b9, 1120a13, 1173b28, 1175b29, 1179b13, 1179b30).

The first way Aristotle uses the term 'base' is to identify certain human impulses. In Book VII, when discussing the dual role of pleasure as morally significant yet also morally corrupting, Aristotle notes specifically that "there are pleasures that are actually base" (1152b21). Here, it is the pleasures, or the drive for the satisfaction of this pleasure, that is deemed base. The pleasure at hand here is the pleasure of children and brutes. The baseness of this type of pleasure is rooted in its simplistic, low, and animalistic qualities. This discussion from Book VII is mirrored in Book X as Aristotle, in returning to the discussion of pleasure, identifies the noble sources of pleasure and contrasts them with the base (1173b28). Again, the base sources are delineated as those tied to our basest instincts.

The second sense of base that Aristotle uses throughout the *NE* is intimately tied to the first, yet importantly different. Aside from identifying base impulses, Aristotle identifies "base objects" (1175b30). Base objects are simply those objects which are desired by base instincts. It is important to see that while Aristotle is again invoking 'base' to describe a type of desire or impulse, he is also disconnecting base from the

impulse and identifying it as residing within the object desired. While base impulses desire base objects, base objects possess baseness independent of their desirability. The clearest example of this, as hinted at by Aristotle, is found in appetites and food. While one's base desires may impel one toward bingeing on junk food, the baseness of junk food as an object of desire is not simply reduced to its being desired via base impulses. Rather, the baseness of junk food is rooted in its utter lack of nutrition. So while base desires drive agents to base objects, baseness is a quality possessed independently by objects as well as contained in certain impulses. Thus, in the closing pages of the *NE*, Aristotle claims that "virtue [is] loving what is noble and hating what is base" (1179b30). Proper desire, manifest as "love," is virtuous but is still ontologically distinct from the objects of love which, for virtue, must also not be base. Thus, in the second way Aristotle identifies "base" as an independent quality of select objects.

The third and most often used sense of the term 'base' employed by Aristotle throughout the entirety of the *NE*, and the sense of 'base' that is central to this section, is as an assessment of actions. At points, Aristotle identifies specific actions which are base. He claims that telling falsehoods or breaking promises is base (1127b5), taking as compared to giving is base (1120a14), and bravely facing pain is noble whereas to not do so is base (1117b8). In addition to specifically identifying individual base (or not-noble) actions, Aristotle accounts for the baseness of actions in general. If we return to Aristotle's first use of the term 'base,' as noted above, base defines one of the ways, if not the central way, we must avoid acting. The actions Aristotle proposes, which are to be assessed as either base or noble, are restricted to those actions which arise as voluntary choices. To understand base actions, we must first see that one of the conditions of a

base (or noble) action is that the action is, to a large degree, under the agent's control.

Here, it is worth quoting Aristotle at length:

For where it is in our power to act it is also in our power not to act, and *vice versa*; so that, if to act, where this is noble, is in our power, not to act, which will be base, will also be in our power, and if not to act, where this is noble, is in our power, to act, which will be base, will also be in our power. Now if it is in our power to do noble or base acts, and likewise in our power not to do them, and this was what being good or bad meant, then it is in our power to be virtuous or vicious (1113b713).

In typically elliptical form, Aristotle claims that baseness, as the quality of certain actions or willful inactions, is restricted to those actions or inactions in which we have the power (read: ability) to act or not to act. This baseness of action is thus easily applied to "bad actions" in general (1179b13), and more specifically to actions of adultery, theft, and murder (1107a11). While obviously immoral actions are easily called base by Aristotle, he famously devotes a large section of Book III to assessing the nature and scope of voluntary actions in accordance with the evaluation of their nobility or baseness as most contentious action (or inaction) fails to be clearly and definitively voluntary.

In describing how actions accord with freedom, Aristotle references two hypothetical situations where necessary actions are done under coercion yet which cannot be properly called 'involuntary.' The two examples given by Aristotle are of the tyrant and the ship captain. In the tyrant example Aristotle proposes a hypothetical scenario where "a tyrant were to order one to do something base, having one's parents and children in his power, and if one did the action they were to be saved, but otherwise would be put to death" (1110a5-8). The ship captain is presented as in an analogous situation, where she is caught in a storm and must throw the ship's cargo overboard to

secure the safety of herself and her crew (1110a9-12). In both scenarios, the moral agent is presented with a situation in which they are coerced into base and shameful actions due to an external influence. For Aristotle, these actions are justified and “worthy of choice” because (a) the end of the action is “done from fear of greater evils or for some noble object,” (b) while the action is base the action would otherwise not be performed if the external constraint were removed, and, (c) “any sensible man” would perform these actions in these situations. Aristotle’s assessment of these so-called mixed actions is done to show that evaluation of actions must be “used with reference to the moment of action” and that the strict and simplistic criteria of “the moving principle” cannot categorize all actions as either completely voluntary or completely involuntary. While these examples illustrate Aristotle’s assessment of free actions, they also shed light on the base and shameful actions which can be necessitated by oppression.

Much like the tyrant, the existence of oppression forces agents to perform base and shameful acts. Where oppression differs from Aristotle’s example of the tyrant is that oppression does not exist wholly in discrete and dramatic moments but rather affects, coerces, and conditions agents over prolonged periods of time. Aristotle’s example of the tyrant depends on two implied premises. The first is that if this one base action is performed then the noble end (of saving the family) will be accomplished. The second is that this base action is discrete and performing this action, in unique situations of mitigating circumstances, will not affect the development and maintenance of one’s character. These two premises fail to obtain in cases of oppression. Oppression’s longevity, and the continuous effects that are exerted upon agents, means that the base and shameful actions which oppression coerces individuals into are not discrete.

Oppression can coerce individuals into a continual cycle of base actions which do not achieve noble ends and which do radically affect the development and maintenance of one's character. The continual and on-going pressure exerted by oppression, by coercing agents to base actions, can become a form of negative habituation.

Let us take, as an example, the debt bondage ring run by Carlos Andres Monsalve. Monsalve orchestrated the immigration of women from Guatemala to the United States such that these women entered into debt bondage agreements with Monsalve where they agreed to work as housekeepers to pay for their initial illegal migration, their eventual legalization and naturalization, and their housing and care.<sup>97</sup> The initial debt was set at \$5,000 (USD) but upon arrival in the US they were informed that their debt had jumped to upwards of \$30,000. The women were told that their debt would now need to be paid-off by working as prostitutes. Under the escalating fears of abandonment, expulsion, and physical torture these women began performing up to 25 sex-acts a day for \$30 an act.

These women, who were clearly subject to an oppressive structure of exploitation and coercive force, were compelled to commit base and shameful acts. Yet, unlike the scenarios presented by Aristotle, their exploitation was not limited to discrete and unconnected actions but rather a life of servitude and sexual exploitation. The continued performance of these base sexual acts has substantial effect upon these women's characters. Melissa Farley, a researcher and clinical psychologist and founding director of Prostitution Research and Education, surveyed and analyzed multiple psychological

---

<sup>97</sup> Johnathan Abel, "How Clearwater Helped Destroy an International Sex Slave Ring," *Tampa Bay Times* (March 14, 2009).

studies done on prostitutes.<sup>98</sup> Here Farley concluded that prostitution, be it forced and illegal (as in the case of the women enslaved by Monsalve) or self-chosen and legal, results in "dissociation," Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and "other mood disorders."<sup>99</sup> Farley's work, and the individual studies she cites, substantiates the ways in which habitual sexual action in exchange for money or services results in harm. This substantiated psychological harm can be further explained by virtue ethics through habituation. The continual performance of an action, according to Aristotle, can, through the process of habituation, have an effect on the moral character of an individual. According to Aristotle, "states of character arise out of like activities" (1103b21) and thus, "we become just by doing just action, and temperate by doing temperate acts" (1105a18). While this is most often associated with moral development (as seen in Aristotle's examples of justice and temperance), it can also explain moral decay. If we become just by performing just actions, so too we become unjust by performing unjust actions. When one continually commits negative and harmful actions, the actions can bring about vice or viciousness.<sup>100</sup> The women exploited and oppressed by Monsalve were forced to commit harmful and base actions and these actions, via their repetition and eventual habituation, curtailed (if not prohibited) their flourishing.

While possibly an extreme (although not uncommon) example, human sexual trafficking can help illuminate how oppressive structures force the habituation of base

---

<sup>98</sup> Melissa Farley, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized," *Violence Against Women* 10, no. 10 (2004).

<sup>99</sup> Farley, "Bad for the Body," 1106.

<sup>100</sup> Here I use both vice and viciousness as vice refers to the quality of lacking a specific virtue and viciousness refers to the complete failing of an individual's character. In having a vice one need not be vicious, for the continent person has not yet achieved virtue and eradicated vice, but is not the vicious individual. The harm caused by habituated base and shameful acts may cause vice in the individual (in that the actions may result in, for example, intemperance) or may cause a complete collapse of character into the character state of viciousness.

and shameful actions and how this habituation must curtail the flourishing of these oppressed people. While an example of sexual debt-bondage may illustrate this point, it can also leave one with a sense that this moral reality is reserved exclusively for extreme scenarios, and this, most certainly, is not the case. Similar results can be found in the way worker safety is commodified and the way workers choose, in a truly Aristotelian "mixed" sense, to labor under unsafe working conditions.

When looking at unsafe working conditions it is difficult not to begin with the commercial meatpacking industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the meatpacking industry is one of the most dangerous industries in the United States.<sup>101</sup> The meatpacking industry has one of the highest injury rates of all industries, and injuries in this industry occur at roughly three times that of other manufacturing industries.<sup>102</sup>

Most of the physical injuries in the meatpacking industry are a result of the extremely high volume of meat processed and the rate at which animals are slaughtered. In the United States over 9 billion animals are slaughtered per year.<sup>103</sup> In industrialized plants, this butchering is done by workers through a series of "cuts." Animals arrive in front of workers on moving conveyer systems and workers are trained to perform specific and targeted "cuts" to the carcass. In many slaughterhouses over 350 animals are butchered per hour, and the cutting process moves at break-neck speed. The speed of the process is extremely dangerous and it is a well known fact that slaughterhouse workers

---

<sup>101</sup> "OSHA 3108: Safety and Health Guide for the Meat Packing Industry," US Department of Labor, 1988.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Jennifer Dillard, "A Slaughterhouse Nightmare: Psychological Harm Suffered By Slaughterhouse Employees and Possibilities of Redress Through Legal Reform," *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 392. Dillard points out that calculations of animals deaths in the industrial meat industry do not include aquatic animals or animals who died in transit. If these deaths were added to the calculation it is believed that the annual number of slaughtered animals in the US would be in excess of 100 million.

toil in some of the most unsafe environments in the industrial sector. Typical injuries range from deep lacerations and amputations to third degree burns (often from a machine called the "gut-cooker"). According to Eric Schlosser, "Every year about one out of three meatpacking workers in this country - roughly forty-three thousand men and women - suffer an injury or work-related illness that requires medical attention beyond first aid."<sup>104</sup>

In addition to the physical danger of slaughterhouse work, meatpackers also face a myriad of psychological dangers. The speed at which slaughterhouses operate means that workers are not given time to ensure that animals are killed quickly, humanely, or even completely. In 1958, congress passed the Humane Slaughter Act (HSA) which regulates the slaughtering of animals. The HSA holds that, "It is therefore declared to be the policy of the United States that the slaughtering of livestock and the handling of livestock in connection with slaughter shall be carried out only by humane methods."<sup>105</sup> While the HSA purportedly ensures that animals are slaughtered humanely, this law fails to ensure the reality of the promise. From its passage in 1958 until 1978, when the HSA was updated, USDA regulators were given no authority to intervene when slaughterhouses were found in violation of the law. Slaughterhouses were given the task of self-regulation and no punishments existed for failures to comply. In 2002, the HSA was updated again via a congressional resolution. This resolution, as part of the Farm Bill, resolved that the HSA "should be fully enforced." Forty-four years after its passage, congress was forced to pass a resolution which called expressly for the

---

<sup>104</sup> Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 172.

<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, the HSA only expressly mentions the slaughtering of "cattle, calves, horses, mules, sheep, [and] swine." The industrial meat industry, along with a complacent and co-conspiratorial USDA, has taken this to mean that animals not expressly outlined in the original legislation fall outside the purview of the law and can therefore be slaughtered in inhumane ways. This is most prevalent in the commercial slaughtering practices of chickens and turkeys, but applies also to the killing of fish, rabbits, and other types of fowl.

enforcement of the law which, up until this point, has no real mechanisms for enactment. Even following this resolution, the inhumane conditions of slaughterhouses persist, and these conditions require workers to treat animal suffering as merely an unavoidable aspect of their work.

Journalist Ted Conover spent a number of months working as a USDA inspector in Nebraska's slaughterhouse industry. He describes the killing process he witnessed, and reports that animals were intentionally left living during the butchering process.<sup>106</sup> A fellow USDA inspector told him that "the pumping of their hearts will help drain the blood from their bodies once their necks are sliced open."<sup>107</sup> Conover describes semi-stunned cattle dangling from chain hoists while their throats are slit open. The cattle's hearts pump the blood out of the living body and onto the killing floor while various workers performed their "cuts." Conover describes animals with dangling eyeballs and twitching muscles as he chronicles the deliberately slow death of cattle which, paradoxically, occurs on the ultra-fast paced conveyer line. This inhumane environment is not unique to the cattle industry nor is it localized to a specific plant or company. Hauntingly similar stories have been shared by whistle-blowers, undercover journalists, and activists in the poultry and pig industries.<sup>108</sup>

While the suffering experienced by animals in this horrific industry is, in itself, extremely morally troubling for virtue ethicists,<sup>109</sup> there are also important ways which the moral character of those who inflict this suffering is equally significant. Without

---

<sup>106</sup> Ted Conover, "The Way of All Flesh: Undercover in an Industrial Slaughterhouse," *Harper's Magazine* (May, 2013)

<sup>107</sup> Conover, "The Way of all Flesh," 35.

<sup>108</sup> See Karen Davis' *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry* (Book Publishing Company, 2009).

<sup>109</sup> See Rosalind Hursthouse's "Virtue Ethics and the Treatment of Animals," in *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, eds. Tom L., Beauchamp and R.G. Frey (Oxford University Press, 2011).

minimizing the severity of the moral wrongs inflicted upon, literally, millions of animals a year in the industrialized meat industry, this industry also causes untold moral damage to those who work in these factories. Workers, who in the course of their daily working lives, inflict this suffering on the animals being slaughtered are morally harmed by the tasks they perform.

Workers in this 'industry of death' work in pools of blood, enveloped by the deafening noise of machinery and animal cries, and "experience, on a daily basis, large-scale violence and death that most of the American population will never have to encounter."<sup>110</sup> Exposure to this cruelty has significant impact on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of these workers. It has been reported that slaughterhouse workers experience higher than average instances of social withdrawal, drug and alcohol abuse, and anxiety.<sup>111</sup> Further, slaughterhouse workers are now being diagnosed with PTSD.<sup>112</sup> In some extreme cases, workers have been known to "kill for fun," intentionally maiming living animals, and have even resorted to forgoing the killing machinery in order to kill animals by hand.<sup>113</sup> In preliminary research, it has also been shown that there is a correlation between slaughterhouse workers and instances of violent inter-human violence.<sup>114</sup> In all of these ways, it is believed that the "nature of the

---

<sup>110</sup> Dillard, "Slaughterhouse Nightmare," 391.

<sup>111</sup> James McWilliams, "PTSD in the Slaughterhouse," *The Texas Observer* (February 7, 2012).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Dillard, "Slaughterhouse Nightmare," 396.

<sup>114</sup> See Amy Fitzgerald, Linda Kalof, and Thomas Dietz, "Slaughterhouses and Increased Crime Rates: An Empirical Analysis of the Spillover from "The Jungle" into the Surrounding Community," *Organization and Environment* 22, no. 2 (2009). This research is very much in its infancy but a connection between slaughterhouse workers and violent crime is clear. What is, as of now, unproven is a *causal* relationship between violent crimes and slaughterhouse employment. Slaughterhouses employees tend to be socio-economically poor individuals residing in low-income communities where crime statistics are already statistically elevated. This leads some to believe that these violent crime statistics are influenced by factors beyond slaughterhouse employment. Yet, Fitzgerald, Kalof, and Dietz's study did find that instances of violent crimes are much more common in communities of slaughterhouse employees when

slaughterhouse work may have caused psychological damage to the employees" such that "employee's actions certainly rise to the level of abnormal cruelty that would cause concern among the general population."<sup>115</sup>

These reports, studies, and diagnoses reveal the moral damage inflicted on these workers. By inflicting suffering on animals, these workers are forced into emotional states which inhibit their moral growth and prohibit their flourishing. Empathy and sympathy are not emotions that these workers can properly experience if they are to carry-out their work. A worker who is literally faced with this level of immense suffering must learn to quiet their emotional responses and develop a level of emotional detachment. This emotional numbing and detachment is not something that one can turn-on and turn-off at their discretion and becomes an emotional state carried out of the factory and into their wider lives. For many of these workers this emotional detachment is aided by routinely and habitually using and abusing drugs and alcohol. These mechanisms of self-abuse help achieve the emotional goal of lessening the experiences of their working lives. Individuals who cannot quiet their emotional responses are left with emotional and psychological disorders, such as PTSD. These individuals have their emotional and psychological states warped into harmful states of excessive fear, emotional uncontrollability, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and even uncontrollable and unwanted thoughts. If these psychological, mental, and emotional states of excess, marked by PTSD and substance abuse, can be avoided (in what must be both called *and*

---

compared to similar socio-economic communities based around other industrial industries (such as iron and steel forging, vehicle manufacturing, metal working, and industrial launderers). This research, while not demonstrating a causal connection between inter-human violence and slaughterhouse employment, has shown extremely strong connections between the two and provides a strong link between slaughterhouse employment and inter-human violence.

<sup>115</sup> Dillard, "Slaughterhouse Nightmare," 396.

bemoaned as a "best case scenario") then this individual achieves emotional disconnection. This strong emotional disconnection (or disassociation) can result in the demonstrated instances of anti-social behavior, such as social withdraw, and even the deviant behaviors of some workers, found in inter-human violence and "killing for fun." It would seem then, workers are left with the options of achieving emotional numbness and detachment via various harmful means, suffering at the hands of emotions they cannot control, or achieving emotional disconnection and suffering its disastrous consequences. In any case, these are states which are clearly at odds with the Aristotelian conception of proper virtue, positive states of character, and human flourishing. For these workers, the continual exposure to violence, the pressure to act in accordance with inhumane industry standards, and the emotional distancing that this must induce warps these individuals into damaged and vicious states.

The connection between the sexual debt-bondage case and the example of slaughterhouse workers is that in both cases agents choose to routinely perform actions which are base and shameful. The baseness forced upon the women enslaved by Monsalve is the boldest and most robust sense of base as described by Aristotle. The sexual actions they are coerced to perform are, in the first sense, base due to their service of the brutish sexual appetites of their johns. In the third sense of base used by Aristotle, the actions performed by these women qualify as base due to the otherwise unchoiceworthiness of their actions. All things being equal, these are not the appropriate choices one should make in service to their moral growth, character development, or happiness. The use of slaughterhouse workers, in conjunction with the sexual debt-bondage case, helps show how similar reasoning can be circumstantially pressed onto

agents which results in moral decay, and therein be base, yet not to the same degree. While lacking the sexual content of the actions performed in the sexual debt-bondage case, the actions performed as work in the meatpacking industry are no less base. The inhumane actions of brutality inflicted by slaughterhouse workers during the slaughtering process, in their cruelty, are base in Aristotle's third sense of the word. These actions are unfitting a person with a properly aligned moral compass and are properly called "base" and "bad." In a second way, the impulses behind this institutionalized cruelty must also be labeled as "base" in Aristotle's first sense of the word as they lack essential emotional sensitivity. Thirdly, the treatment of the animals by the slaughterhouse workers does not "serve noble ends." The consumer-ready meat produced by this industry is an unnecessary commercial good. It is not the case that meat is the only means for feeding people and the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals is the necessary means for obtaining this irreplaceable good. The meat produced and sold to consumers fulfills only basic peculiar desires which are fungible goods easily replaced when the moral circumstances of their production are known. In this third way, the 'necessary' actions of meatpackers are, in no sense, necessary and do not serve noble ends. Thus, both the sexual debt-bondage example and the example of the actions of meatpackers are similar and analogous. In both are cases agents choose, in a "mixed" sense, that which is base and shameful and this choice results moral harm, moral decay, and moral damage.

While drawing important connections between the examples of sexual debt-bondage and slaughterhouse workers in regards to the harm of base and shameful actions, it is equally important to note that there are significant disconnections between these two groups. The first, and most important, disconnect between these two cases is the severity

of moral harm caused in each case. The severity of harm inflicted on a sexual slave is exponentially higher, more malicious, and more pernicious than the moral harm inflicted on slaughterhouse workers and it would be irresponsible to not clearly indicate this important difference. Yet, even with this noted, the moral damage identified in slaughterhouse workers as a result of their coerced and base decisions is none the less present, real, and harmful. Thus, these two cases, in reference to severity of harm, differ only in degree. The second way these cases differ is in the level of choice that the agents in each case possess. One may object to the connection being drawn here between sexual slavery and meatpacking because agents working in the meatpacking industry begin, and continue, their employment voluntarily whereas the women controlled by Monsalve are truly enslaved. While this is, as a point of fact, true it in no way alters the moral evaluation of these cases. As with moral harm, the voluntariness of actions, for Aristotle, comes in degrees. Both the actions of the sexual debt-bondage slaves and the meatpackers are coerced and cannot be said to be fully voluntary. The threats leveled against the women enslaved by Monsalve and the economic pressures of employment and enforced industry standards in slaughterhouses both act to coerce agents to perform base and harmful actions. In a similar way, the actions of the sexual slaves and the meatpackers are not so over-determined by this coercion as to make these actions involuntary. At the moment of action, these unfortunate and coerced agents still possess an ability to refuse, even if this refusal comes at an unacceptable cost. This means that the actions in both the sexual debt-bondage case and the case of the slaughterhouse workers are truly "mixed" and both involve, to varying degrees, the choice of the agent. While important differences exist between the levels of coercion in these two cases (and

therefore the level of choice available to the agents) both are mixed actions, varying only in degree and not in kind. It is the moral harm caused to slaughterhouse workers and the women enslaved by Monsalve that is similar and it is this similarity that connects these cases. Both are cases where individuals are coerced into the continual performance of base and shameful acts and the effect of these continued actions harms, corrupts, and damages the acting agents which, in turn, severely limits the availability flourishing.

If the differences between these cases are only differences of degree, then it seems reasonable to extend this type of moral damage beyond even these two cases. This type of moral harm, typified at the extreme by sexual debt-bondage slaves and to a lesser degree by meatpackers, extends, by degree, to other professions and lifestyles. The implications of Dillard and McWilliams research done on slaughterhouse workers seems to point to possible similarities in other types of labor. Members of other high-risk professions can and do suffer from the same negative habituation. Police officers, firefighters, manual laborers, and even public school teachers all struggle to weigh the competing values of personal safety and financial obligations. Where national and local governments weigh economic concerns against safety regulations, and where employers treat worker health and safety as negotiable and transmutable budget expenditures, the health and safety of all workers is utterly commodified. It is this commodification of worker safety that forces all workers, to varying degrees, to choose courses of actions which, all things being equal, they should not choose. It is precisely because *all things are not equal* that their choices are coerced and, in an Aristotelian sense, "mixed." All workers, who must accept working conditions which they know to be less than safe, unsafe, or dangerous, must normalize their decisions and repeatedly working in such

conditions distances workers from the reality of the unchoiceworthiness of their decisions. This continual acceptance (via continued actions) for that which is unchoiceworthy is what Aristotle's examples of base actions does not account for. Aristotle does not address the abundance and pervasiveness of base (or otherwise unchoiceworthy) necessary actions that oppressed people must habitually make, and fails to consider how the repetition of these coerced choices has a cumulative effect on oppressed individual's wellbeing, happiness, and virtue.

Much like Aristotle's examples of the despotic tyrant and the rogue storm while at sea, oppression forces (to varying degrees) the performance of base actions. While Aristotle did not expressly consider the possibility of these base actions being performed on a routine basis, and he treated base actions as relatively isolated incidents, the moral framework of virtue theory can account for the repetitive nature of such actions and the damning effect of this repetition. It is through this account that we can see how oppression's coercive force acts as an external influence and curtails flourishing. In this way, to account for and substantiate the harmful effects of oppression we must consider, in conjunction with oppression's effects on the acquisition of virtue and its manipulation of external goods, the essential and damning ways in which base and shameful actions play a vital role.

#### Section 4 – Conclusion

The central aim of this chapter has been to move from a *prima facie* understanding of oppression's harms to a substantiated account of these harms as

understood by virtue ethics. It was argued here, in three sections, that the limitation on the availability of flourishing can be found in three distinct forms.

The first way oppression limits flourishing is by limiting virtue. It was argued in section one that under the conditions of oppression virtues can be made either (a) an impossibility (as demonstrated via temperance), (b) radically affected such that the development of certain virtues can be made extremely onerous and unrealistic (as demonstrated via courage), or, (c) heavily burdened into becoming somehow damaging in themselves (as demonstrated via proper-anger). In each of these ways oppression acts as a force which limits the acquisition, development, and maintenance of virtue. Since virtue is needed for the achievement of the good life and flourishing, oppression acts as a barrier for this achievement.

The second way oppression limits flourishing is through the manipulation of external goods. Arguing against Farwell, and using Farwell's position as a foil, section two first establishes that external goods are, in fact, necessary yet not sufficient for the achievement of flourishing. These necessary but not sufficient goods, external to the agent, require Aristotle to present a corollary picture of how factors outside the agent's control alter the dispersal of these goods. Deemed "moral luck," it was argued that while Aristotle did account for the fortunate/unfortunate allotments of external goods he also failed to understand the political, social, and structural ways these goods are intentionally manipulated beyond the bounds of mere happenstance. When manipulated via oppressive structures and regimes, the limitation of external goods limits the necessary goods for the achievement of flourishing.

The conjunction of sections one (on virtue's limitation) and two (on external goods) demonstrate how all of the necessary *and* sufficient goods needed for the achievement of flourishing are skewed by oppression. In this way, all aspects of the moral life fall under oppression's harmful influence such that flourishing, for the oppressed, is not only curtailed but possibly prohibited.

The third and final way oppression was shown to act as a limitation on the achievement of flourishing was through an assessment of base and shameful actions. Section three began by accounting for the different ways Aristotle conceived of that which is base. In conjunction with his identification of so-called "mixed" acts, it was claimed that oppression can force individuals into base and shameful actions (of varying degrees of severity) which, in turn, affect the possibility of achieving flourishing. Here, this section used case studies (and related research) of prisoners of sexual debt-bondage and workers in the meatpacking industry to show how mixed actions can negatively habituate individuals to varying degrees of moral harm which, in turn, acts as a barrier for the achievement of flourishing.

The harms presented here, which are done as a way of substantiating oppression's damning influence, furthers scholarship on the (im)morality of oppression in two important ways. First, they descriptively present an analysis of oppression's influence from within the virtue ethics tradition. The normative framework of virtue ethics requires a uniquely virtue based account of oppression's harm and this chapter has sought to provide this detailed analysis. Secondly, the harms presented here, as understood by virtue ethics, take a large and broad look at the human life. The framework of virtue ethics attempts to encompass and engage in all aspects of human life treating human

flourishing as the result of a complete life. Connecting the harmful effects of oppression via virtue ethics uses this encompassing framework to trace the harmful effects of oppression to our desires, our emotions, our choices, our habits, our interactions with others, and our political existence as social beings. Virtue ethics, and the account of oppression given here, attempts to meet these ethical demands in the wide and varied arenas in which the ethical life is lived and developed. The resulting picture of oppression and its harms demonstrates the extent and depth of oppression's devastating effects on the oppressed.

If oppression, in all of these ways, denies flourishing, it is clear that we need to accept that oppression *must* be resisted and once this barrier to flourishing is removed such full human potential is made available to all individuals and communities. This resistance is the topic of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ESTABLISHING AN OBLIGATION TO RESIST OPPRESSION

Understanding the complex ways that oppression harms agents, as argued for in the previous chapter, mandates a moral response from virtuous agents. This chapter argues that Aristotelian virtue ethics generates a strong moral obligation which requires agents to resist oppression and obligates individuals to actively engage in liberatory struggles against oppressive forces.

At first blush, this language of obligation used in conjunction with the Aristotelian moral framework might appear to be an unnatural mixing of moral theories as if a square peg has been placed into a round hole. After all, the modern revival of virtue ethics traces its roots to Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy," in which Anscombe calls for a return to virtue theory in light of the fact that the moral language of "must" and "ought" fails to have any sensible meaning. Anscombe urges for a return to the tradition of virtue ethics as it is here that she believes that the juridical "must" and "ought" play no role. In many ways Anscombe's call has been answered. Moral theorists took up the mantle of virtue theory, jettisoned the juridical language of obligation and "must," and began working on expanding, extolling, and exploring virtue's role in modern moral discussions. For many, like Christopher Miles Coope, who claims that the very idea of 'obligation' is "a problem specific to justice... and [within a virtue ethical framework] not readily comprehensible," the virtue framework cannot nor should not

attempt to conceptualize ethics as yielding obligations or asserting moral claims as obligatory.<sup>116</sup>

It is my belief that even if we take Coope and Anscombe's criticism seriously, and fulfill the demands of ethics from within a uniquely virtue framework, the language of obligations still emerges and, more specifically, agents are obligated to engage in moral resistance to oppression given oppression's harmful effects.

To establish and defend this view, this chapter begins with an analysis of Rosalind Hursthouse's conception of "v-rules." From this conception of v-rules, I will advance a picture of the derivative rules which the v-rules entail. These derivative rules (or "d-rules"), and the action guidance they provide, obligate agents in circumstances of oppression and necessitate that agents act to resist oppression in all its forms.

### Section 1 - Hursthouse's V-Rules

Hursthouse develops her conception of the so-called "v-rules" as a way of responding to the critics of virtue ethics who claim that virtue cannot provide anything by way of practical action guidance. For these critics, the reliance on so-called "agent centered" ethics leaves individuals unable to determine the appropriate moral actions required in specific situations as the broad ethical dictums to "become virtuous" or "achieve eudaimonia" do not translate into practical application. Hursthouse responds to these critics and develops a strong conception of virtue based action guidance which explains how virtue ethics instructs agents as to their actions.

---

<sup>116</sup> Christopher Miles Coope, "Modern Virtue Ethics," in *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Oxford University Press, 2007), 27.

For Hursthouse, the overarching rule for action guidance found within virtue ethics is the general principle which holds that right action is defined by the action(s) of the virtuous agent. As a foundational premise, Hursthouse expresses this principle as:

P<sub>ve</sub>.1. An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances.<sup>117</sup>

Hursthouse admits that this first rule concerning the action guidance found in virtue ethics may sound like an unhelpful truism, yet is no different than any other general rule for action guidance found in any other brand of moral theory. All moral theories begin with broad premises and these basic premises are, by themselves, generally unhelpful for determining what, specifically, an agent should or should not do.<sup>118</sup> Using the framework of Utilitarianism for comparison, Hursthouse shows that the first principle of utility is, when taken by itself, equally unhelpful for guiding actions. This first principle of utility can be expressed as:

P<sub>u</sub>.1. An action is right iff it tends to maximize total happiness.

Much like P<sub>ve</sub>.1., P<sub>u</sub>.1. fails, by itself, to provide concrete action guidance. P<sub>u</sub>.1. does not clarify or explain how happiness is to be understood or how maximization is to be calculated or how the "tendency" requirement is measured and thus further principles must be explained. Similarly, P<sub>ve</sub>.1. does not, by itself, define the virtuous agent or define the virtues or explain action's connection to character, which leaves P<sub>ve</sub>.1. unable

---

<sup>117</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 28.

<sup>118</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 31.

to singularly guide actions. For Hursthouse, the broad foundational premise of P<sub>ve.1.</sub> must be unpacked and added to other ethical principles contained and entailed with the normative framework of virtue ethics. Action guidance is not provided solely by P<sub>ve.1.</sub>, but emerges when P<sub>ve.1.</sub> is conjoined with additional elaborative principles. The subsequent premises needed, according to Hursthouse, are:

P<sub>ve.2.</sub> A virtuous agent is one who has, and exercises, certain character traits, namely the virtues.

P<sub>ve.3.</sub> A virtue is a character trait...<sup>119</sup>

The action guidance prescribed in P<sub>ve.1.</sub> is given content by the subsequent premises. While Hursthouse ends this elaboration with P<sub>ve.3.</sub>, it seems warranted to grant at least one additional premise which flushes out this entailed chain. The additional premise would be as follows.

P<sub>ve.4.</sub> - Virtues are developed by agents through either teaching/learning (in the case of intellectual virtues) or through habituation (in the case of moral virtues).

It is at this point that the action guidance entailed in P<sub>ve.1.</sub> becomes clear.

Certain actions are necessary for the development and maintenance of the virtues, and other actions are to be avoided for the same reason. Hursthouse dubs the "large number of rules" which P<sub>ve.1.</sub>- P<sub>ve.3.</sub> (and presumably P<sub>ve.4.</sub>) generate "v-rules."<sup>120</sup> It is v-rules which specify the content of action guidance in virtue ethics. For Hursthouse, v-rules are

---

<sup>119</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 29. Hursthouse defines virtue via the "standard neo-Aristotelian" conception of virtue as "a character trait a human being needs for *eudaimonia*, to flourish or live well" (emphasis in original).

<sup>120</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 37.

derived directly from the virtues and vices and their normative force is imparted as being derivative of P<sub>ve</sub>.1.<sup>121</sup>

We can see here that, for Hursthouse, v-rules emerge as a component of Aristotelian virtue ethics' schema for action guidance. At this preliminary point, let us consider an example as means of clarification. For this clarification, consider the virtue of liberality. Liberality, the virtue which governs those things regarding wealth, necessitates that a virtuous agent be liberal, generous, and charitable. This virtue generates, amongst others, the v-rules "be liberal," and the related vices of liberality instruct agents by the v-rules "do not be miserly" and "do not act as a spendthrift."

Here, some might object that while the v-rules are entailed by the existence of the virtues (and vices) and do instruct agents how they are to act, they still provide little by the way of *concrete* action guidance. After all, being instructed to "act charitably" does not seem particularly helpful when faced with situations where agents are presented with complex scenarios of competing demands. Must an agent part with their money whenever asked for spare change? How should one decide between, on one hand, making a charitable donation or, on the other, saving this would-be-donated money for potential future circumstances of self-need? Here, it might seem that being instructed to merely "act charitably" does not provide the strong action guidance needed to determine the required actions.

Objections such as these fail to see how the virtue concepts, as captured by the v-rules, are "thick" and carry with them more instructive and informative content than these critics give them credit for. For Hursthouse, the v-rules generated by the virtues "connote not only doing what the virtuous agent could do, but also doing it 'in the way' she

---

<sup>121</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 39.

would."<sup>122</sup> This "in the way she would," points to the complex schema of the virtues found in Aristotelian virtue ethics as well as all of the factors involved in determining, identifying, and enacting the virtues. For Aristotle, the virtues are not presented as axiomatic goods without conditions or parameters, but are restricted to delineated conditions, constraints and boundaries. These boundaries describe the limits of the virtue's the mean as well as the ways in which agents can be said to fail. These boundary conditions are all contained in the specific, and seemingly vague, v-rules as they are "the ways the virtuous agents acts."

For clarification, let us return to the example of liberality. Aristotle describes the liberal person as one who does not give money to the wrong person (1120a28, 1120b6), one who gives without pain (1120a30), one who takes (acquires) money from the right sources (1120a33), and one who uses their wealth to confer benefit to others (1120a35). Those who error in regards to these conditions find themselves either prodigal (the related vice of excess) or "mean" (the related vice of deficiency). While at the most general level, agents are instructed to "be liberal" (as this is the v-rule), this liberality is, in part, measured by the ability and willingness of agents to act in ways delineated by the conditions and boundaries of the virtue. To fulfill the v-rule of liberality *qua* charity is to, for example, give money to those in need and to do so unbegrudgingly.

For Hursthouse, and Aristotle, the determination of these boundaries and conditions, and the specifics of the otherwise broad virtues (and v-rules), are to be determined by agents using phronesis. Through the use of practical wisdom agents can determine the practical implementation of the virtues and the fulfillment of the v-rules. It is practical wisdom which yields the derivative content of the virtues and the v-rules, and

---

<sup>122</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 36 (footnote).

this derivative content can be deployed by agents in concrete situations where the specifics of individual action are needed.

Through the schema of the v-rules, and the derivative content yielded by practical wisdom, Hursthouse gives us a strong conception of the action guidance found in virtue ethics. To my mind, Hursthouse more than adequately answers the critics of virtue ethics who see it as unable to practically instruct agents as to proper action. Seeing as how these critics are the target of her argument, I believe that the scheme that she advances succeeds. Yet, at this point, I want to break from Hursthouse's conception of the v-rules and push them further than she intends.

## Section 2 - Rules Beyond the V-Rules

Hursthouse maintains that the v-rules must always remain tied to the virtue concepts. The v-rules operate by iterating the specifics of moral action in direct reference to the language, and therefore meaning, of the virtues. For Hursthouse, this linguistic connection is of central importance. Keeping the v-rules tied, expressly, to the virtue concepts keeps them anchored in the eudaimonistic framework. So while there are many obvious moral maxims which most will admit are morally significant in virtue ethics (such as "do not murder"), the v-rules, themselves, do not extend to these actions. This is not to say that these actions are therefore not prohibited but rather that the v-rules which provide action guidance to agents do not extend to such prohibitions. The obvious prohibition on murder which virtue ethics maintains is to be understood as the practical manifestation of v-rules which ask agents to "be gentle" and to "maintain proper anger."

For Hursthouse, such practicality is given to agents through the exercise of practical wisdom which operates under the direction of the v-rules.

The virtue concepts that Hursthouse sees as both central to her conception of the v-rules and essential for their implementation extends beyond the enumerated virtues listed by Aristotle and includes those virtue concepts which express states of character, both positively and negatively, without being, in themselves, virtues or vices. Hursthouse, briefly, provides examples of this extensive virtue and vice vocabulary which remains available for v-rule analysis. This list includes irresponsibility, fecklessness, laziness, uncooperativeness, and being inconsiderate, to name just a few.<sup>123</sup> These virtue (and vice) concepts help give strong action guidance and can be expressed as v-rules. Thus, we can say that, for example, there is a v-rule which instructs agents to not be lazy. This v-rule (which would read something akin to "do not be lazy" or even "do not be slothful") is important in that virtue ethics requires agents to actively and rigorously engage in the project of virtues acquisition. After all, virtue cannot be stumbled into blindly nor quickly and requires continuous work by the agent. While this v-rule concerning laziness instructs and guides agents in accordance with virtue ethics, it is not derived directly from the existence of a specific virtue. Aristotle, while describing idle laziness as the earmark of the incontinent (1166b11), does not discuss laziness at any length and certainly does not identify laziness as a vice with a corresponding virtue. Yet this does not preclude, for Hursthouse, the vice concept of slothfulness from being included in both our list of virtue and vice concepts or the v-rules.

The boundaries for the v-rules, for Hursthouse, is the virtue (and vice) concepts.

The v-rules express the virtues and can only do so by remaining tied to the virtue

---

<sup>123</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 42.

concepts. Any further, more specific, action guidance derived from the v-rules which falls outside the parameters of the virtue concepts falls, therefore, outside the scope of the v-rules. Any further action guidance derived from the v-rules is to be yielded by practical wisdom but cannot be called v-rules as many of these specifics break away, even linguistically, from the virtue concepts. Hursthouse's emphasis is on the v-rules, and her belief that the v-rules must remain the sole and central mechanism for action guidance, means that she resists moves to identify any derivative content into a further system of 'rules.' Systemizing these details into a schema of rules, within the larger picture of the v-rules, is precisely what I want to do. In doing this, I do not reject the picture of v-rules offered by Hursthouse but rather seek to identify how eudemonistic virtue ethics generates rules beyond those identified by the v-rules. In fact, the action guidance I want to identify is meant to lie within, and act in conjunction with, the Hursthousian schema.

The rules I wish to identify are those specific actions or circumstances which constitute the conditions and parameters entailed by the v-rules and discovered through practical wisdom. These specific charges, which Hursthouse is happy to leave unspecified in favor of a continued focus on the v-rules themselves, form a class of rules *derived* from the v-rules, and which I will call "d-rules."<sup>124</sup>

The relationship between the d-rules and the v-rules can be understood in two ways; as a 'nested relationship' or as a 'corollary relationship.' The nested relationship is best seen by looking at the way that d-rules emerge from the v-rules as a way of

---

<sup>124</sup> I have chosen not to extend the label "v-rule" to these derivative rules (or d-rules), preferring to identify them by a unique name. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the differing nomenclature helps keep clear the division between those aspects of Hursthouse's theory which I follow as she explains them and those aspects and areas where I break away from Hursthouse's account. Secondly, the differing nomenclature is an attempt to respect the adamancy Hursthouse expresses that the v-rules, properly, cannot be extended in the ways I originally hoped. Thus, by coining a different term for these moral rules I can keep the v-rules as Hursthouse intended while adding that which I see as necessary.

clarifying the entailed moral content of the virtue concepts. To see this relationship it is helpful to return to the example of liberality. Beginning with the virtue of liberality, we can derive the v-rules "be liberal" and "be generous." As Aristotle explains, liberality is, in part, marked by gaining (or attempting to gain) money from the proper sources and the illiberal person seeks money through nefarious sources. Thus, practical wisdom tells us that "one should earn money only through the right sources." Here, this entailed claim, which instructs agents as to what they should (or should not) do, is a general instance of a d-rule. "Earn money only through the right sources," as a rule, has no (literal) connection to the virtue of liberality and does not express the moral rule in purely virtue concepts, and therefore cannot be a v-rule. Yet the importance of such a dictum is necessary, and is necessarily entailed, by the Aristotelian concept of liberality. Getting more specific, we can clarify what "right sources" mean. Using Aristotle's assertion that money is to be given in order to benefit others we can conclude that wealth generating schemes which necessarily cause harm to others are wrong and run afoul of the virtue of liberality. Thus, we can iterate the derivative content of the v-rules and, as obvious as this sounds, practical wisdom presents d-rules to agents which forbids the trafficking of heroin and the use of ponzi schemes. Both the trafficking of heroin and the earning of money via pyramid schemes must result in harm being inflicted on the other person in this financial interaction. Here, we can see that v-rule(s) which the virtue of liberality generates, in conjunction with the practical wisdom of the agent, generates further forms of action guidance. In this way the d-rules can be said to be nested within the normative content of the v-rules and the virtues (and virtue concepts), and they express this moral content as a rule.

The other way d-rules can be expressed is as being in a corollary relationship with the v-rules. The existence of wit as a virtue (1128a1) yields the v-rule to (in Aristotle's words) "be a ready-witted person" and the vice of buffoonery yields the v-rule "do not act a fool." These v-rules, which remain tied directly to the virtue concepts of ready-wittedness and foolishness, entail a corollary proposition (and therein a d-rule) that "one must cultivate a proper sense of humor." There is an important distinction between "develop a sense of humor" and "be ready-witted" in that the latter expresses a moral claim in reference to direct virtue concepts while the former does not. Here, the v-rule which is tied to the virtue concept of wit has a non-virtue concept corollary about one's sense of humor. This example helps show how the v-rules' express connection to the virtue concepts give rise to moral claims that extend beyond these virtue concepts yet, through derivation, remain intimately tied to the virtues themselves. Here, d-rules can emerge as conjuncts with the v-rules and can direct agents to the moral necessities entailed by the virtues, virtue concepts, and the v-rules.<sup>125</sup>

In these two ways, both as nested and corollary relationships, the d-rules emerge as a source of action guidance which works in conjunction with v-rules. This identification of d-rules, or at least something akin to the d-rules, as operating within the schema of v-rules is not a foreign idea to Hursthouse. Hursthouse expressly notes the significance of what she calls "mother's-knee rules."<sup>126</sup> These mother's-knee rules, such as 'do not lie' and 'keep promises,' provide concrete action guidance for children and are

---

<sup>125</sup> This corollary relationship between wit, on one hand, and one's sense of humor, on the other, can be further explored by seeing the additional nested relationships of further d-rules that can be employed to not only clarify what qualifies as "a *proper* sense of humor" but also why one is, obviously, forbidden from telling racist jokes. The corollary relation between wit and humor exists alongside the nested relationship of proper humor and a prohibition on racist jokes.

<sup>126</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 39.

given to children as a simplistic moral measure in the early stages of moral education.<sup>127</sup> Hursthouse restricts these knee rules to children as their cognitive ability to "grasp 'act charitably, honestly, and kindly, don't act unjustly,' and so on" seems quite impossible. For these children, these indispensable rules cannot stand alone and their moral explanatory power must be tied to moral education built on the virtue concepts. For Hursthouse, "virtue ethicists want to emphasize the fact that, if children are to be taught to be honest, they must be taught to love and prize truth, and that *merely* teaching them not to lie will not achieve this end."<sup>128</sup> Thus, Hursthouse claims "it is a mistake to define a virtuous agent (and therein virtuous action) as simply one disposed to act in accordance with deontologist's moral rules."<sup>129</sup>

While accepting Hursthouse's point about the moral education of children, I believe that these so-called knee rules can be expanded beyond the education of children and can apply generally to all those actions which agents are instructed regardless of age or mental abilities. It seems that Hursthouse's worry with these knee rules is that, in their seemingly deontological form, that they will, by themselves, be used to define right action, goodness, and virtuousness. But this need not be the case. The d-rules, which seem, in form, to be quite similar to the mother's-knee rules, are only given moral importance as being derived from the v-rules (and therein the virtues and virtues) or acting in conjunction with the v-rules and the virtue concepts. Agents are not made virtuous by merely acting in accord with the d-rules, but the d-rules are adhered to by the virtuous agent. The "indispensability" that Hursthouse identifies in the knee rules is that they are connected to the virtue concepts through moral education. In the same way, the

---

<sup>127</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 38.

<sup>128</sup> Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 39 (emphasis in original).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

d-rules are inherently connected to the virtue concepts through the practical wisdom of the virtuous agent. This is why the d-rules cannot exist outside the moral framework of the v-rules and all that this framework entails. I want to be clear here; I do not believe that the d-rules can be removed from the schema of the v-rules and maintain any sensible moral content for the virtue ethicist. This is why the Hursthouseian framework which begins this chapter is essential. Were one to *simply* or *merely*, to borrow terms from Hursthouse, identify d-rules as consistent with the action guidance found in virtue ethics and then place them center-stage, they would be removing the moral framework of the virtue concepts which act to give these d-rules moral grounding.

### Section 3 - Hard and Soft D-Rules

As of this point, I have argued that the action guidance which v-rules provide must be extended to those actions which can, and must, be derived from the virtue concepts yet remain unteathered to the virtue concepts embodied in the v-rules. These derived rules, or d-rules, which the v-rules make possible operate in differing ways and thus d-rules can be further subdivided into two classes: hard d-rules and soft d-rules.

Definitionally, hard d-rules are those d-rules which guide actions without flexibility and specifically note what agents are, or are not, to do. Soft d-rules on the other hand are those d-rules which, while providing action guidance, are flexible in their implementation and execution and require agents to exercise practical wisdom to determine how and when to act.

A parallel can be drawn between hard and soft d-rules and the perfect and imperfect duties outlined by Kant. Kant, following the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative (which holds that agents are to "act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law") distinguishes between perfect and imperfect duties. Perfect duties are those duties that admit no exception and are therefore to be followed in any and all situations. Imperfect duties, while also categorical in nature (as compared to hypothetical), are those duties which allow for exceptions and are to be fulfilled by agents to the best of their ability. To see this difference at work, we can look to Kant's four examples. Kant claims that the action of suicide to avoid the unpleasantness of life violates a perfect duty to oneself and the perfect nature of this duty means that agents are to, without exception, refrain from acts of suicide.<sup>130</sup> Charity, or the helping of others, is, on the other hand, an imperfect duty such that there are a vast number of exceptions which agents must juggle when deciding how and when to help others in need. The imperfect nature of this duty means that agents can, and should, exercise judgment in determining the appropriateness of appeals for aid from friends and strangers and agents need not universally capitulate to all

---

<sup>130</sup> Kant does return to the example of suicide in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (6:422-6:424) and his account here seems to muddy this water. Here, he raises three "casuistical questions." These questions ask if suicide is permissible in the cases of (1) saving one's country, (2) avoiding an impending death sentence (as Seneca did), and (3) when one is bit by a rabid dog and contracts hydrophobia (as hydrophobia is an incurable disease which erodes one's rationality). In these cases he leaves open the possibility of taking one's life. On the surface, this appears to contradict his identification of suicide as categorically forbidden. Yet, these cases are, in fact, not cases of suicide. Actions in which agents take their own life can be said to be a genus of action, and suicide is a specific species. Suicide, for Kant, is (by definition) the taking of one's own life *for a specific reason*; namely to avoid perceived unpleasantness. Thus, these other actions of the voluntary taking one's own life are different in analytical form, and the prohibition on suicide does not answer these cases. Thus, according to John Atwell, Kant's casuistical questions in no way undermine the categorical nature of the duty to refrain from suicide as "the respective actions are not to be labeled 'suicides.'" John E. Atwell, *Ends and Principles in Kant's Moral Thought* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 79. While Kant's explanation here, or rather the noticeable lack of explanation given by Kant, may be unsatisfactory, it does show that Kant's perfect duty concerning suicide is, to his mind, exceptionless.

cries for assistance. Agents, in these imperfect cases, are commanded to "help others" (or "provide charity"), and therefore cannot universally reject this obligation yet it need not be discharged whenever one is approached for aid. Agents are to use their discretion to determine the best way to effect and implement their charity.

This difference between perfect and imperfect duties is similar to the distinction being introduced here between hard and soft d-rules. Hard d-rules are those rules which obligate agents in a strong sense and admit no exception. Soft d-rules are those rules which must admit exceptions, and it is the practical wisdom of the agent plays a significant role in helping determine when and how the agent is to act in accordance with the v-rules.

Soft d-rules capture many of the ways that the practical path to virtue is, in the Aristotelian sense, meant to unfold. The flexibility, and the latitude to which agents are given for implementation, of soft d-rules fulfill the goals of two of Aristotle's most important examples in Book II. The first is the relative nature of the mean as explained by the example of Milo the wrestler (1106a5), and the second is the analogy of the bent wood in relation to individuals' natural tendencies (1109a30-1109b7). The practical action guidance given to agents concerning temperance, as shown through Milo the wrestler, helps show that the quantities of food which one should consume cannot be mathematically determined. Milo must consume more food (or, to update the example based on contemporary dietary understandings, more calories) than the novice gymnast because his work and life as a wrestler requires this amount of food for the healthy functioning of his body in accordance with his life as a wrestler. Agents, acting under the d-rule to "eat properly," (derived from the v-rules to "remain temperate") are all

instructed in a similar manner and to the same end but the details of this charge are specific to the agent and their particular lifestyles and situations. In conjunction with the example of Milo the wrestler, Aristotle uses the example of straightening bent wood to explain how the natural tendencies of individuals vary from person to person and must be accounted for in different ways amongst individuals seeking virtue. For every individual, there are natural tendencies which pull them towards different vices and these tendencies need to be accounted for when establishing habits for the acquisition of virtue. Keeping with the example of temperance, one individual may see that they are naturally drawn towards eating excessive amounts of junk foods or eating in excess for pleasure while another individual may not suffer from the same tendency towards over-indulgence and may find little to no pleasure at all in eating. For these two individuals, each must come to know their own tendencies. When establishing proper eating habits each must initially err in their consumption past the mean towards that vice which does not come naturally to them. Much like how carpenters must bend wet wood beyond the point of straightness for a period of time in order to overcome the warped and bowed nature of the lumber, individuals must attune themselves to the naturally bent nature of their individuated desires in order to arrive, in the end, at the relative mean.<sup>131</sup> Both the bent wood analogy and the example of Milo the wrestler indicate the important ways that the practical paths to virtue must be, to a degree, individuated and relative to individual pursuits. It is the

---

<sup>131</sup> Aristotle's example of the bent wood also carries with it a second point. For Aristotle, natural tendencies are both individuated and universal. This means that there are some natural tendencies unique to individuals and other natural tendencies which all people, in virtue of their humanity, possess. This second sort of natural tendency, which I have not explained here, simply holds that between the two vices related to a specific virtue one is more erroneous. The more erroneous vice between the two is that vice which all people are naturally drawn to and which is harder to escape. While I only focus on the way this example is applied in individual cases, it should be noted that this example has this equally important second aspect.

flexibility in implementation that guides agents in accordance with soft d-rules. The soft d-rule which guides agents in their eating habits for the acquisition of temperance is intentionally flexible. This flexibility in the d-rule(s) allows agents latitude to encompass and accommodate their natural tendencies such that they can act in accordance with the v-rule(s) under the specifics of individuated and personal details.

Hard d-rules, on the other hand, lack flexibility and the action guidance provided by these rules leaves no room for variation between individuals. In the most obvious cases, hard d-rules come in the form of universal prohibitions. Most will agree that, regardless of the moral framework in which one is working, there are many actions (or courses of actions) which must be categorically prohibited. These categorical prohibitions, while most often associated with certain juridical moral theories such as deontology and divine command theory, are also found in virtue ethics. Aristotle expressly notes the existence of these sort of universal prohibitions. In the *NE*, immediately after defining moral virtue as operating by the doctrine of the mean and elaborating what constitutes the conditions and parameters of 'the mean,' Aristotle notes that there are some actions which do not, nor cannot, admit of a mean. He characterizes these actions as morally wrong "however they are done" (1107a24), and notes that it "is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to [these actions]... [as they] must always be wrong" (1107a13-14). For Aristotle, these actions are universally forbidden and, to return and borrow the language of Kant, are prohibited without exception. The specific actions listed here by Aristotle are "adultery, theft, [and] murder" (1107a11). Aristotle returns to this idea later in the text and reiterates his claims that adultery, theft and murder are all categorically prohibited actions and expands this list to include the actions

of "poisoning, enticement of slaves, assassination, false witness... robbery with violence, [and] mutilation" (1131a6-9). It would seem that this expanding list of universally prohibited actions is not presented as an exhaustive or definitive list. There are many actions which virtue ethics must prohibit without exception.

To help explain these lists of categorically prohibited actions, Aristotle specifically elaborates on the example of adultery. When one evaluates the act of adultery they need not consider whether the act was committed "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way" (1106b21) as the act itself admits none of these conditions.<sup>132</sup> This means that the moral wrong found in adultery is not due to choosing the wrong person with which to engage in an adulterous affair (such as choosing one married person over another to sleep with because one lives closer to you and therefore will require you to drive less and therefore contribute less harmful carbon emissions during the course of the affair), or engaging in adultery in inappropriate locations (such as in a marital bed as compared to a cheap motel), or performing adulterous acts for the sake of nefarious motives beyond lust (such as out of spite). None of these considerations contribute or explain the badness of the act of adultery. The baseness of adultery is in the action itself. In this way, Aristotle proclaims adulterous acts to be intrinsically wrong.

Corresponding to this account of adultery's intrinsic badness, virtue ethics can be said to generate a strong prohibitive d-rule, namely "do not commit adultery," which instructs agents how they are to act. This strong d-rule, as it instructs agents without

---

<sup>132</sup> Aristotle reiterates these criteria for the mean, in various formulations, on a number of occasions (see 1109a27-28, 1115b16, 1126a6 to name a few). By the end of Book II, Chapter 5, this list is, to Aristotle's mind, adequately repeated enough to warrant a "and so on" after again identifying the "right things [and] in the right way" (1126b7). What this shows is that it should be, by this point in the *NE*, obvious what constitutes the varied conditions of the mean and continued repetition is unnecessary.

exception or flexibility, is a hard d-rule. For each of the acts Aristotle lists as categorically prohibited, agents are presented with hard d-rules which demand strict exceptionless compliance. Given Aristotle's list of universally prohibited actions, agents are presented with a myriad of hard d-rules which include "do not murder," "do not plot or carry-out assassinations," "do not bear false witness," and, "do not engage in acts of mutilation."

What is noticeably missing from Aristotle's account of universally prohibited actions, and therein the source of many of the hard v-rules, is an explanation of why these actions must be categorically prohibited. Aristotle's proclamation that certain actions do not admit a mean, and his subsequent analysis of the example of adultery, may sound convincing but it, by itself, does not explain why these actions must be categorically forbidden. The examples listed by Aristotle coincide with commonly held beliefs regarding the badness of murder, adultery, theft, and assassination but, our willingness to acquiesce to these obvious moral maxims does not explain why, for Aristotle, these actions are intrinsically wrong.

It might appear that Aristotle's claim that these actions "do not admit of a mean" is why they cannot be schematized (and therefore evaluated) as part of virtue, but surely this cannot be the source of their badness. Some of the listed actions and feelings given here by Aristotle *could* be said to admit a mean. A severely egoistic account of virtue might justify theft on the grounds that individuals ought to secure goods for themselves at all costs, and a system of virtue constructed on notions of the total depravity of human beings (as derived from most stringent strands of Calvinist theology) might cast shame as a desirable state when moderated with constant atonement. Accounts of virtue such as

these should, I hope, sound unappealing, but their possibility shows that the intrinsic badness of these actions and feeling are not *a priori* and the normative force behind the associated hard v-rule requires theoretical structures to motivate our understanding of their universal prohibition.

Returning, briefly, to Kant, we can see how other moral theories can give normative force to similar categorical prohibitions. Kant's proceduralist structure allows for the grounding of differing types of duties and gives normative force to both imperfect and perfect duties as different, yet related, failures of law. For Kant, the failure of maxims to conform to "law as such" denies their inclusion within the sphere of acceptable actions since voluntary human action must conform to the "form of law itself" to be a candidate for human moral decision making (4:402).<sup>133</sup> When maxims fail to conform to law-like structure, by failing the test outlined in the Universal Law Formulation of the Categorical Imperative, the actions are normatively prohibited. Potential actions, expressed as maxims, can fail this "test" (i.e.: generate contradictions) in a multitude of ways and the differences in failures creates differences in types of duties. Kant briefly notes this important distinction after explicitly working through the cases of suicide, selfishness, sloth, and lying. While each of these cases admits a contradiction, the nature of their contradictions differ. In the cases of lying and suicide, "[the actions] are so constituted that their maxim cannot even be *thought* without contradiction as a universal law of nature, far less could one *will* that it *should* become such" (4:424, emphasis in original).<sup>134</sup> In the cases of sloth and selfishness, the maxims can be conceptualized as universal laws but "it is still impossible to *will* that their maxim

---

<sup>133</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

be raised to the universality of a law of nature” (4:424, emphasis in original).<sup>135</sup> These two types of contradictions, being contradictions in the maxim and contradictions in the will, generate the two types of duties, perfect and imperfect.<sup>136</sup> Contradictions in the maxim generate perfect duties and contradictions in the will generate imperfect duties. Kant can, using this schema, provide an account of categorical prohibitions which come in the form of perfect duties and can do so by employing his procedural account of logical consistency. It is the inability of the maxims to even sensibly be conceptualized as universal law which makes them bad and allows for their prohibition in a system which demands law-like form.

While fine and well for those who are inclined to deontology, such an analysis is unavailable to Aristotle and virtue ethicists. Aristotle cannot rely on a logical testing mechanism to motivate his categorical prohibitions as his moral theory is free of such proceduralist underpinnings and does not rely on analytic conceptions of law-as-such. So how does Aristotle ground such claims?

In Book II, where Aristotle initially discusses these intrinsically bad actions, he does not see the need to explain why these actions in particular, or even in general, must be forbidden. These actions are simply decried and it appears that Aristotle believed that their intrinsic badness was simply obvious. This alone does not explain *why* it is that these actions must be categorically prohibited (and therein governed by unwavering hard

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> For a full explanation and schematization of these contradictions see Onora O'Neill's "Consistency in Action," in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

d-rules).<sup>137</sup> Thus we must look beyond this preliminary account presented in Book II in order to find the foundations for the intrinsic badness of these actions.

Turning to Book V, Chapter 2, where Aristotle returns to this discussion of categorically prohibited action, we can begin to see the roots of his argument. Here in Book V, Aristotle restructures the discussion of these prohibited actions around the nature of injustice. Here Aristotle explores two different ways people can be said to be unjust. In one sense, a person can be said to be unjust when they lack the specific virtue of justice. In this sense, an individual's actions can be called unjust when they are the actions which embody the specific vice of injustice *qua* that which is "contrary to the law" (1130a23). In a second sense, individuals are called unjust when their actions (and presumably their character) exhibit "other forms of wickedness" beyond the specific virtue of justice (1130a18). Here, we can call someone unjust in a general sense meaning that they are one who lacks virtues of various kinds (beyond merely the virtue of justice) and is not, therefore, the virtuous agent. To illustrate this point, Aristotle (re)turns to

---

<sup>137</sup> While most everyone agrees that adultery is an obvious case of an intrinsic wrong it should be noted that there are dissenters from this view. The most notable is Joseph Fletcher. See his *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Westminster Press, 1966). Fletcher, as a situation ethicist, argues that there can be no universal prohibitions in ethics as all ethical rules have exceptions. Specifically in reference to adultery, Fletcher presents a real-life case of so-called "sacrificial adultery" (p. 164). The case relates the supposedly true story of an imprisoned civilian during World War II named Mrs. Bergmeier. Bergmeier was captured by the Russian Army and, before being able to get word to her family, taken to a prison camp in the Ukraine. Her husband, after being released from a POW camp in Wales, returned to Germany and was reunited with his three children. Mrs. Bergmeier's whereabouts were unknown to her family and the family searched in vain to locate her. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bergmeier learned through a sympathetic commandant that her family had been reunited in Berlin but did not know her whereabouts and were in a "dire situation of hunger, chaos, and fear" (p. 165). As per camp rules, prisoners would only be released from the camp under two conditions. The first was in the event of an illness which required medical attention beyond the camp's facilities (in which case the prisoner would be transferred to a hospital in Russia). The second case was in the event of pregnancy (in which case the prisoner would be released and sent back to Germany as pregnancy was labeled "a liability"). Mrs. Bergmeier convinced a "friendly" camp guard to impregnate her, and through the pregnancy was able to secure release from the camp, travel back to Germany, and be reunited with her family. Fletcher concludes this case with two rhetorical questions: "Should they [the Bergmeiers] be grateful to the Volga German?" and "Had Mrs. Bergmeier done a good and right thing?" (ibid). For Fletcher, the obvious answer to these questions is an unequivocal "yes" and therefore, for Fletcher, this case shows that even adultery has exceptions.

adultery. He claims, "If one man commits adultery for the sake of gain and makes money by it, while another does so at the bidding of appetite though he loses money and is penalized for it, the latter would be held to be self-indulgent rather than grasping, but the former is unjust, but not self-indulgent" (1130a24-28). In this example the adulterous acts of the two men relate to different virtues. The first case of adultery is, as odd as it sounds, a failure of liberality. This man, in his adultery, exhibits unjust "graspy-ness" as he is using the adulterous acts (somehow) as an avenue for unjust financial gain. Clearly such attempts violate the "right source" criteria detailed in Aristotle's discussion of liberality (1120a32). The second man's adulterous actions are motivated by self-indulgence and are not a failure of liberality but a failure of temperance. It is this second case that captures the archetype of the cheating partner as one who is driven by uncontrollable lust and sexual desire into seeking sexual gratification beyond the confines of their avowed monogamous relationship. While both men are adulterous, and both are unjust, they differ in their moral failures.

Drawing from this discussion, we can see that Aristotle's account of adulterous actions, while possibly running afoul of many different virtues based upon the feelings, desires, and aims of the adulterous agent, will always be base. The intrinsically bad nature of the action of adultery stems from the fact that it will always, and in every instance, exhibit a vice and demonstrate the viciousness of the acting agent. While the vice exhibited may vary between agents, the action will always indicate the presence of some sort of viciousness. Moving beyond adultery, similar examples can be found surrounding each of the actions Aristotle lists as categorically prohibited. One may murder another for financial gain (and fail miserably and horribly in respect to their

liberality) or out of rage (and therefore fail miserably in respect to good-temperedness), but both are necessarily vicious. For each of the actions Aristotle identifies as "intrinsically bad," utter and inescapable moral failure must be the result of their performance.

It is here that we can understand Aristotle's argument for the categorically prohibited nature of these actions. It is not the case that these actions, whose badness Aristotle initially claims is indicated by their name alone, are morally condemned by either (a) an axiomatic *a priori* claim, or, (b) by the near universal agreement people share that these actions must be obviously immoral. These actions are prohibited because they are, whenever they are performed and under all circumstances, indications of severe moral failure (i.e.: viciousness) and must be actions which when undertaken necessarily prohibit agents from achieving virtue.

This understanding provides not only the necessary moral argumentation to support Aristotle's assertions that there are universally prohibited actions, but provides the normative force for hard v-rules. Hard v-rules provide strict action guidance in situations where the performance of an act (or a course of action) necessarily results in either the inability to acquire virtue or a loss of virtue. In conjunction with virtue as necessary for the achievement of flourishing, we can say that hard d-rules govern those things which necessarily act as barriers for the achievement of flourishing.

Since hard d-rules govern those things which necessarily prohibit virtue and flourishing, we can see how Aristotle's enumerated list of exceptionless actions (or inactions) is not exhaustive. In addition to murder, adultery, et al. it is possible to expand this quite minimal list to other actions which, like those listed by Aristotle, are

government by hard d-rules. To Aristotle's list we can add, for example, further prohibitions on the sexual abuse of children (expressed in the, obvious, hard d-rule "do not interact sexually with children") and use of human slaves ("do not traffic human beings"). Like adultery and murder, both the trafficking of humans and the performance of sexual acts with children admit no mean, always violates the specific criteria of virtue, and always indicates wickedly evil states of character which necessarily prohibits flourishing.

At this point, it seems wise to pause take stock of what we have and look at how the general argument presented here has proceeded. V-rules, *writ large*, provide the necessary action guidance needed in virtue ethics. The v-rules are understood and clarified though the use of practical wisdom. While Hursthouse leaves these specifics unsystematized (relying on the mechanism of practical wisdom to yield further needed details), I have introduced the concept of d-rules to help explain and systematize this derivative content. The d-rules, which are given by the v-rules, range quite widely in their flexibility and specificity and can be said to emerge from all aspects of virtue theory. It is into this conception of d-rules that I have introduced the categories of hard and soft. Soft d-rules are those rules which instruct agents with flexibility and latitude and which can only find implementation through an agent's use of practical wisdom to determine the details of their dischargement. Hard d-rules, on the other hand, are those rules which guide agents without flexibility and strongly obligate agents to specific courses of action without latitude.

Of specific interest here is the workings of hard d-rules. To explain hard d-rules, and see how and when they obtain, one can look to the categorically prohibited actions

enumerated by Aristotle. The paradigmatic examples of hard d-rules then become those actions which virtue ethics sees as categorically prohibited. When looking at these actions, and understanding why it is that they must be categorically prohibited, we see that the performance of these actions (in any and all circumstances) must necessarily indicate a vicious character. Beyond indicating the state of one's character, the presence of these actions in one's life denies the possibility of virtuous development. One cannot develop virtue, or be said to be working towards flourishing, with these actions in their life. In this way, virtue ethics differs from other moral theories (such as deontology) in its assessment of these sort of actions in that the moral failure found here is a direct result of the way these actions necessarily limit the availability of flourishing. It is here that the core of the argument is found: virtue ethics must categorically prohibit that which denies flourishing. This categorical prohibition is then expressed as a hard d-rule.

While these hard d-rules are easiest to understand in reference to Aristotle's list of intrinsically bad acts, they apply more broadly to this moral core of that which necessarily prohibits flourishing. It is here that the discussion of oppression reemerges. As shown in chapter two, when the reality of oppression is taken seriously within the virtue ethical framework one comes to see oppression as uniquely crippling and harmful as it necessarily limits the availability of flourishing for the oppressed. If hard d-rules generate strong prohibitions on those things which limit the availability of virtue or flourishing, and oppression acts to limit, if not eliminate, the possibility of flourishing and virtue for the oppressed, then virtue ethics must advance strong prohibitions, in the form of d-rules, concerning oppression.

## Section 4 - V-rules, D-rules, Oppression, and Resistance

The strong rules which virtue ethics generates regarding oppression can be seen as emerging in three distinct ways; the first concerns one's ability to oppress others, the second concerns the oppression that an individual experiences directly as an oppressed person, and the third concerns oppression that is leveled against others where the agent experiences no direct first-hand effect of the oppression. In each of these three ways, the d-rule concerning oppression levels strong condemnation against the oppressive force(s) and advances a definite schema of action guidance in the face of oppression. In what follows I would like to explore each of the three ways the d-rule concerning oppression manifests and chronicle the action guidance that the d-rule prescribes.

### A. The Oppression of Others

Turning first to the most obvious case, we can see that the hard d-rule concerning oppression manifests, in the most simple way, as a strong prohibition on the oppression others. As obvious as this sounds, virtue ethics must prohibit the oppression of others as actively oppressing others violates, in egregious ways, the ways that we are required to treat others. In short, the hard d-rule concerning the oppression of others manifests as the simple dictum, "do not oppress others."

While obvious, what is of interest here is the limited scope of this prohibition. This hard d-rule concerning the oppression of others cannot be understood as prohibiting any and all participation in oppressive systems and structures, as participation in

oppression, as either the oppressor or the oppressed, is, for the most part, unchosen. As argued for in chapter one, agents do not choose to be oppressed, and all those who benefit from oppression's existence are not voluntary beneficiaries. The involuntary and unearned social and economic benefits of privilege, which manifests through the oppression of others, cannot be merely shaken off or denied by the privileged. Peggy McIntosh, in her work on white privilege and male privilege, describes privilege as:

... an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, code-books, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.<sup>138</sup>

This imagery of the invisible weightless knapsack seems particularly apropos here. Even when one comes to see the privilege they have (be it white privilege, heteronormative privilege, class privilege, or male privilege), this knapsack of assets is still carried and "cashed in." Individuals of privileged classes or groups, through their actions reinforce the privileges they have been granted.

Thus, this first instantiation of the hard d-rule concerning oppression, which unwaveringly and steadfastly prohibits the oppression of others, is, in reality, limited in its application to those who actively promote, champion, and consciously advance oppressive structures and systems, and herein lies the irony. Those whose actions and beliefs violate this moral dictum are precisely those individuals who are unresponsive to moral arguments of this nature. White nationalists, defenders of capitalist exploitation, avowed misogynists, and anti-queer activists and politicians all run afoul of this obvious

---

<sup>138</sup> Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Working In Women's Studies," in *Race, Class and Gender: an Anthology (Third Edition)*, eds. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (Wadsworth Publishing, 1998), 94-95.

moral rule yet are exactly the people who are unswayed by moral arguments condemning oppression. Thus, on this first level, the hard d-rule which categorically prohibits one from oppressing others is quite limited, as is my treatment of this topic. The focus of this project, and that which is worthy of any time or consideration, is not the actions of the unrepentant oppressor, but rather the oppressed who, by this same hard d-rule, are instructed and guided towards resistance and liberation.

### B. Resisting Oppression in One's Own Life

The d-rule concerning oppression manifests as a need for resistance when individuals find themselves the victim of oppression and oppressive structures. Oppressed individuals, who have their avenues to flourishing limited by oppression, face no other viable options than resistance when confronted with their enslavement. For the oppressed not to resist and struggle against the oppression they face, or to acquiesce to oppressive forces, is to accept that the highest human good of flourishing and happiness are goals that ought not be made available to oneself. In this way, the oppressed agent who simply accepts and submits to their oppression also accepts a withered and emaciated view of their personhood.

It is in this arena, where one is the direct victim of oppression, that the demands of resistance are experienced the strongest. Virtue ethics instructs agents to engage in active struggle against oppression when their flourishing is hindered or prohibited under the weight of oppressive structures and forces. It is the direct experience of oppression that makes the need for resistance necessary, and the normative force of the moral

imperative for resistance is most clearly experienced by those who are oppressed. While the moral obligation to engage in resistance is most tangible in the experience of the oppressed we must be careful not to describe this palpability in the language of "wanting" or "desire." It is all too easy to describe the necessity of resistance as what oppressed agents should necessary "want to do" and here we need to be warned against such attempts. Tessman has, excellently, chronicled the heavy costs that accompany a commitment to resisting oppression, and these burdens show why the oppressed should not see the need for resistance as something they would want to do, all things being equal, but rather the appropriate and often regrettable necessity given their experience of oppression.

Committing one's self to resistance carries with it heavy burdens which cannot be brushed aside quickly or accepted without understanding the harmful effects of resisting oppression. One obvious burden that resistance bears is a threat to one's health and, in many cases, one's very life. A commitment to combating oppression will be met with vehement opposition and the lengths to which the oppressing class will go to ensure the continued existence of the status quo cannot be understated. Many (like Judi Bari<sup>139</sup> and Frank Little<sup>140</sup>) have become the victims of the overt violence used in service of

---

<sup>139</sup> Judi Bari was an American radical who devoted much of her life to labor organizing, feminist consciousness raising, and environmental activism. Bari is most well-known for her work organizing direct-action campaigns against timber companies logging the redwood forests of Northern California. In 1990, Bari and her Earth First! compatriot Darryl Cherney were victims of a car bomb in Oakland, CA. While luckily escaping with their lives, the car bomb planted in their vehicle left Bari in critical condition with a shattered pelvis and numerous serious internal injuries. Bari had long been the source of death threats relating to her activism.

<sup>140</sup> Frank Little was a anti-war activist and union organizer who was, during an organizing campaign at a copper mine in Butte, Montana in 1917, lynched by Pinkerton agents on behalf of the mine's owners. Little was beaten and then dragged from his hotel room to a railroad trestle outside town where he was hung. Pinned to his jacket were the numbers '3-7-77,' which was a common warning sign used by vigilante lynch mobs of the period to warn other would-be agitators that similar actions of resistance would be met with similar deadly results. In a disgusting and lasting display of the oppressive violence

oppression's defense. For the oppressed, the need to struggle against oppression can carry with it a physical cost which one should not accept lightly.

In addition to the threats to one's health and existence that the resistance fighter will likely face, the decision to address, head-on, the oppressive structures and forces that limits one's flourishing may create prolonged circumstances of emotional and psychological harm. In her treatment of resistance, Tessman pays special attention to the emotional burden that resistance carries with it. The development of, in Tessman's words, the "politically resistant self" requires the development of certain otherwise harmful and unwanted emotional states. Tessman recounts,

I remember discovering how difficult it can be to harden oneself against sympathetic responses to an oppressor, a discovery that was tied to my reading for the first time Alexander Berkman's account of his attempt to assassinate Henry Frick during the Homestead strike against Carnegie Steel in 1892.<sup>141</sup> Upon reading the details of the attempted assassination, I chastised myself for involuntarily cringing in pain - as a sympathetic response on behalf of Frick, who was injured but not killed and whose fear, as described by Berkman, made me want to comfort rather than attack him - a response that, at the time, I believed diminished my capacity to act as a true resister, for Frick was clearly one of the "bad guys."<sup>142</sup>

For many, including Tessman at this time, the revolutionary attitude developed by those committed to resisting oppression may call for the abandonment of certain emotional disposition that many might be rightly reluctant to jettison. The resistance fighter must cultivate a level of emotional detachment towards their oppressors and this seems to undercut the otherwise moral goods of sympathy, empathy, and kindness.

---

used against Little and other union organizers of the time, these numbers, as a signal of the quite real threat of continued lynchings, are, to this day, proudly emblazoned on the uniforms of all Montana State Troopers.

<sup>141</sup> Henry Frick was an American industrialist and the chairman of Carnegie Steel. Frick, well-known for his anti-union actions and his belief that unionists ought to be outright killed, orchestrated the murder of nine striking steel workers during the Homestead Strike of 1892.

<sup>142</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 116.

Resistance, and the fortitude and commitment that active resistance requires, seems to stand at odds with the emotional and psychological development which virtue ethics insists are central to the moral project of life. For Tessman, the resistance fighter might come to resent the person that they become once they embrace a commitment to combat oppression.

Worries about this emotional and psychological burden are perfectly natural and the moral worries here are especially troublesome to the virtue ethicist. The costs that Tessman chronicles which the resisting agent must bear are quite real, but I do believe these burdens need to be contextualized. First, it is essential to see that the moral harms of becoming a "politically resistant self" cannot be weighed against a fictionalized self where emotional and psychological are otherwise nonexistent. It is not the case that the burdens of resistance can be considered against the possibility of a state where one can avoid emotional and psychological burdens. For the oppressed agent who embraces the need engage in resistance, and understands that this commitment may carry with it significant moral baggage, does so under the already existent burdens of oppression. The oppressed agent is obligated to resistance by the harmful effects of oppression and therefore is not being asked to accept the harmful effects of resistance over a possible state in which these harms fails to exist. Secondly, it might seem that the emotional and psychological burdens of resistance would lead to a cascading effect where the cultivation of the politically resistant self leads an agent to experience a lack of sympathy, empathy, or kindness to those they should love. While a very legitimate worry, and a potential harm that the resisting agent must understand, I see no reason that this slippery slope argument necessarily ends in complete moral ruin. The resisting

agent, like all agents, must properly cultivate their emotional responses and in no way does becoming the politically resistant self demand that agents dive headlong into emotional commitments without concern for their effects on others. In fact, becoming the politically resistant self demands that the resistor be constantly mindful of these potential harms and work to keep these harms at bay.

In the end, Tessman's strong worries about the burdens of resistance remain, although these worries must be understood against the backdrop of oppression's harms. This then returns us back to the warning of expressing the normative force of the d-rule regarding resistance as a form of "wanting." To describe this impulse as a "desire" or a "want" runs the risk of white-washing the tremendous harms and costs that becoming a political resister carries with it. Failing to see the heavy moral burdens that resistance entails means that the gleeful activist, or the person who enters the life of political resistance with reckless abandon and a willful spirit, must be either acting in ignorance, or merely play-acting the revolutionary spirit. For Tessman, these weighty moral burdens ought to yield a politically resisting agent that sees that "there is no glory in resistance to injustice, just a sad and regretful recognition of its necessity."<sup>143</sup>

### C. Resisting the Oppression of Others

On what ground can we be said to have an obligation to engage in active resistance when it is not ourselves who are oppressed but others? While the need to resist oppression in our own lives can be grounded in the need to struggle against those barriers which deny our ability to flourish, the need to engage in active resistance struggles on

---

<sup>143</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 131.

behalf of others who are oppressed is not so clear. While doing so seems quite noble, engaging in such actions might seem to verge on the supererogatory as the harms being perpetrated in the lives of others do not, in principle, limit our ability to flourish. After all, the achievement of virtue is a demanding task and requiring one to struggle on behalf of others and their attempts to flourish only increases the demandingness of the moral life.

This query takes us headlong into the question of virtue ethics' perceived self-centeredness. Thomas Nagel charges that Aristotelian virtue ethics "is wrong" because it fails to account for the way that "moral requirements have their source in the claims of other persons" and these "moral claims cannot be strictly limited by their capacity to be accommodated within a good individual life."<sup>144</sup> In a similar vein, David Solomon summarizes the self-centeredness objection when he writes:

The thought behind such claims seems to be that for classical virtue theorists, it is rational for an agent to acquire the virtues only insofar as it is a good for that agent that he or she acquire them. But if the rationality of virtue acquisition is thus grounded in the needs of the agent, so the argument goes, the needs, wants, and desires of others have, from the point of view of morality, an insufficiently prominent status.<sup>145</sup>

Such arguments will not sound unfamiliar to defenders of virtue ethics. While the claim that Aristotelian virtue ethics is egoistic is patently false (and overtly dismissed by Aristotle), Aristotelian virtue ethics does rely upon on the properly understood concept of 'self-love.' It is this reliance on self-love, as the love of the virtue that one possesses, that might lead some to believe that resisting on behalf of others must take a backseat to an individual's pursuit of the virtuous life. According to this view, while agents must resist

---

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Nagel, *A View from Nowhere* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 197.

<sup>145</sup> David Solomon, "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (1988), 432.

oppression in their lives as it limits their flourishing, the oppression of others becomes only a secondary moral possibility and only rises to the level of moral concern when the oppression of others affects oneself. It is this view I reject, and it will be argued that our obligation to engage in resistance struggles against oppression ought to occur whenever oppression is present; be that in our own lives or in the lives of others.

Let us turn first to Aristotle's rejection of radical self-centeredness, as it is through this argument that one can see how the ethical demands of resistance obligate agents when others are oppressed. Aristotle's conception of self-love, and therein his rejection of egoism, is developed in his account of friendship in Book IX. Here, Aristotle distinguishes between two types of self-lovers. The first is the self-lover as understood colloquially. This self-loving agent is one who "assign[s] to themselves the greater share of wealth, honor, and bodily pleasures" and does so because money, social esteem, and pleasure are what they "desire most" and what they consider to be "the best of all things" (1168b15-19). While commonly called a self-lover, Aristotle openly criticizes this ultimately self-serving person as viciously graspy. For Aristotle, these people are those "who are grasping with regard to these things [in order to] gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the irrational element of the soul" (1168b19-22). For Aristotle, these self-seeking agents are lovers of self in a way that is reproachful and blameworthy. While Aristotle criticizes this common-place understanding of self-love, he certainly maintains that proper self-love is central to an understanding of virtue. The second type of self-lover described by Aristotle is "most truly a lover of self, of another type" (1169a4-5). This self-lover acts for the sake of her friends and her country, even going so far as sacrificing her life if necessary (1169a19). Further, this self-lover willingly

jettisons wealth, goods, and even social standing in order to gain nobility and do what is fine (1169a21). Here, the self-lover is not wedded to merely accumulating these goods as perceived ends in themselves but rather understands that these goods can be won and lost in service of true happiness and moral goodness. Here, the self-lover seeks that which is truly good and it is this agent, motivated by virtue, that we must see as a true self-lover as they work, sometimes even to their temporary detriment, in service of virtue. Aristotle concludes this picture of 'proper self-love' by saying "In this sense, then, as has been said, a man should be a lover of self; but in the sense in which most men are so, he ought not" (1169a1-2).

While Aristotle's outright rejection of egoism denies that the self-love found in the virtuous life must be seen as some form of "other-disregarding" (as advanced by certain noxious strands of neo-Randian "virtue" ethics), it also seems that it might advance a picture of virtue which ultimately privileges one's own pursuits over the pursuits of others. Christopher Toner summarizes this view as the belief that "concern for others can be seen secondary to or conditional upon achieving one's own central goals [for virtue and flourishing]."<sup>146</sup> Here it might be tempting to advance an argument regarding oppression along the following lines: when others are oppressed the damage done to their character comes to affect non-oppressed individuals such that the oppression indirectly affects the availability to flourish even when one is not the direct victim of oppression. An argument such as this makes the oppression of others the indirect problem of the non-oppressed. Their oppression comes to affect me, and therefore their oppression is of direct moral concern to me and my pursuit of flourishing. While

---

<sup>146</sup> Christopher Toner, "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics," *Philosophy* 81, no. 4 (2006), 598.

capturing Aristotle's claims that others, like goods, are instrumentally necessary for the achievement of the good life (1155a5-30), an argument such as this cannot ultimately ground our obligation to resist oppression when the oppression is found in the lives of others as it too fails to properly account for the Aristotelian conception of self-love.

To see the full scope of Aristotle's account of self-love one must see that this specific argument defending self-love comes as a lynch-pin of sorts in a longer protracted argument presented in his account of friendship. To trace the roots of Aristotle's argument for self-love, we must turn back to the outset of Book VIII. Here, Aristotle identifies "the objects of love." It is from the objects of love that Aristotle's schema for friendship emerges, and it is from his views on friendship that self-love emerges and does so as a paradoxical form of friendship. It is only by taking stock of this entire argumentative chain, that we can see how and why the virtuous self-lover cannot compartmentalize their response to oppression into delineated categories of 'self' and 'other.'

Aristotle identifies three rough categories of loved objects; the useful, the pleasant, and the good (1155b18). Agents may love something do to its ability to achieve goals (and are therefore loved due to their relative utility), or due to the way an object causes pleasure for the agent, or because something is, itself, good. When we love others, and find these object of love in persons, we delineate these relationships as corresponding types of friendships. Thus, when agents love the usefulness of another they engage in a friendship of utility, when agents take pleasure from another they engage in friendships of pleasure, and when agents find goodness in another they partake

in the complete friendship. In this way, friendships identify the domain where the object of love relates to persons.

After denying that friendship is merely manifest goodwill (Book IX, Chapter 5) or simple concord/unanimity (Book IX, Chapter 6), Aristotle raises a seeming paradox that emerges from his account of the complete friendship (Book IX, Chapter 8). Here, it appears that his conception of the friendship between two virtuous persons (i.e. the complete friendship) oddly necessitates that virtuous agents to forsake their friendships for the sake of their own self-love. This odd argumentative consequence can be called "the paradox of the complete friendship." The paradox is as follows.

1. A complete friendship requires motivational displacement. (In a complete friendship, the individuals in the friendship love each other for reasons beyond usefulness or pleasure.)
2. Between all the friendships that one has, the one that should be most loved is the best friendship with the best friend. ("One ought to love best one's best friend" (1168b1).)
3. What marks a friend as a best friend is "one who wishes well to the object of his wish for his sake, even if no one is to know of it" (1168b2). (A best friend is, in Irwin's words, the "friend who is most a friend.")
4. Oddly enough, "all of these marks [of a best friendship] will be found most in a [person's] relation to [themselves]" (1168b8).
5. Therefore, "[one] is [their] own best friend and therefore ought to love [them]self the most" (1168b9).

It is the conclusion (5) which generates the paradox and the contradiction. It is only through truly loving the goodness of another that virtuous friendship can be described, yet this same mechanism leaves the virtuous agent ultimately loving herself above all else. The paradox rests upon premise (1) (requiring motivational displacement in complete friendships) being in contradiction with the conclusion drawn in premise (5). One cannot, after all, be motivationally displaced for themselves.

It is in response to this apparent paradox that Aristotle's discussion of self-love emerges. Aristotle's answer to this seemingly difficult problem accepts the principle of self-love yet reinterprets self-love in a way which is compatible with motivational displacement. The properly self-loving agent does not love *themselves as virtuous*, but rather loves *the virtue* they possess. The only type of self-love that yields a contradiction in such an argument is that of the egoist, and thus, as noted above, Aristotle dismisses and chides the egoist as being wedded to a conception of self-love which "is a bad one" (1168b23). The self-love of the virtuous agent, when understood in the above mentioned way, allows agents to maintain motivational displacement in that they are motivated not by self gain but for goodness itself. The virtuous agent is motivated by goodness itself, whether it be found in herself or in the person of another. This conclusion harks back to the beginning of Book VIII where Aristotle identifies the objects of love. That which is loved by the virtuous agent is goodness itself.

Aside from clarifying the role of self-love in Aristotle's ethics, this allows us to grasp the nature of the obligation to resist oppression when oppression is found in the lives of others. If oppression is a barrier to flourishing, virtue, and goodness, and the virtuous person loves the good itself (and draws motivation from this love), then the good person must detest prohibitions of goodness *qua goodness itself*. The virtuous agent's love of goodness does not distinguish between the goodness of one's self and the goodness of others, and further draws no sharp divide between restrictions on goodness whether in their own life or in the lives of others. When one properly experiences self-love, as the virtuous agent does, they do not love their virtue, but rather *virtue*. The virtuous agent does not covet their flourishing, but loves *flourishing*. Thus, oppression's

harms, as barriers to flourishing, are targeted by the virtuous agent as an obstacle to the good in itself. For one to accept the oppression of others, or sharply delineate this as distinct from their love of the good, is to fail in the love of goodness itself. In the face of oppression, the virtuous agent's love of goodness, as achieved in flourishing, cannot be restrained or compartmentalized without leaving said agent loving only some goodness; namely the goodness fortunately available to them. Thus, the virtuous agent must respond to all oppression with acts resistance and must develop a continued commitment to combating oppression and its harmful effects regardless of who is directly affected by these harms.

## Section 5 - Conclusion

This chapter works to establish the obligatory nature of resistance to oppression as understood by virtue ethics. To this end, the chapter began with Hursthouse's conception of the v-rules, as it is in the v-rules that one can find the groundwork for virtue's schema for action guidance. While the v-rules work to outline the general course of action agents must follow in order to acquire the virtues, they actively leave much of the actual concrete action determination up to the practical wisdom of the agent. It was argued here that the v-rules entail a vast set of entailed claims, which diverge from the virtue concepts of the v-rules, and these claims can be further schematized into a system of d-rules. The d-rules further guide agents in the process of action determination and can be subdivided into the categories of hard and soft. The soft d-rules, mirroring Kant's imperfect duties, guide agents with flexibility and latitude, while the hard d-rules guide agents in

exceptionless cases which relate to those things which necessarily prohibit flourishing. Drawing from Aristotle's understanding of categorically prohibited actions, the hard d-rules present as strong obligations.

With an understanding of the v-rules and d-rules in place, an understanding of our response to oppression begins to emerge. As shown in chapter two, oppression acts as a barrier to flourishing and the existence of the d-rules helps ground the obligations one is under to engage in resistance struggles. In the most obvious case, these d-rules obligate agents to resistance action when they are the direct victims of oppression. But drawing from Aristotle's understanding of self-love and friendship, one sees that agents are equally under the demand of resistance when they are not the direct victim of oppression. In general it was argued here that the existence of oppression (and the reality of oppression's influence), in conjunction with the d-rules that emerge from virtue ethics' schema for action guidance, demands that agents become what Tessman calls "the politically resistant self" and actively engage in resistance struggles.

The resistance which this chapter establishes as morally necessary still, to this point, lacks refined definition and has only been established in broad and general terms. The next chapter seeks to deepen this understanding, and works to give content and direction to the practicality of resistance actions, struggles, and movements.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GIVING CONTENT TO RESISTANCE

To this point we have shown that oppression harms agents in that it acts to limit, or even eliminate, possible avenues to flourishing. Virtue ethics requires agents to resist these harms and work towards combating oppression by engaging in liberatory struggles against oppressive forces. While it has been established that agents are called to engage in resistance to oppression, the content of resistance and the determination of the specifics of resistance such that our obligations can be discharged has been, to this point, left largely unspecified. It is the stated aim of this chapter to provide a framework for the practical determination of resistance.

It will be argued here that we cannot reduce the moral demands of resistance to merely the formulation and cultivation of an attitude (or disposition) of resistance. While the cultivation of the revolutionary attitude is necessary for engaging in resistance movements, the obligations placed on agents in light of oppression mandates that agents move beyond dispositional states and into engaging in resistance actions.

To understand what, specifically, agents are called to do as part of our revolutionary obligations an organizing model will be deployed to help aide in determining the specifics of action guidance. The model of action determination used here, drawn from the practical world of activism and organizing, provides the necessary tools for determining what we must do, and this discussion leads directly to questions

about the value of efficacy in resistance actions, the role of violence in political and social movements, and the seemingly high demands placed on agents.

### Section 1 - The Revolutionary Attitude

The resistance actions and movements which virtue ethics requires cannot be limited to the development of contrarian attitudes or dispositional states. Critics of virtue ethics might assume that the only guidance that virtue theory can mount in response to systematic oppression is a series of vague requirements which ask agents to develop certain intellectual or emotional capacities which would allow them to understand and then judge (properly) their experience of oppression with moral outrage. Here, one might assume that virtue ethics would emphasize the cultivation of a disposition over required actions. Yet, this is not the case. While it is essential that individuals develop a revolutionary attitude and habituate themselves to not only understand but also abhor the oppression manifest in the world, this attitudinal development cannot, in-and-of-itself, be said to discharge our moral responsibilities. The reason for this is that the cultivation of such an attitude does nothing, by itself, towards elevating the harmful effects of oppression or making available avenues to flourishing which were previously unavailable to the oppressed.

This is not to say that the development of such an attitude or disposition is not important. In fact, the development of a revolutionary consciousness seems indispensable as a precondition for revolutionary struggle. For individuals to begin, either individually or collectively, to mount a movement of resistance to oppression agents must first

cultivate the necessary emotional and intellectual capacities of a revolutionary attitude.

This revolutionary attitude includes both the development of reflective willingness and an important shift in epistemic positioning.

On the first front, agents must develop a sense of reflective willingness. The oppressed must cultivate the ability to reflect on their experiences of oppression and come to understand the oppressive forces that operate in their lives. The immediate response to instances of oppression might be either momentary, and often emotional, outbursts of lashing out, or the assumption that such incidents are merely a matter of unlucky circumstances or disconnected events. The unreflective agent, or the agent who has not cultivated a sense of reflection and thoughtful awareness, would lack the necessary tools for adequately understanding that which acts to oppress them. Take for example the countless individuals who have been the victims of Sheriff Joe Arpaio's unjust racial profiling in Arizona.<sup>147</sup> Victims of Arpaio's systematic racial abuses, who lack critical reflection, could perceive these actions either (a) just the isolated actions of a rogue police officer (rather than the manifestation of racists policies and a pattern of racial injustice), or, (b) an offence which must be met head-on, in the moment, with a direct outburst of emotion. The reflective agent, or the agent who has cultivated an ability and willingness to reflect on instances of oppression's manifestation, can come to understand their experience(s) as both part of an overlapping pattern of racism and also a systematic offence that cannot be combated in singular outbursts. The revolutionary

---

<sup>147</sup> Joe Arpaio is the infamous long-standing sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona. Arpaio has risen to national notoriety due to his illegal practices of racially targeting of Latino/a people through the use of so-called 'saturation patrols' (which intentionally sweep up all Latino/a people in an attempt to find persons who are undocumented) and so-called 'illegal smuggling squads' (which are charged with stopping all Latino/a drivers, regardless of provocation or probable cause, to check for documentation). See Karen McVeigh's, "Arizona's Sheriff Joe Arpaio Faces Civil Lawsuit over Racial Profiling Allegations," *The Guardian* (July 17, 2012).

disposition is able to understand such instances and is also disposed to accurately judge these infractions as unjust, unfair, and wrong while at the same time gauge what response(s) is warranted. The cultivation of such an attitudinal disposition, in both its emotional and intellectual capacities, must be developed by the oppressed and the classic framework of virtue ethics explains how such a cultivation of character is possible.

In addition to reflective willingness, the revolutionary attitude which must be developed in the oppressed also requires the cultivation a certain type of epistemic positioning. Oppressed agents must learn to come to see the oppression they experience as interconnected to the oppression experienced in the lives of others. The oppressed are uniquely able to understand the oppression leveled against them as a matter of direct perception, yet coming to understand the way oppression manifests in the lives and experiences of others is a different matter all together. Here, agents must come to position themselves as willing to learn from the experiences of others and must be willing to take accounts of these experiences as epistemically privileged. Here, the revolutionary spirit called for by virtue ethics must accept the insights of feminism on epistemically privileged positions.<sup>148</sup> The revolutionary man cannot directly experience the ways oppression manifests, as sexism and patriarchy, in the lives of oppressed women. And women cannot directly experience how sexist gender norms manifest in the lives of transgendered women. In each case, the oppressed must cultivate a receptive willingness to hear the voices of other oppressed people and take these experiences as privileged experiences of oppression. Here I am reminded of the countless accounts of activists and revolutionaries who have failed to cultivate such an epistemic disposition. During the rise, and subsequent decline, of the so-called New Left, many American

---

<sup>148</sup> Alison Jaggar's "Love and Knowledge: Emotions in Feminist Epistemology," *Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (1989).

radicals, influenced by Marx, Lenin, and Mao, failed to incorporate the experiences of women in the movement, often choosing to dismiss their experiences of sexism and sexual oppression (coming both from outside *and within*, the movement) as either unimportant or merely secondary to the primary struggle against the oppressive nature of capitalism. Women's experiences of oppression were subdued under the interest of the oppressed worker and the oppression of women was "explained away" as merely a subordinate form of capitalist exploitation. Here, movement leaders and organizers (most often men) failed to epistemically position themselves in such a way as to make their female comrades legitimate and equal partners in the struggle to both understand and also combat oppression. In a way similar to the development of reflective willingness, the framework of continual habituation and constant cultivation found in virtue ethics instructs agents as to the practical path(s) to such an attitudinal cultivation.

While the cultivation of such a revolutionary attitude or disposition, with which one can both experience and judge oppression correctly, is of the utmost importance, it alone cannot be said to discharge our responsibilities in the face of oppression. Agents who are able to develop such an attitudinal disposition (or at least undertake the project of the development of such a revolutionary disposition), yet fail to employ this disposition of character in resistance movements or actions cannot be said to be engaging in the required project of resistance. The harms that oppression levels against the oppressed, as chronicled in chapter two, are not merely intellectual or dispositional harms and thus the cultivation of a revolutionary spirit alone cannot be said to combat the harms that make resistance necessary. This revolutionary disposition must be put into action,

and must actively engage in a revolutionary movement which, though it's collective effort, dismantles the existing apparatuses of oppression.

Claims such as these, that the cultivation of the proper attitudes is insufficient to discharge our moral responsibilities when facing oppression, stand in stark contrast to the beliefs of empowerment theorists. To the empowerment theorist, disaffected agents commit themselves to transforming themselves (or others) from a psychological state of disempowerment to "a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization."<sup>149</sup> The goal of empowerment theories is the "transformation of attitudes and beliefs."<sup>150</sup> While most academic empowerment theorists work in sectors relating to business/employee management (where they seek "empowered" employees for optimal business performance), ideas akin to empowerment theory are also found in some so-called activist circles. Here, well-intentioned activists see empowerment (as marked by positive psychological states or attitudes) as the goal of social and political action. For these activists, consciousness-raising actions are undertaken for the purpose of cultivating empowered attitudes and this experience of psychological transformation stands as the final goal of social justice action. To individuals such as these the claims being made here, that attitudinal transformation (or the development of certain positive dispositional states) cannot be said to satisfy our obligations in a world of oppression, will sound backwards and wrongheaded. For such individuals, the goal of consciousness-raising actions is to, literally, raise consciousness (or empower the previously disempowered).

---

<sup>149</sup> Sanjay T. Menon, "Psychological Empowerment: Definition, Measurement, and Validation," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* 31, no. 3 (1999), 161-162.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

The claim that attitudinal shifts and the development of a revolutionary attitude alone cannot satisfy the demands placed on agents should be welcomed by both Marxists and existentialists as both Marx and Sartre forwarded important conceptions of shifting consciousnesses in the face of oppression. Marx spoke of this important attitudinal shift as the development of class consciousness and Sartre extolled the importance of authenticity and the struggle against bad faith. While Marx and Sartre differed widely in their conceptions of attitudinal transformation, both held that shifting psychological and emotional states served as necessary means for the larger struggle to combat and, ultimately, destroy oppressive structures. And this is the conception of the revolutionary spirit being advanced here; attitudinal transformation acts not as an end-in-itself but rather the necessary catalyst for the moral work of resistance.

If it is oppression's inherent harms that make flourishing impossible for the oppressed (and therefore creates the moral mandate for resistance), then it is at these harms, along with the practical mechanisms which level these harms, that resistance must be directed. While some of the harms inflicted by oppression are emotional and psychological in nature, these harms cannot be reduced to merely "internal" states which can be solved merely by transforming an agent's dispositions. Thus, virtue ethics, in its demands that we meet oppression head-on, cannot be reduced to an obligation to cultivate a disposition and must focus upon action determination. The resistance necessitated by virtue ethics must function to directly and purposefully attack and dismantle the apparatuses of oppression which make avenues to flourishing impossible for the oppressed. It is only through acting to dismantle oppression's mechanisms that oppressed

people are able to pursue the human good of flourishing and the moral life described by virtue ethics.

While the v-rules, and the subsequent d-rules, of virtue ethics provides an avenue for action determination, the determination of revolutionary action in service of revolutionary ends seems quite difficult to ascertain. While the v-rules can imbue us with moral rules rooted in, and focused on, the development (and maintenance) of the virtues, and while the d-rules can be derived and deployed to help us understand the actions needed to fulfill the v-rules, the path to moral resistance remains somewhat unclear and abstract. Fortunately, paths to revolutionary action have been explored and schemas exist which can aid us in this effort. Interestingly, these schemas for specific action determination have been developed and deployed from sources outside academic circles, outside the confines of academic writing and journals, and outside the frameworks of virtue ethics. These sources for strategic revolutionary action, founded and developed by activists, unionists, and revolutionaries, need to be brought into philosophical and academic discussions of moral resistance. Bringing these methods into conversation with the academic discourse of oppression can help transform often highly theoretical and abstract calls for "moral resistance" into measured and practical resistance movements.

## Section 2 - A Practical Understanding of Resistance Actions

But what specific actions fulfill the demands of resistance as mandated by virtue ethics? If the picture of resistance advanced by virtue ethics requires agents to act in

ways beyond attitudinal and dispositional development, and requires agents to actively engage in resistance struggles, we are left having specify what exactly agents are required to do. To begin to understand what agents are obligated to do in becoming resisters we must see that our resistance to oppression must be as varied and diverse as the oppression which it fights. Because oppression manifests in widely different, and overlapping, ways it seems impossible to enumerate a fixed and static list of moral responses. The dynamic nature of oppression means that we cannot simply enumerate such a list of resistance actions but rather we need specific and elaborated tools which can be used by the resistance fighter in specific circumstances to generate the required actions which can combat dynamic oppression. As activists and revolutionaries, who resist the existence and effects of oppression in all its varied forms, we must not rely on a prefabricated inventory of resistance actions but rather understand resistance as dynamic, and be prepared to provide appropriate and individuated responses to pressing evils. What is called for here is a mechanism for understanding and generating practical and implementable actions to be used by the moral resistance fighter. Fortunately, such mechanisms already exist.

The practical mechanism for understanding and generating revolutionary action beings with important terminological and taxological distinctions. Of central importance are the terms "issue," "goal," "strategy," and "tactic." These terms carry a wide array of meanings and are often used in a myriad of ways, yet, to the resister, they are technical terms and need to be understood as such. The interconnected nature of these technical terms, when understood schematically, provides the minimal tools needed for

determining the reality of resistance actions. Here, these terms will be outlined and defined.

All revolutionary movements begin with an issue. An issue is, simply, that problem or obstacle which needs to be changed, altered, or addressed. Issues are presented to activists and revolutionaries as being vague and broad. In many ways, the issue is the large-scale obstacle which revolutionary attention is to be paid. When an issue is clarified through investigation, conversation, and explanation it becomes a 'goal.' This clarification of an issue into a goal is constrained and elucidated by the use of a set of five criteria, captured by the acronym SMART.<sup>151</sup> Here, SMART stands for:

'Specific' - Something is 'specific' when it is understood without ambiguity and with clear delineation.

'Measurable' - Something is 'measurable' when it contains enumerated conditions for calculating success criteria in specific amounts of quantity and/or quality.

'Activating' - Something is 'activating' when the undertaken activity/campaign/action will energize current participants as well as motivate other individuals to becoming actively involved.

'Realistic' - Something is 'realistic' when the outcome sought can feasibly be achieved by the people currently involved with the action/campaign/activity.

'Tangible' - Something is 'tangible' when the change sought will make a marked and real difference in the lives of those affected.

When the SMART criteria are applied to an issue, a goal emerges. A goal, which is derived directly from an issue, is the clearly defined change that activists and revolutionaries will accomplish. What distinguishes a goal from an issue is that an issue can be vague and unclear while goals are strictly delineated, measured, and have

---

<sup>151</sup> The SMART criteria used here is most notably used, and explained, in the literature produced by the Ruckus Society. The Ruckus Society, founded in 1995 in Oregon, is a non-profit organization which provides training and skills-sharing for activists. For a more detailed description of SMART organizing see The Ruckus Society's undated "Action Strategy: a How-To Guide."

achievable outcomes (ensured by the satisfaction of the SMART criteria). For example, while "ending environmental destruction" is a noble end and a wishful dream it fails in all conceivable ways to be a goal as it is unrealistic, there are no defined measurable criteria for determining the success of such a campaign, and is utterly unspecific. On the other hand, "stopping the Pacific Lumber Company from clear-cutting any of the old-growth trees in Humboldt County" represents a SMART goal. Here, the goal has gained specificity, will have a tangible results, and the involved activists can measure the success of the campaign (as, in this overly simplified example, the loss of "not any" old-growth tree can be measured).

A SMART goal connects directly to 'strategy.' Strategy defines the form of campaign or struggle that will be waged to achieve the goal. To achieve SMART goals agents may wage legal campaigns (where the legal system is used as a weapon), publicity campaigns (where public perception is used as a weapon), or commercial campaigns (where the buying, or not buying, of products is used as a weapon), to name just a few. A campaign's strategy, which too is subject to SMART evaluation, will justify the form of struggle that will be embarked upon. The determination of strategy must be specifically determined in light of the most effective and realistic way to achieve the goal.

Strategy connects, in the end, to 'tactics.' Tactics are the specific actions agents will perform as part of a strategy (or strategic plan) in order to achieve the goal. Tactics can range from tree-spiking to the production and distribution of literature. It is the strategy which determines and informs which tactics agents must perform. If, for example, activists are engaged in a legal campaign then civil-disobedience (and subsequent legal entanglement) might be a tactic employed whereas a protest, as a tactic,

would be dismissed as the strategic plan is not one which hinges upon publicity or public perceptions. Just as in the determination of goals and strategy, tactics are subject to the SMART criteria.<sup>152</sup>

To help illustrate the interplay between these concepts I believe that it is useful to consider an example. Thus, let us consider the following fictitious scenario:

LGBTQ students and faculty at a liberal arts college see that their community is marginalized within the university community as a whole and there exists an alarming lack of resources at their university to be used for combating this marginalization and supporting members of the LGBTQ community. First and foremost, these activists are struck with the issue: their marginalized status and the harm that comes from this marginalization. Though interactions with each other they come to the realization that something needs to be done and thus formulate a goal. Their goal cannot be "to stop homophobia" or to "make the university more queer friendly" as these vague, idealistic, and unmeasurable goals lack SMART criteria. So the students and faculty determine a specific goal; the establishment of an LGBT resource center on their campus by the end of the upcoming academic year. With this SMART goal in mind, they then can formulate a strategy and determine how best to achieve this goal. These activists determine that the university has available funds for the establishment of such a resource center and need to be convinced of its importance and viability. Thus, these activists opt choose strategically to wage a corporate campaign. Here, activists reach out to other universities

---

<sup>152</sup> It is important to note that each of the components in this taxonomy need to be made continually subject to revision and clarification. This process of continual review and reaffirmations is called "praxis." Through the continued use of praxis goals, strategies, and tactics are continually reviewed and reassessed to ensure that they are warranted, effective, and SMART. Activists and resisters should not become wedded to any goals, strategies, or, tactic such they cannot be abandoned or altered when needed as this form of stalwart bullheadedness, by definition, cannot be said to dynamically waging a realistic and effective campaign.

where LGBT resource centers exist and, with their help, draft a proposed budget for the center to be delivered to the university. Activists create a "target map" to determine which individual, or individuals, in the university administration are able to approve such a resource center. It serves these organizers no good to petition someone who cannot deliver the goods, and these activists learn who, specifically, can approve their request. Activists attend board meetings, or meetings where decisions such as this would originate or be approved, where they present their proposal. Activists also gather narratives of students and faculty describing how the center would positively impact their lives on campus and deliver these proposals to the proper university.

In this example, we can see that any specific tactic which is used is derived from strategically analyzing the goal in light of the issue at hand. These activists, using this organizing model, are able to set achievable goals, employ useful and strategic tactics, and continually act to strategically achieve their goal.

There are three important strengths to understanding this model of resistance determination. The first is that in this structure, of the interplay between issues, goals, strategy, and tactics in a cohesive and dynamic system, allows us to see how resistance, as the morally mandated response to oppression, can begin to be realistically formulated. The importance of the ability to formulate real and practical resistance actions cannot be overstated. Drawing insights from the practical world of organizing can help direct academic projects, such as this, to give substance to the otherwise general and unfulfilled calls for political action.

The second strength of such a system is that it emphasizes and necessitates effective results. By demanding specificity and elaborating, clearly, the measurability

and tangibility of our goals, strategies, and tactics, this model of resistance organizing (if applied correctly) yields actions which directly combat oppression and the harms that oppression causes. In this way, the campaigns and actions that revolutionaries and radicals embark upon, when employing this organizing schema, avoid the problem that empowerment theories fall prey to. Since it is oppression's harms that create the need for active resistance, it is these specific harms that must be directly contested. While empowerment theory may give agents an indirect avenue for coping with said harms, the organizing model of deployable action seeks to directly rectify these injustices and therefore can be said to provide the framework for the d-rules concerning oppression.

Finally, and most importantly, this organizing structure is free from an overt moral framework. This, at first glance, might sound like an odd strength seeing as the organizing model being advanced here is being used to frame and explain how agents are to act in order to discharge the moral obligations which arise in the face of oppression. The moral neutrality of this method means that it is both free from any inherent or axiomatic moral judgments which would render it incompatible with the framework of virtue ethics and also free to work in conjunction with the demand to engage in active resistance to oppression as mandated by virtue ethics. In the first sense, this method does not contain any moral claims, such as (for example) a demand that the goals of resistance action be only constructed from theological and eschatological revelations, which would render its compatibility with virtue ethics impossible. In the second sense, this model can be deployed to determine, practically, the measures needed for agents to engage in practical and implementable forms of resistance while the moral demands of virtue

ethics, as expressed as v/d-rules, can likewise be equally deployed to constrain the considered actions of resistance to that which the morally virtuous agent would accept.

The question thus becomes how the interplay between a practical organizing model such as this and the moral requirements of virtue ethics works to guide our resistance. The moral neutrality of this organizing model asks for all options to be considered, regardless of moral standing, and places central emphasis on the efficacy of actions to combat oppression without considerations of their moral permissibility. It is here that the framework of virtue ethics can act to constrain actions available to activists and revolutionaries.

One of the central moral concerns which is often raised during discussions of resistance action is the question of the permissibility of violence. Tessman, when discussing the costs beared by the resisting agent approaches the question of violence in liberatory struggles but, in the end, fails to engage directly in the question of the role of violence in revolutionary struggles. She says, "is not my intent here to enter into - and certainly not to settle - the question of whether liberatory goals are best achieved through a commitment to nonviolence... or through a readiness for violence."<sup>153</sup> While Tessman works to avoid this question, it seems essential to address this important issue head-on as it is one of the most central questions encountered when discussing morally available resistance actions and movements. So it is to this question that the next section turns.

---

<sup>153</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 113.

### Section 3 - The Role of Violence in Resistance Struggles

When considering the permissibility of violence in revolutionary action it is hard to escape the overt moral language of those who espouse doctrines of nonviolence. The position of nonviolence dominates the landscape of 'moral activism' and the pacifist position often carries with it the belief that any set of revolutionary actions which remain bound by any sensible moral principles must, by nature, commit itself to nonviolence. In this way, the prevailing myth of morally acceptable revolutionary action is that it must be nonviolent.

This section begins with a survey of pacifist positions, starting with the canonical views of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi and then moves to more nuanced and constrained forms of pacifism. This survey of pacifist positions demonstrates the contours of the pacifist landscape and shows that pacifist positions occupy a spectrum of possibilities, motivations, and justifications. In the end it will be argued that while pacifism is not a univocal or monolithic position, a commitment to nonviolence, no matter the motivation or justification, remains a deeply flawed position which one ought not accept as a necessary perimeter of resistance actions.

The most widely known, and often referenced, pacifist positions are those of King and Gandhi. Both King and Gandhi publically defended the exclusivity of nonviolence in revolutionary movements, and the impact of their positions can hardly be understated. While the pacifism espoused by King and Gandhi are importantly different, both men expressly tied prohibitions on violence to *the* moral position and it is their views which

best serve as both an anchor-point and launching pad for understanding doctrines of nonviolence.

In many ways it is Gandhi that represents the voice of absolutist pacifism.<sup>154</sup> Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence is rooted in two equally important principles or concepts; satyagrahi and ahimsa. Satyagrahi, a word that Gandhi coined, is a derivation from the Gujarati word sadagraha (meaning firmness to a good cause). Satyagrahi is the "[hope] to convert the heart and soul of the opponent by virtue of adhering to the truth, enduring self-suffering, remaining sincere and chivalrous and by avoiding hurting, humbling, or embittering the opponent."<sup>155</sup> Ahimsa, a Sanskrit word, means nonviolence ('himsa' is Sanskrit for violence and ahimsa adds a prefix to indicate the rejection of 'himsa'). The connection between satyagrahi and ahimsa takes root, for Gandhi, in his epistemological worldview. Gandhi held that there exists an immutable and eternal truth of existence but also held that people remain, in whole, unable to know this truth. This skepticism about human knowledge standing before eternal and absolute truth forced him to deny that violence was ever an option. Gandhi believed that satyagrahi could never use violence "because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore [is] not competent to punish."<sup>156</sup> The two moral pillars of satyagrahi and ahimsa established, for Gandhi, the moral framework of not only resistance to oppression but also the moral framework for the virtuous life. Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence was necessitated

---

<sup>154</sup> Here my use of the qualifier "in many ways" is used to indicate the ways that Gandhi's position(s) on violence was, at points, radically inconsistent. Gandhi himself acknowledged this fact and claimed that his views on nonviolence and politics was an evolving position whereas he strived not to be consistent with all that he had said before but rather to be "consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment." Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (Yale University Press, 1989), 283.

<sup>155</sup> Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (Praeger Publishers, 2004), 96.

<sup>156</sup> Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* (Columbia University Press, 1993) quoted in Nojeim, *Gandhi and King*, 97.

by his understanding of what he say as the only "right, or pure, means to a right, or pure, end."<sup>157</sup>

In a similar way, Martin Luther King Jr. advanced a conception of nonviolence which held a moral, not strategic, view of pacifism. King, in describing his so-called 'pilgrimage to nonviolence,' chronicles how he came to understand the unique moral high ground which pacifism, and pacifism alone, offers. King describes how the nonviolent resister must come to commit herself to the denial of both "external physical violence" (which prohibits the use of violent actions against an opponent) as well as the use of "internal violence of spirit" (as manifest as hatred).<sup>158</sup> For King, the moral prohibition on all forms of violence, both physically and emotionally, takes root in the Christian notion of universal love. It is love, for King, that is the basis of all commanded moral action thus all forms of violence, even in service of noble and libratory ends, must be forsaken. Throughout King's description of the nonviolent position one sees countless overt references to "moral resistance" and "moral resister." Where one might expect to find King distinguishing between the moral goodness of the struggle for justice and the moral evil of oppression, they actually find King often distinguishing between the "moral resister" of nonviolence and the "immoral resister" who rejects the pacifist doctrine. King expressly ties morality to pacifism and describes those who accept even a limited role for violence (even for libratory ends) as morally failing.<sup>159</sup> For King, the connection

---

<sup>157</sup> Nojiem, *Gandhi and King*, 101

<sup>158</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Harper and Row, 1958), 103.

<sup>159</sup> In his 1963 *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, King specifically notes "Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement" (or, as they were actually known and of which King was more than aware, the Nation of Islam) as "an opposing force." Here King describes the NOI (and implicitly Malcolm X, who was at this time the National Representative for the Nation and the most public figure within the NOI) one of the foes of the nonviolent movement and as part of a movement of "bitterness and hatred" which "comes perilously close to advocating violence." This example helps illustrate how King's moral condemnation was not merely

between nonviolence and moral necessity was so strong that he concluded not only that the pacifist position was available only to those who have "morality enough" to end the cycle of hate and injustice,<sup>160</sup> but also that "[nonviolence] was the only *morally and practically sound* method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."<sup>161</sup>

Positions such as those expressed by Gandhi and King, with their overt attempts to constrain all resistance actions to the moralism of pacifism, defines the axiomatic core of absolutist pacifism. Here, absolutist pacifism (often called "universal pacifism") holds that violence, in all forms and in all circumstances, is morally reprehensible and unjustified. As is often the case with absolutist positions, heavy criticism has been launched at this view. Jan Narivson, arguing from a politically rights-based tradition, holds that absolute pacifism is "far from being plausible" and claims that it suffers from being "morally inconsistent."<sup>162</sup> For Narivson, the failure of absolutist pacifist stems from a commitment to the proposition that violence is wrong. This commitment, while allowing pacifists to condemn any violence that is waged against them, also commits them to abide the existence of violence in that it constrains individuals in their attempts to stop impending acts of violence. For Narivson, the pacifist must condemn violence as categorically wrong but also hold that violence which cannot be stopped by anything short of a violent response is morally justified, as any potential violent reaction is morally worse than the violence committed by the aggressor. This 'commitment' that Narivson sees the absolutist pacifist having to make leaves their position "confused" as "their

---

reserved for those who advanced and advocated oppression and racial discrimination but also, possibly equally, for those revolutionaries who did not accept his position on Christianity, love, and pacifism.

<sup>160</sup> King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 104.

<sup>161</sup> King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 97.

<sup>162</sup> Jan Narivson, "Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis," *Ethics* 75, no. 4 (1965), 265.

position involves a contradiction: violence is wrong, *and* it is wrong to resist it."<sup>163</sup> Others, such as Daniel Farmer have argued that absolutist pacifism (or as he dubs it "deontological pacifism") is "morally indefensible" as it leads to the "unpalatable conclusion" that individuals should forgo violent responses in situations of dire self-defense.<sup>164</sup> Where Narivson objects to pacifism as a contradiction in rights, Farmer does so on the grounds of incomparable value. For Farmer, the absolutist pacifist holds that the refusal to defend one's life, at a minimum, is of comparably higher value than the life that is threatened. This means that for the absolutist, the immorality that is a violent threat to one's life is somehow morally superior to the life that is threatened. This devaluing of the life threatened, for Farmer, is an obvious case of moral confusion.

The pacifist response to the arguments launched by Farmer and Narivson is to back away from absolutist strains of pacifism to positions of qualified or contingent nonviolence. Here, the pacifist denies the absolutist line found in the positions of King and Gandhi and opts to advance a position which holds that nonviolent resistance is to be sought except in the most dire of circumstances. To my mind this seems the only appropriate response to the insensibility of the absolutist position. In fact, Farmer himself argues that criticisms of absolutist pacifism, such as those he offers, act as straw-man arguments given that qualified pacifism "represents the commitments of actual pacifists."<sup>165</sup> Here, Farmer is absolutely correct.

Possibly the most easily adaptable position to this qualification on violence would be strands of utilitarian pacifism. Here, the use of violence is weighed by means of a utilitarian calculus and the utilitarian pacifist assigns especially heavy negative utility to

---

<sup>163</sup> Narivson, "Pacifism," 269 (emphasis in original).

<sup>164</sup> Daniel Farmer, "Pacifism Without Right or Wrong," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>165</sup> Farmer, "Pacifism Without," 47.

the use of violence making it an available option only when its prescribed low utility is overcome by the achievement of significantly higher utility.<sup>166</sup> A position such as this does seem to avoid the problems of absolutism and may appear plausible, at least on the surface, (and is probably the position of many non-academic pacifists), the details of its possibility need not be discussed here as such a position seems out-of-step from the larger virtue-based approach detailed in this work.

Of interest here are positions of so-called "virtue pacifism" which seek to morally ground pacifism in an ethical framework which avoids the problems which plague absolutist stands of nonviolence. Franco Trivigno argues for a form of contingent or qualified virtue pacifism.<sup>167</sup> Here, Trivigno considers the damning and harmful effects of violence on the characters of individuals who, in war or in their attempts to resist oppression, commit themselves to violent means. Trivigno notes the harmful psychological effects that a learned willingness to killing (or harm) has on agents and how this severely damages their character. His argument begins with the way a willingness to kill (or harm) others erodes an agent's empathic abilities. From here he moves to show how a willingness to use violence makes the acquisition of multiple virtues, beyond empathy, seemingly impossible. The dehumanization needed to carryout acts of violence requires agents to habitually cultivate a lack of empathy and erodes the seemingly natural instinct to identify would-be victims as similar to one's self. Here, the would-be violent agent must lose, or work to lose, the empathy which would otherwise interfere with their ability to act violently. This loss of empathy, which otherwise would "play a role in causing virtuous action and also virtuous character," results in agents who

---

<sup>166</sup> Farmer, "Pacifism Without," 38.

<sup>167</sup> Franco Trivigno, "A Virtue Ethical Case for Pacifism," in *Virtues in Action: New Essays in Applied Virtue Ethics*, ed. Michael W. Austin (Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

lacks the necessary traits to achieve virtue and therefore eudemonia.<sup>168</sup> The result of this negative habituation, for Trivigno, is the yielding of an agent who can only be described as morally damaged. "One may becomes (sic) callous and insensitive, when confronted with the suffering of others; one may become cruel and malicious in what one says about them and hope for them; one may become spiteful and vindictive when confronted with their wrongdoing"<sup>169</sup> Here, Trivigno claims a cascading of harmful effects that are leveled against this agent; while possibly beginning with a loss of empathy, the result is an inability to cultivate the goods of "compassion, sympathy, benevolence, and kindness." This moral harm, found at the level of character, leads Trivigno to claim that "states should refrain from putting its citizens [in the form of soldiers] in situations that are likely to hinder eudaimonia" and (moving beyond the question of war) that one should endorse contingent pacifism for political resisters.<sup>170</sup>

The contingent nature of Trivigno's virtue pacifism emerges as he expressly accounts for some of the ways that violence may, in fact, be necessary in certain circumstances. He specifically notes instances of life-saving self-defense and I suspect this would extend to other forms of severe harm, such as rape, which might not result necessarily in one's death but may bring about severe harm to one's body or sense of being. While Trivigno allows for the possibility of a violent response in these cases he severely qualifies the use of this violence. He says:

If violence must be used, because he is being directly attacked and cannot avoid its use in order to *resist*, then the virtuous person will use only the *minimum amount* of violence necessary to defuse the situation. If, after all nonviolent and nonlethal violent strategies have been fully exhausted, it turns out that the minimum amount of violence necessary is deadly - because the only way to resist

---

<sup>168</sup> Trivigno, "A Virtue Ethical Case," 91.

<sup>169</sup> Trivigno, "A Virtue Ethical Case," 91.

<sup>170</sup> Trivigno, "A Virtue Ethical Case," 94.

the violence involves killing - then the virtuous person will feel *pain* and *regret* afterwards.<sup>171</sup>

The violence permitted by Trivigno is constrained by three factors (1) it is only to be used as a way to resisting impending harm towards oneself (thus making it purely reactive), (2) all other forms of resistance must be exhausted before violence is considered, and, (3) any warranted violent response is minimal in nature and the amount of violence used is only enough to avoid the impending harm *in this situation* (making its acceptable duration quite short). When these criteria are met, and violence is used, the acting agent should experience the appropriate moral regret for their action, even if such actions are warranted, justified, and necessary.

Trivigno's account of a virtue-based qualified pacifism clearly avoids inescapable problems faced by absolutism and carves out a pacifist position which might seem amenable to the account of resistance being forwarded here. Yet, while positions of qualified pacifism, such as Trivigno's, can (easily) avoid the charges of logical inconsistency and moral indefensibility, they remain deeply morally problematic and I want to outright reject them as acceptable models of virtuous resistance. The grounds on which I want to reject these accounts follows the arguments made by Peter Gelderloos<sup>172</sup> and Ward Churchill<sup>173</sup> who have argued, I believe successfully, that all pacifist positions, including those with the necessary qualifications to make them minimally morally palatable, remain inherently patriarchal and racist and therefore ought to be rejected.

---

<sup>171</sup> Trivigno, "A Virtue Ethical Case," 96 (emphasis in original).

<sup>172</sup> Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (South End Press, 2007).

<sup>173</sup> Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* (AK Press, 2007).

Gelderloos' charge of the patriarchal nature of even qualified pacifism takes root in the ways which patriarchy assigns and normalizes gender roles. Patriarchy advances a view of gender which is fundamentally dualistic and essentialist whereas gender norms establish what is appropriate for men and women. While much has been written about the excessively problematic nature of gender dualism, Gelderloos focuses upon the ways patriarchy assigns the appropriateness of violence between the genders. For Gelderloos, "Patriarchy gives both the ability and the right to use violence almost exclusively to men."<sup>174</sup> Under patriarchy, men are expected to be violent and the violence expressed and enjoyed by men is explained as a byproduct of their masculinity. This manifests as a patriarchal license for men to use 'appropriate levels' of violence against women and children, often grounds explanations of why men engage in wars and warrior behavior, permits men to be quick to fist fights over insults and to defend honor, and even explains why men relish violent sports like rugby and football. The opposite is true for women. Patriarchy essentializes women to roles of mother and caregiver, and presents femininity as a compassionate foil to the violence that is expressed in masculinity. For Gelderloos, when women resist the oppression that is patriarchy, and do so by committing to any strand of pacifism, they replicate the gender norms of the very same patriarchy they seek to resist. "Because patriarchy clearly prescribes a one-sided male violence, women would be disrupting this power dynamic, not reinforcing it, by relearning their propensity for violence."<sup>175</sup> The insistence, which even qualified pacifism has, on tactical decisions which makes violence a last-ditch-effort means that women who subscribe to such a position must only explore those resistance options which replicate the unjust association

---

<sup>174</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 65.

<sup>175</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 68.

of gendered violence perpetuated by patriarchy. In effect, the resisting pacifist is only morally allowed to consider violent options once all the other womanly options are explored and exhausted. When one applies Trivigno's constraints on the use of violence, the revolutionary woman is left to (1) only break away from patriarchal femininity to stop violent acts from taking her life or violating her body, but in no other circumstances of oppression is she to abandon her femininity, (2) she must explore all peaceful, and therein stereotypically feminine, responses before breaking the patriarchal connection between masculinity and violence, and, (3) must restrain herself to only temporarily abandoning her femininity and must do so for the shortest time possible. The insistence on nonviolence, with limited qualifications, means that women who resist patriarchy are restricted to continually play-out the damning essentialist feminine myth which patriarchy perpetuates.

In a similar vein, Gelderloos argues that pacifism, even of a qualified nature, is racist.<sup>176</sup> The basis for such a claim is that the ideology of pacifism comes from a racially privileged context and unfairly harms and burdens people of color. Racialized systems of social privilege endorse certain acceptable forms of resistance for people of color. When people of color struggle against oppression they are permitted, to a certain extent, to do so as long as they stay nonviolent. When they diverge from nonviolence, the response (even by self-proclaimed white anti-racist activists and resisters) is often quite vitriolic. "Black people marching is photogenic. Black people with guns evokes the violent crime reports on the evening news. American Indians holding a press conference is laudable.

---

<sup>176</sup> Here, one might prefer the term "racialized" to the term "racist," but Gelderloos expressly opts to label pacifism as racist. He uses the term "racist" here "only after careful consideration" (23) and does so, I suspect, to convey the depth and degree to which pacifist positions further racist views of people of color.

American Indians ready, willing, and able to take their land back is a trifle disturbing."<sup>177</sup>

The social acceptability of militant non-whites is almost universally nonexistent, and the fear that is provoked by the arming of people of color is nearly universally condemned both by the powers-that-be as well as by those who otherwise claim to stand in solidarity with their anti-oppressive ends. People of color are doubly demonized for turning away from the sanctified avenues of nonviolence. People of color are asked to accept institutionalized violence and are vilified for responding to this violence with anything other than Christian love and a turn-the-other-cheek attitude. And here lies the tragic reality; the nonviolence that pacifism commands carries with it disproportionate consequence for people of color. Here, Gelderloos summarizes this tragic reality:

[Pacifism] ignores that violence is already here; that violence is an unavoidable structurally integral part of the current social hierarchy; and that it is people of color who are most affected by that violence. Pacifism assumes that white people who grew up in the suburbs with all their basic needs met can counsel oppressed people, many of whom are people of color, to suffer patiently under an inconceivably greater violence, until such time as the Great White Father is swayed by the movement's demands or the pacifists achieve that legendary "critical mass."<sup>178</sup>

The burden of institutionalized violence is beared disproportionately by people of color, and pacifism asks people of color to be victims of this violence in the name of "bearing witness" while numbers are massed and consciences can be affected. In effect, pacifism disproportionately asks people of color to act as cannon fodder for the violence doled out by oppression. This is why pacifism is an all too easy position for privileged (white) people to endorse as they, by and large, are not asked to directly suffer the violent retribution that resistance carries with it. When militant Native Americans or Blacks

---

<sup>177</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 40.

<sup>178</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 23.

reject this dogma of nonviolence they are seen as unwieldy, unreasonable, and uncontrollable mobs with savage intent. To borrow the analogy made by Malcolm X, pacifism asks people of color to conform to socially acceptable tropes of blackness; they become the acceptable "house negro" and discuss resistance as "our resistance" and to see their struggle as "our struggle."<sup>179</sup> When people of color fail to abide the message of pacifism they are cast as "alienating" other (white) people who are reluctant to support their armed movements while claiming to yearn to share in the ends they seek. Pacifism acts as if the violence that is doled out against the oppressed is equal, and in its equally this violence is to be absorbed and reacted to with the same direct noncooperation. The reality is that the current state of racial privilege "punishes the resistance of people of color more harshly than the resistance of white people."<sup>180</sup>

One can see the evidence of the patriarchal and racist nature of nonviolence in the ways in which resistance narratives are constructed. The story, if not outright myth, of the civil rights struggle in the United States is that it was gender inclusive and, for the most part, safely nonviolent.<sup>181</sup> The actions of the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam are often excluded from *the* civil rights story while the actions of the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference are held as paradigms of virtue. Similarly, Rosa Parks has been cast into the acceptable tropes of both the "tired seamstress who tiptoed into history" and of "angry grandmotherlyness."<sup>182</sup> This fictionalization of her

---

<sup>179</sup> Malcolm X, "Speech to Michigan State University" (January 23, 1963).

<sup>180</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 29.

<sup>181</sup> One particularly poignant example of this is Patrick Jones' *Selma of the North* (Harvard University Press, 2010), which chronicles "the" civil rights movement in Milwaukee, WI. Jones, while attempting to describe Milwaukee's turbulent history of racial segregation and the movement against this city's racist past, spends 360 pages extolling the virtues of (white) civil rights leader Fr. James Groppi and his Christian coalition of church going pacifists, and ignores almost completely those aspects of the movement which extended beyond these "safe" confines.

<sup>182</sup> Danielle McGuire, "Opinion: It's Time to Free Rosa Parks from the Bus," *CNN* (December 1, 2012).

actions and life allowed for her public veneration to the point where, upon her death in 2005, she became the first woman in history to have her body laid in honor in the Rotunda of the US capital building. I suspect that no such honors will be bestowed upon Angela Davis or Kathleen Cleaver upon their deaths.

Beyond the ways that nonviolence furthers, rather than resists, the oppressive structures of racism and patriarchy, pacifism suffers from a further, equally troubling, problem of ineffectiveness. The problem of ineffectiveness represents the practical failure of pacifism which, in conjunction to the deeply troubling moral and political dynamics of pacifism's perpetuation of patriarchal and racist ideals, helps show why pacifism ought not be a criteria for moral resistance.

The claim that pacifism is ineffective for bringing about revolutionary change stands in direct opposition to the historical "victories" that pacifists cite as evidence for their commitment to nonviolence. To explore pacifism's ineffectiveness it is essential to first debunk these historical fictions. Once these historical fictions are taken off the table as evidence for pacifism's ability to accomplish ends, we can see why, by the very nature of any pacifist position, effectiveness must be rejected as an essential component of political action. In short, when one actually investigates the claims made by pacifists about the effectiveness of nonviolence one is left with little evidence that pacifism can act as an effective tool for resisting oppression.

Pacifists are often quick to cite India's independence, "the" Civil Rights Movement in the US, and the anti-nuclear movement as examples of the successful deployment of nonviolence. Sadly, none of these examples help demonstrate a meaningful measure of effectiveness. Take for example the story of India's independence

from the British. The prevailing myth of India's independence struggle is that the Indian people, unified under the leadership of Gandhi, adopted a doctrine of pacifism and after years of struggle and suffering, forced the British to relinquish control of India to the Indians.

While uplifting and inspiring, this story is, at best, a radical oversimplification, and at worst a lie. While the Indian independence movement did embody many nonviolent tactics, it cannot be claimed (1) only nonviolence was used in this struggle, or, (2) it was nonviolence that caused the British to relinquish colonial control. The struggle for Indian independence was not monolithic and certainly not guided exclusively by Gandhi. Advocates for nonviolence, who evoke the name of Gandhi with religious fervor, often are ignorant of other revolutionary figures such as Chandrasekhar Azad (who led an army of Indians in armed campaigns against the British), Bhagat Singh (who gained mass support for his bombing campaigns aimed at "overthrowing both foreign and Indian capitalism"), Subhas Chandra Bose (who, as a militant candidate called for and organized open warfare against colonial rule, was elected twice to the presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939), and even Nehru (whose pragmatism led him to deny the universality of nonviolence). The Indian (and Pakistani) independence movements cannot, without dangerous oversimplification, be called a movement of nonviolence. Nonviolence was used by some, but rejected by others. Further, the claim that it was, specifically, the nonviolence of Indian revolutionaries which brought an end to British rule is false. There were a number of factors beyond nonviolence which forced England to relinquish control of India. These forces, aside from including the violent aspects of the Indian independence movement, include violent

forces outside India. One such force which weakened British control over India was the actions of Palestinian revolutionaries in the mid-to-late 1940's. The British Mandate for Palestine, also called the Palestine Mandate, created British rule over Palestine after World War I and in the 1930's a large scale war by was waged by Palestinian guerilla fighters against the occupying British army. This war consumed considerable resources from the British, and resulted in large numbers of British casualties and, according to many historians, presented a clear threat to the British that the Indians, like the Palestinians, might give up civil disobedience and take up arms in masse if ignored for long enough.<sup>183</sup> This factor, rooted in the violent actions of Palestinian anti-colonists, influenced British decisions concerning India and it alone is enough to show that it cannot be claimed that the nonviolent tactics used by some Indians was, in itself, what caused the end of British rule in India.

Similar analyses can be performed on the myths of the Civil Rights Movement<sup>184</sup> and the US's anti-nuclear movement.<sup>185</sup> While it is true that many in these movements were committed to pacifist principles, it is not the case that pacifism can be said to be singularly and causally responsible for the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the minimal movement towards ending nuclear proliferation and bringing about nuclear

---

<sup>183</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 8.

<sup>184</sup> The limited view of the American Civil Rights movements advanced by many pacifists is expressly tied to history of King (and to a lesser extent Fred Shuttlesworth, Ralph Abernathy, and A. Phillip Randolph), and the nonviolence that he (they) advocated. But the reality is that these pacifists, did not, as a fact, encompass the totality of the Civil Rights Movement. Advocates of nonviolence who cite the example of the Civil Rights Movement as "one of their victories" must rewrite history to exclude groups and organizations such as the Black Panthers and the Nation of Islam and render them a non-influence, while at the same time consciously failing to recognize the existence and influence of violent uprisings, such as the rebellions in Watts (in 1965) and Newark (in 1967). Pacifists who invoke the victories of the Civil Rights Movement in the US as "due to nonviolence" must whitewash, quite literally, the philosophies of Black Nationalism, Black Militancy, and Black Power.

<sup>185</sup> The identification of the largely pacifist anti-nuclear movement as a pacifist "victory" is even more dubious as nuclear disarmament has not been achieved, there has been an increase in nations with nuclear weapon capability, and the right to pursue peaceful nuclear programs was established as a core part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

disarmament. In each of these historical cases there is no evidence that pacifism can be cited as the causal force which brought about these "victories."

While these historical fictions, when exposed, help dismantle the perceived effectiveness of pacifism, the failure of pacifism's effectiveness is not purely to be inferred from past historical failures. The fundamental failure of pacifism, as an effective route to resistance and revolution, is found in the ways that pacifism cannot be incorporated into a sensible organizing model. The pacifist must begin organizing from the principle that all actions must be nonviolent and then work backwards to tactics, strategy, and goals. In effect, the pacifist can only plan in reverse. Tactics are not considered in reference to their strategic ability to achieve goals, but in their ability to adhere to the principle of nonviolence. In this way, the pacifist must privilege their commitment to remaining nonviolent over the effectiveness that this nonviolence may or may not possess. This backwards reasoning explains why pacifist organizing often, and continually, performs the same set of actions regardless of the goals or the reality of their campaigns. Protests, boycotts, letter writing campaigns, political lobbying, petition signing, and consciousness raising are the "activism in a box" for pacifists, and these different tactics are dragged-out and deployed in almost all pacifist campaigns as these tactics can be done without the use of violence. This leads to political campaigns which begin and end with ineffectiveness. Surely there are times where these tactics are important and strategically warranted, but the belief that we must begin our organizing by placing parameters on our tactics and then work backwards to see what strategies are available to us based on these limited tactics places the preverbal cart before the horse. Effectiveness, as a value, is taken off the table as an organizing necessity and is replaced

by the ability of one's actions to express nonviolence. While this conclusion may seem bold to some, to the pacifist this is not a contentious conclusion as the pacifist openly and avowedly holds their nonviolence as the central value needed in organizing. For the pacifist, remaining committed to nonviolence is superior to efficacy.

Given that pacifism is not only ineffective but also patriarchal and racist there is more than sufficient evidence for rejecting pacifism, even in its qualified and contingent forms, as an acceptable moral parameter on resistance actions. While this conclusion may sound, to some, quite bold, it is essential to see that this outright rejection of pacifism does not entail the adoption of a "pro-violence position." In fact, to my mind, there is no one who adopts or advocates for a "pro-violence" position. Such a position would entail relying exclusively on violent tactics in any and all situations, and not only is no one folly enough to defend such a position but the belief that they must is beyond absurd.<sup>186</sup> What one must accept when they reject pacifism is simply a position which might be called "diversity of tactics." Here, agents are asked to consider and weigh possible tactical actions in light of their connection to strategy and goals. Whereas pacifism demands agents to accept tactical parameters before considering specific actions, the diversity of tactics asks agents to consider tactics as they flow from strategies

---

<sup>186</sup> Here and analogy to the debate surrounding the permissibility of abortion seems apt. There are those who continually assert that holding a pro-choice position is equivalent to a position of "pro-abortion." The NRCL (National Right to Life Committee) has continually asserted this claim. They claim, "The bottom line is that to be permissive of someone performing a particular action; to allow someone to perform a particular action, is to be in favor of having that action performed. Therefore, people who call themselves 'pro-choice' must be called what they really are - 'pro-abortion.'" Michele Dillion, "Argumentative Complexity of Abortion Discourse," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1993). Not only is this a false dichotomy, but it is (obviously) argumentatively bankrupt. A similar argument might be made here concerning the rejection of pacifism. The rejection of pacifism no more necessitates a "pro-violence" position than the acceptance of reproductive rights necessitates a "pro-abortion" position.

and as they work to accomplish goals.<sup>187</sup> As Gelderloos points out, it is an unfortunately reality that people seem to approach tactics and strategy backwards, "enacting tactics out of a habitual response or marshalling tactics into a strategy without more than a vague appreciation of the goal."<sup>188</sup> The diversity of tactics demands that this tactical habituation be upended, and asks agents to consider all of the political and ethical dimensions of tactics (and strategy) when setting courses of action. While the resisting agent may come to decide that nonviolent options are preferable to violent ones in a given campaign, and therefore align themselves with the pacifist, they do so only after active deliberation and consideration and not by simply conforming their actions to a pre-established tactical order they feel compelled to enact.

It is also equally important to understand is that these active discussions about the availability of a plurality of tactics which the diversity of tactics demands does not deny the moral and psychological reality of the harms that violent resistance may carry with it. The psychological and moral harms chronicled by Trivigno, which lead him to adopt his virtue-based qualified pacifism, are quite real and the diversity of tactics does not deny this reality. In fact, these harms need to be understood by resisting agents and these dangers must help frame discussions of resistance actions. What the diversity of tactics demands is these harms are weighted by resisters in light of the reality of oppression. The resisting agent must be free to consider all options, weighing moral demands and the often high moral costs which resistance entails, when determining the details of resistance. The determination of tactics, no matter their form, must be part of a continual

---

<sup>187</sup> It is worth noting and emphasizing that nonviolence is not a tactic, and my language here has been chosen as not to confuse the two. Nonviolence cannot be a tactic as nonviolence is not an action. A sit-in or march may be a tactic, but the demand that this protest remain nonviolent is merely a parameter that is placed upon these tactics.

<sup>188</sup> Gelderloos, *How Pacifism Protects*, 81.

discussion within revolutionary movements. Tactics must be continually determined through the use of practical wisdom and not guided at the outset by a commitment to a nonviolent axiom.

The appropriate resisting agent who properly considers the high moral cost that is beared by one who engages in violent actions will likely act in accord with other activists who swear to a doctrine of nonviolence but between the two there are important differences. First, the resisting agent who accepts the diversity of tactics is empowered to consider options, even if they ultimately reject them, which the pacifist cannot even bring to the table for thoughtful consideration. Secondly, the agent who accepts the diversity of tactics will be determining their actions under the light of their strategic necessity, effectiveness, and moral acceptability rather than beginning with a set of tactical options which must be worked backwards into a strategic plan.

In the end, violence and violent tactics must remain an option for the resisting agent and cannot be removed from consideration. While the choice to use violence is by no means a decision that agents should arrive at easily nor quickly, it must remain a viable option for activists and revolutionaries who seek to struggle against oppression and who seek to alleviate the harms which oppression levels against the oppressed. The heavy burdens beared by resisting agent, as chronicled by Trivigno and Tessman, are all quite real, but these harms cannot, in principle, outweigh the necessity of effective resistance to oppression.

#### Section 4 - The Emerging View of Resistance and the Demandingness Objection

The general picture of resistance that begins to emerge here has many complicated facets. Agents are obligated to engage in resistance to oppression and the discharging of this obligation can only be determined by agents embedded in specific contexts. The actions of resistance must strategically target multiple targets, must be relentless in their pursuit of liberation, and are not limited to merely combating the oppression an individual faces in their own life. On top of this, the practical determination of appropriate resistance actions and campaigns requires agents to engage in a diverse range of tactics, and the determination of these tactics (and the strategies which make these tactics necessary) can only be uncovered through a timely process of deliberation, discussion, and reflection. Taken together, these demands begin to mount and it might be argued that the conception of resistance being advanced here ought to be subject to the criticism of demandingness.

The demandingness objection, in its simplest form, is "describable as the problem of the ease or difficulty of fulfilling a moral theory's demands - its 'moral obligations'..."<sup>189</sup> When a moral theory advances a schema of moral demands that extends beyond a 'reasonable' degree of difficulty, and the fulfillment of these moral demands become onerous to the obligated agent, the moral theory is said to be suspect or problematic. Alan Thomas claims that the belief that morality ought not be onerous is "an uncontentious core of common sense morality."<sup>190</sup> The breadth and depth of our

---

<sup>189</sup> Christine Swanton, "Virtue Ethics and the Problem of Demandingness," in *The Problem of Demandingness: New Philosophical Essays*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Palgrave MacMillian, 2009), 105.

<sup>190</sup> Alan Thomas, "Consequentialism, Integrity and Demandingness," in *The Problem of Demandingness: New Philosophical Essays*, ed. Timothy Chappell (Palgrave MacMillian, 2009), 131.

obligations to resist, as being advanced here, more than seem to qualify as onerous and demandingness objections appear quite apt.

While the demandingness objection is most often associated with consequentialist theories, virtue theorists such as Swanton and Thomas have attempted to outline, and guard against, accounts of virtue ethics which stray into excessive demandingness. On these accounts, and particularly Swanton's, the conception of resistance being advanced here seems to run afoul of these warnings and I suspect that the arguments made here will be met with charges of onerous demandingness. In anticipation of such responses I want to address this important issue. To do so, I will outline Swanton's understanding of the demandingness objection, and the principle(s) she asks us to abide to keep virtue theoretical accounts free of this so-called problem. Following this, I will argue that Swanton's approach ultimately fails and that one ought to accept the onerous nature of our obligations to resist oppression.

Swanton's work on the demandingness objection, as it relates to virtue ethics, works to establish limits on the scope of demands that any virtue theoretic account can make. She begins by acknowledging that the "The Demands of the World are limitless; there are limitless needs to fulfill, there is no end to the value we could promote..."<sup>191</sup> These seemingly limitless demands are exerted by both strangers in need as well as by loved ones with which we have relationships. For Swanton, there is no lack of need in the world given the high amount of existent suffering, and the relationships we hold to our loved ones continually ask us to devote more than all of our energy to their

---

<sup>191</sup> Swanton, "Virtue Ethics and the Problem of Demandingness," 108. Swanton uses the term "demands of the world" (sometime with capitalization and sometimes without), in her 2003 book *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*, in conjunction with "demands of the self" (also called "Constraints of Human Nature") as a way to identify the two sources of moral demand. Demands of the world are simply those demands which are exerted on agents from factors exterior to her personhood or personal projects.

maintenance and flourishing. When taken individually, it might appear that agents ought to be obligated to radical sacrifice in the face of competing demands. Mirroring Singer's famous dictum that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought morally to do it,"<sup>192</sup> Swanton claims that when one considers individual actions which makes demands of us to sacrifice it would appear obviously obligatory that one make such sacrifices. She considers a variety of semi-fictional cases, drawn from her own life, where she is asked to choose between using available resources (of both time and money) to aid in famine relief or use these resources to see a movie, restore a classic Vauxhall, or continue to use her gardening as an outlet for her creativity. Beyond cases of famine relief, similar dilemmas are encountered when one weighs the expenditure of time and money for these ends as compared with the possibility of devoting these resources towards furthering more meaningful aspects of one's relationships. When each of these courses of action are considered individually, it seems rather obvious that the moral need expressed is both (a) of significantly higher priority demanding one's time and money, and, (b) exactly the sort of needs that the virtuous agent (who has cultivated the other-regarding virtues of sympathy, empathy, and benevolence) would find compelling. In each case, as in the classic Singer examples, it would seem that the pressing moral demands of famine relief or relationship maintenance ought to trump one's desires to creatively garden, see movies, or restore old cars. While Utilitarians might claim that the loss of these quite minimal goods is far outweighed by substantive goods that can be secured by reallocating these resources, one might expect Swanton to demand the same sacrifice as these actions are exactly of the type demanded by virtue. Yet Swanton rejects

---

<sup>192</sup> Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972), 31.

such a view and maintains that actions such as these cannot, nor should not, be considered individually, where one weighs off each expenditure against other possible outcomes. While sacrificing in any one of these situations may not leave an agent in ruin, Swanton maintains that the cumulative force of acquiescing, even happily, to these demands is damning to one's character and results in a withering of self. Returning to her examples, she proposes that if she were to give up seeing the movie, and restoring the car, and abandoning the creative outlet that is gardening she (hypothetically) would find herself "gradually becomes more miserable" and, in the end, would find that, in Nietzsche's terms, "her self wilts away."<sup>193</sup> This disruption of one's self, and the 'wilting of one's self' that comes from continually meeting the otherwise moral demands of sacrifice, is a price too high to pay. Swanton uses this evidence to show that radical sacrifice is, in fact, not obligatory, even when each individual instance of need appears more morally significant to the desires/plans of the agent. In this way, she defuses the demandingness objection by denying that such sacrifices are obligatory. From here, she abstracts to a general understanding of moral demands and holds,

Moral demands (whether arising from authorities such as bosses, from the needy in general, from our nearest and dearest, or from the general demand to promote value) should not tax our strength to the point where the self wilts away, we neglect our children and loved ones, we ignore ethics altogether ... and resentment becomes rife. .... A plausible ethics must not require contortions of our psychological apparatus.<sup>194</sup>

Returning to the question of obligatory resistance, I suspect that Swanton would object to the view being advanced here seeing as how the obligation to resist does

---

<sup>193</sup> Swanton, "Virtue Ethics and the Problem of Demandingness," 111.

<sup>194</sup> Swanton, "Virtue Ethics and the Problem of Demandingness," 122.

demand continual effort, personal sacrifice, and the abandonment of otherwise morally significant projects on the part of the resister.

The problem with Swanton's account is that it relies on a false dichotomy of assumed privilege. Swanton asks us to consider the damning effects of the 'wilting of the self' as if this wilting was only brought about through continual sacrifice. In Swanton's model, the acting agent is placed into a moral bind because they are asked to choose between sacrificing for other's needs or achieving (or working towards) a state of self flourishing where this flourishing of the self is otherwise possible. The would-be movie going gardener who drives a beautiful old Vauxhall is presented as otherwise fully capable of self-fulfillment but conflicted by the seeming need to respond to moral needs of others. The damning reality of oppression is that agents do not begin with the prospect of self-fulfillment which they may be asked to unfairly abandon. The existence of oppression wilts and withers characters and contorts psychological apparatuses long before agents are placed into circumstances where they are asked to sacrifice their otherwise good characters. Swanton seems to assume that the unwilted person is somehow plucked from their previously unsullied world of blissful self-fulfillment and suddenly and unfairly asked to jettison this otherwise flourishing life. Only in a semi-ideal world could such a choice exist. Even if we were to grant that such a prospect is possible, and believe that an agent can morally develop in an oppression-free vacuum, it certainly only be a problem for a very select and privileged few. In reality, the harmful and costly demands of resistance exist alongside the harmful and costly effects of oppression. When the reality of oppression is understood, and taken seriously, the overarching demands of resistance are no more wilting than the lived reality of the

oppressed. When these circumstances are understood, the obligation to engage in resistance is no longer trade-off between flourishing and harm, but rather the swapping of the harms of oppression for the harms of resistance, and between *these* two positions only resistance holds the promise of liberation.

Agents engaging in, and committing themselves to, resistance will have to sacrifice, and sacrifice dearly. The demands of resistance ask us to prioritize our projects, and it seems quite reasonable that the agent who develops the revolutionary attitude and commits themselves to the project of resistance might find that this revolutionary life cannot accommodate children, or continued schooling, or fine art, or vacations to the beach. To the privileged, the reality that these goods might not be able to be sought, let alone acquired, during the course of the revolutionary life may sound shocking. Yet to the oppressed, the existence of such 'goods' has never been real and asking them to abandon these goods is tantamount to asking them to feel regret for accepting a life that will probably not experience interstellar space travel.

## Section 5 - Conclusion

In the end, the determination of resistance actions cannot be specified without context, and resistance cannot be reduced to a codified list of necessary actions. It is impossible to say, with specifics, what resistance must look like. Resistance is a category of actions which address the issue(s) of oppression. Resistance is not a specific tactic, nor is it a strategy, but rather resistance captures the strategic and tactical actions one

undertakes when the issue they address is, specifically, oppression.<sup>195</sup> To fulfill the demands of virtue ethics agents must act in a plurality of ways, in a multitude of situations, and must organize themselves in such a way that their actions (be they collective or individual) effectively fight to break down the harmful apparatuses of oppression and work to make avenues to flourishing a reality for the oppressed.

Committing oneself to resistance, and working to fulfill the demands of virtue ethics, is a costly endeavor and places continual and onerous demands on agents. As it is the soaring harms of oppression which create these demands, it is at oppression and oppressive structures which our actions must be targeted. The sad reality of oppression is that there are individuals who, even when engaged in active resistance to oppression and committing to the fulfillment of the moral demands placed on them by the existence of oppression, will not achieve the flourishing virtue promises. Yet it is only through the concerted effort of individuals working in tandem that there is any promise that these harms can be alleviated or eliminated and flourishing made an available goal for all people.

---

<sup>195</sup> One may wonder if it is possible to have a model of issues, goals, strategy, and tactics which does not, given this understanding of resistance, address oppression. It is not the case that the only implementation of this model, and also the SMART criteria, come when fighting oppression. This model can be used in cases of falsely identified oppression and may be employed, for example, by Neo-Nazi organizers. This model can also be used in business as a way of tackling new customer bases or organizing new franchises. In these cases the presented issue is not oppression (or a manifestation of oppression) and therefore yields no resistance.

## CONCLUSION

By way of summery, this project took a paradigmatic understanding of oppression and opened it up to a virtue-based analysis. This analysis allowed for a substantiation of the all-too-obvious *prima facie* claim that oppression is harmful to those oppressed. The holistic framework of virtue ethics, as the lens through which this harm was investigated, showed that oppression warps the acquisition of the virtues in a multitude of ways, systematically manipulates the external goods necessary for the development of the virtues, and unduly presses agents into the habituation of base and shameful actions. In each of these ways, oppression acts as a barrier for the achievement of flourishing. By exposing oppression's harmful influence on the ability for the oppressed to flourish, one finds not only the need for agents to engage in resistance struggles against these corrupting forces, but the obligatory nature of this need. The source of this obligation is found in the ways that agents are obligated by the so-called d-rules implied by virtue ethics' schema for action guidance. In the end, the d-rules which emerge in conjunction with oppression compel agents to engage in revolutionary actions to combat the existence of oppression. It was argued here that this moral engagement cannot be said to discharge our responsibilities through the mere cultivation of dispositional attitudes, but requires that agents act in such a way that they maximize efficacy and actually combat the oppressive structures and systems which limit avenues to flourishing.

This project has sought to make important contributions to both the existing discussions of oppression found in social and political philosophy, as well as to the

expanding tradition of virtue ethics. To this end, this dissertation makes three important contributions in these areas.

This project contributes, in an important way, to the expanding literature on oppression. Theorists like Frye, Cudd, and Harvey (to name just a few) have sought to explore the philosophical and political dimensions of oppression, and this project contributes to this expanding field. The contributions made here help show the substantial psychological, emotional, and moral impact of oppression as revealed by virtue ethics and thus this project expands existing discussions by substantiating these impacts.

The second way this project contributes to existing philosophical literature is that it develops neo-Aristotelian understandings of action guidance. While Hursthouse stands as the foremost figure in this field, and her explanation of the v-rules has helped schematize and explain how virtue ethics provides a framework for action guidance, the establishment of the d-rules here helps push this idea further. The d-rules allow for a more refined explanation of action guidance as found in virtue ethics and, in what is expectedly the most controversial aspect of this work, this action guidance works in such a way that one can establish the generation of obligations in virtue ethics.

The third way this work makes important contributions to existing philosophical literature on oppression is that it works to answer the looming question of ‘what is to be done.’ Often philosophical works on oppression hint at, or vaguely suggest, the ways agents should be acting in our struggles against oppression, but more often than not these overtures stop short of providing a way to practically understand what shape these actions

should take. As an example of this we can look to the way that Tessman walks up to the question of effective resistance and then leaves it as an open question. She claims:

It is not my intent here to enter into... the question of whether liberatory goals are best achieved through a commitment to nonviolence ... or through a readiness for violence. Nor will I try to determine the relative efficacy of ending oppression through negotiation and communication with dominators—requiring virtues like compassionate understanding.... Not settling these questions, I leave open the possibility that the more-militant or more-radical approaches are the most effective.<sup>196</sup>

Similarly, at the end of Cudd's book length treatment of oppression she addresses four potential strategies of resistance.<sup>197</sup> These "strategies" include rhetorical and symbolic strategies, economic strategies, armed strategies, and legal strategies. In each arena she looks to past struggles and suggests a similar replication of past tactics, but she does so without any schema for evaluating these potential actions as either effective, realistic, or feasible. Where this work adds to existing literature is that it works to draw practical resistance organizing into existing discussions of oppression and allows for a robust substantiation of the concrete ways that the political resister must act.

Looking forward from here, this project sets forth multiple paths for future exploration. The establishment of the d-rules, as outlined here, allows for continued exploration of ways in which Aristotelian virtue ethics can make important inroads into

---

<sup>196</sup> Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 143-144.

<sup>197</sup> Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 201 ff.

discussions of practical and applied philosophy. The d-rules established here are only explored in one area, the experience of oppression as an impediment to flourishing, but the d-rules need not be limited to this one discussion. Their general form lends to their application in a variety of arenas, and continued work on these derivative rules of action guidance provide fertile ground for continued exploration. In this way, the d-rules set out here seem to provide rich possibilities for continued exploration and scholarship in practical and applied philosophy.

Beyond further exploration of the d-rules as an avenue for providing virtue theoretic inroads into contemporary discussions of practical and applied philosophy, the d-rules seem posed to answer important theoretical questions about the nature of the supererogatory and the existence (or non-existence) of such a category in virtue ethics. Chapter four, in part, worked to defend the account of obligation established here against the potential charge of demandingness. While the work done here defended the specific d-rules which emerge in conjunction with oppression against this potential objection, this work also treads closely on the category of the supererogatory. People like Jason Kawall have argued that virtue ethics lacks the tools necessary to make sensible headway on the existence (or non-existence) of the category of the supererogatory, and Kawall claims that the lack of these tools means that virtue ethics falls into circularity.<sup>198</sup> On the surface, it seems that the d-rules might be just the necessary tools which neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics needs to address this question, and this possibility represents an important avenue for further exploration and future scholarship.

---

<sup>198</sup> Jason Kawall, "Virtue Theory, ideal observers, and the supererogatory." *Philosophical Perspectives* 146, no. 2 (2009).

Beyond future academic work, this project begs for practical implementation. The second half of this project aims to establish a way to mobilize people to combat oppression and does so by outlining an organizing model which stresses the need for continual praxis. In this way, the continued struggles against oppression require constant and perpetual reflection and re-evaluation. By engaging in this unceasing and self-critical evaluation, revolutionary movements of the oppressed are ensured that our actions, campaigns, and efforts achieve the highest degree of efficiency. The practical implementation of the suggestions made in this project work as both a forward plan for real-life engagement and a reflective praxis of review, and the moral and social philosophy used here has an important role to play in both these tasks. Here, the philosopher and the activist become one and same person. The revolutionary agent must take the abstract theoretical lessons learned from praxis and find ways to continually shape their actions and campaigns, and the tools outlined here not only aid in the process but make the reality of this process palpable. To this end it is worth considering a few facts:

- In 2014, The Walk Free Foundation completed a global survey and concluded that, globally, there are currently 38.5 million slaves.<sup>199</sup> This global estimate includes the conservative estimate that there are 60,000 currently in the US. Commenting on this report, Rick Noack, writing for the *Washington Post*, notes that these shocking numbers are “twice the amount estimated... in 2012.”<sup>200</sup>
- The Sentencing Project, a non-partisan research and advocacy origination, claims that “The United States maintains its distinction as the nation with the highest rate

---

<sup>199</sup> Walk Free Foundation, “Global Slavery Index,” (2014).

<sup>200</sup> Rick Noack, “The World’s 36 Million Slaves,” *Washington Post* (November 18, 2014).

of incarceration in the world... [with a] total correctional population of 6.9 million.” And according to the 2010 US Census, African Americans were 5 times more likely than whites to be incarcerated, and while representing 13% of the US population, African Americans represent over 40% of the incarcerated population.<sup>201</sup>

- Dr. Brian Mustanski, writing for *Psychology Today*, noted that in 2013 the number of hate crimes perpetrated against members of the LGBT community has doubled in New York City alone.<sup>202</sup> And according to a 2011 FBI report, while hate-crime numbers have decreased nationally, anti-gay hate crimes are nationally increasing (and this report excludes anti-transgender hate crimes).<sup>203</sup>
- The Wall Street Journal reported in 2014 that the Average income for the wealthiest 10% of U.S. families rose 10% between 2010 and 2013 while at the same time families in the bottom 40% saw their average inflation-adjusted income decline over that same period.<sup>204</sup> The AFL-CIO reported in 2013 that CEO pay was an “eye popping” 331 times the salary of the average worker and 774 times the take home salary of a minimum wage worker.<sup>205</sup>

One need not abstract very far from these facts to see that oppression, and systematic injustice, is alive and well. It is the experience of oppression, which generate statistics

---

<sup>201</sup> Leah Sakala, “Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-State Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity,” Prison Policy Initiative Briefing (May 28, 2014).

<sup>202</sup> Brian Mustanski, “Are Violent Hate Crimes Against LGBT People on the Rise?,” *Psychology Today* (June 12, 2013).

<sup>203</sup> Lauren Glaze, “Correctional Populations in the United States, 2010,” *Bulletin NJC 231681*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice (December 2011).

<sup>204</sup> Ben Leubsdorf, “Fed: Gap Between Rich, Poor Americans Widened During Recovery,” *Wall Street Journal* (March 4, 2015).

<sup>205</sup> Kathryn Dill, “CEOs Earn 331 Times As Much As Average Workers, 774 Times As Much As Minimum Wage Earners,” *Forbes* (April 15, 2014).

like these, which provides the impetus for the need of revolutionary thinking about resistance to oppression to which this project focused. While much of this work is academic in nature, this project, and in particular chapter four, has sought to bring an academic analysis of oppression into conversation with the reality of resistance struggles. By engaging in practical resistance organizing, and by deploying a model such as the one outlined here, oppressed peoples are equipped with the basic tools needed to actively combat oppression. In this way, this project has sought to bridge the divide between academic work on the reality of oppression and the resistance struggles oppression make necessary. It is in the actual implementation of the suggestions made here that this project hopes to move from an academic setting to the reality of liberation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Able, Johnathan. "How Clearwater Helped Destroy an International Sex Slave Ring." *Tampa Bay Times*. March 14, 2009. Accessed from <http://www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/crime/article984066.ece>
- American Psychological Association. "Trauma." 2013. Accessed from <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>.
- Anscombe, G.E.M. "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1-16.
- Alwitt, Linda. F., and Thomas D. Donley. "Retail Stores in Poor Urban Neighborhoods." *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 31, no. 1 (1997): 139-164.
- Atwell, John E. *Ends and Principles in Kant's Moral Thought*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986.
- Bell, Carl C., and Esther J. Jenkins. "Community Violence and Children on Chicago's Southside." *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993): 46-54.
- Block, Jason P., Richard A Scribner, Karen B. DeSalvo, K. B. "Fast Food, Race/Ethnicity, and Income." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 27, no. 3 (2004): 211-217.
- Brown, Judith. *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*. Yale University Press, 1989.
- Cancino, Alejandra. "Former Republic Windows and Doors Workers Learn to be Owners." *The Chicago Tribune* (November 6, 2013). Accessed from [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-11-06/business/ct-biz-1106-new-era-windows-20131106\\_1\\_armando-robles-17-workers-former-republic-windows](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-11-06/business/ct-biz-1106-new-era-windows-20131106_1_armando-robles-17-workers-former-republic-windows)
- Churchill, Ward. *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America*. AK Press, 2007.
- Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. "Are Men Oppressed?" In *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in the Light of Feminism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, edited by Larry May, Robert Strikwerda, and Patrick D. Hopkins. Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.
- Conover, Ted. "The Way of All Flesh: Undercover in an Industrial Slaughterhouse." *Harper's Magazine* (May 2013): 31-49.
- Coope, Christopher Miles. "Modern Virtue Ethics." In *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*, edited by Timothy Chappell. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Cudd, Ann. *Analyzing Oppression*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

- Cudd, Ann. "Oppression by Choice." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 25:s1 (1994): 22-44.
- Cudd, Ann. "How to Explain Oppression: Criteria of Adequacy for Normative Explanatory Theories." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35, no.1 (2005): 20-49.
- Cummins, Steven, and Sally Macintyre, "'Food Deserts' – Evidence and Assumption in Health Policy Making," *BMJ* 325, no. 7361 (2002): 436-438.
- Dalton, Dennis. *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Davis, Karen. *Prisoned Chickens, Poisoned Eggs: An Inside Look at the Modern Poultry Industry (Revised Edition)*. Book Publishing Company, 2009.
- Dill, Kathryn. "CEOs Earn 331 Times As Much As Average Workers, 774 Times As Much As Minimum Wage Earners." *Forbes*. April 15, 2014. Accessed from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kathryndill/2014/04/15/report-ceos-earn-331-times-as-much-as-average-workers-774-times-as-much-as-minimum-wage-earners/>
- Dillard, Jennifer. "A Slaughterhouse Nightmare: Psychological Harm Suffered By Slaughterhouse Employees and the Possibility of Redress Through Legal Reform." *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy* 15, no. 2 (2008): 391-408.
- Dillon, Michele. "Argumentative Complexity of Abortion Discourse." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1993): 305-314.
- Driver, Julia. *Uneasy Virtue*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Engles, Frederick. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. International Publishers, 1942.
- Evans, W. J., Morley, J. E., Argilés, J., Bales, C., Baracos, V., Guttridge, D., Jatoi, A., Kalantar-Zadeh K., Lochs, H., Mantovani, G., Marks, D., Mitch, W.E., Muscaritoli, M., Najand, A., Ponikowski, P., Fanelli, F.R., Schambelan, M., Schols, A., Schuster, M., Thomas, D., Wolfe, R., Anker, S.D. "Cachexia: A New Definition." *Clinical Nutrition* 27, no. 6 (2008): 793-799.
- Farley, Melissa "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized." *Violence Against Women*, 10, no. 10 (2004): 1087-1125.
- Farmer, Daniel. "Pacifism Without Right or Wrong." *Public Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2011): 37-52.
- Ferris, Lorraine E., Jane Sandercock, Brian Hoffman, Marvin Silverman, Harvey Barkun, John Carlisle, and Cheryl Katz. Risk Assessment for Acute Violence to Third Parties: A Review of the Literature." *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 42, no. 10 (1997): 1051-60.

- Fitzgerald, Amy, Linda Kalof, and Thomas Dietz. "Slaughterhouses and Increased Crime Rates: An Empirical Analysis of the Spillover from "The Jungle" into the Surrounding Community." *Organization and Environment* 22, no. 2 (2009):158-184.
- Fletcher, Joseph. *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*. Westminster Press, 1966.
- Frye, Marilyn. *Politics Of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. The Crossing Press, 1983.
- Garry, Ann. "Sex, Lies, and Pornography." In *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, edited by Hugh LaFollette. Blackwell, 2002.
- Gelderloos, Peter. *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. South End Press, 2007.
- Glaze, Lauren. "Correctional Populations in the United States, 2010." *Bulletin NJC 231681*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice. December 2011. Accessed from <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus10.pdf>.
- Groves, Betsy McAlister, Barry Zuckerman, Steven Marans, and Donald J. Cohen. "Silent Victims. Children who Witness Violence." *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association* 269, no. 2 (1993): 262-264.
- van Hoff, Stan. *Understanding Virtue Ethics*. Acumen Publishing, 2006.
- Hartmann, Heidi. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." In *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, edited by Lydia Sargent. South End Press, 1981.
- Harvey, J. *Civilized Oppression*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1999.
- Haslanger, Sally. "Oppressions: Racial and Other." In *Racism, Philosophy and Mind*, edited by Michael Levine and Tamas Pataki. Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Hendrickson, Deja, Chery Smith, and Nicole Eikenberry. "Fruit and Vegetable Access in Four Low-Income Food Desert Communities in Minnesota." *Agriculture and Human Value* 23 (2006). 371-383.
- hooks, bell. *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*. Holt, 1995.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind. *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind. "Virtue Ethics and the Treatment of Animals." In *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, edited by Tom L. Beauchamp and R.G. Frey. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind. "Virtue Theory and Abortion." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20, no. 3 (1991): 223-246.

- Inwood, Brand, and Raphael Woolf. *Eudemean Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Johnson, Kent. "Luck and Good Fortune in the *Eudemean Ethics*." *Ancient Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (1997): 85-102.
- Jones, Patrick D. *Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*. In *Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Metaphysics of Morals*. In *Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Kawall, Jason. "Virtue Theory, ideal observers, and the supererogatory." *Philosophical Perspectives* 146, no. 2 (2009): 179-196.
- Kenny, Anthony. *Aristotle on the Perfect Life*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Kenny, Anthony. *The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of the Relationship Between the Eudemean Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. Oxford University Press, 1978.
- King, Martin Luther Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World (Special 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)*, edited by James Melvin Washington. HarperOne, 2003.
- King, Martin Luther Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. Harper and Row, 1958.
- Leubsdorf, Ben. "Fed: Gap Between Rich, Poor Americans Widened During Recovery." *Wall Street Journal*. March 4, 2015. Accessed from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/fed-gap-between-rich-poor-americans-widened-during-recovery-1409853628>.
- Lewis, LaVonna Blair, David C. Sloane, Lori Miller Nascimento, Allison L. Diamant, Joyce Jones Guinyard, Antronette K. Yancey, and Gwendolyn Flynn. "African Americans' Access to Healthy Food Options in South Los Angeles Restaurants." *American Journal of Public Health* 94, no. 4 (2005). 668-673.
- Lewis, Marva, and Joy Osofsky. "Violent Cities, Violent Streets: Children Draw Their Neighborhoods." In *Children in a Violent Society*, edited by Joy Osofsky. Guildford Press, 2005.
- Lorde, Audre. "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger." In *Sister Outsider*. Crossing Press, 1984
- Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of Anger: Women Redefining Difference." In *Sister Outsider*. Crossing Press, 1984.

- Lugones, Maria. "Hard-to-Handle Anger." In *Overcoming Sexism and Racism*, edited by Linda Bell and David Blumenfeld. Rowmann and Littlefield Press, 1995.
- Marshall, John S. "Art and Aesthetics in Aristotle." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 2 (1958): 228-231.
- McGuire, Danielle. "Opinion: It's Time to Free Rosa Parks From the Bus." CNN (December 1, 2012). Accessed from <http://inamerica.blogs.cnn.com/2012/12/01/opinion-its-time-to-free-rosa-parks-from-the-bus/>
- McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Working In Women's Studies." In *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology (Third Edition)*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. Wadsworth Publishing, 1998.
- McWilliams, James. "PTSD in the Slaughterhouse." *Texas Observer* (February 7, 2012). Accessed from <http://www.texasobserver.org/ptsd-in-the-slaughterhouse/>
- McVeigh, Karen. "Arizona's Sheriff Joe Arpaio Faces Civil Lawsuit Over Racial Profiling Allegations." *The Guardian* (July 17, 2012). Accessed from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/17/arizona-sheriff-joe-arpaio-lawsuit>
- Menkhaus, Ken. "Somalia: A Situation Analysis." *WriteNet Paper* 07 (2000). Accessed from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/3f7c235f4.pdf>
- Menon, Sanjay T. "Psychological Empowerment: Definition, Measurement, and Validation." *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science* 31, no. 3 (1999): 161-164.
- Meyers, Diana. "Emotions and Heterodox Moral Perception: An Essay In Moral Psychology." In *Feminists Rethink the Self*, edited by Diana Meyers. Westview Press, 1997.
- Moreland, Kimberly, Steve Wing, and Ana Diez Roux. "The Contextual Effect of the Local Food Environment on Resident's Diets: The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study." *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 11 (2002): 1761-1767.
- Mustanski, Brian. "Are Violent Hate Crimes Against LGBT People on the Rise?" *Psychology Today*. June 12, 2013. Accessed from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-sexual-continuum/201306/are-violent-hate-crimes-against-lgbt-people-the-rise>.
- Nagle, Thomas. *A View from Nowhere*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Narvison, Jan. "Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis." *Ethics* 75, no. 4 (1965): 259-271.
- Noack, Rick. "The World's 36 Million Slaves," *Washington Post*. November 18, 2014. Accessed from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/11/18/map-the-worlds-36-million-slaves/>.

- Nojeim, Michael J. *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance*. Praeger Publishers, 2004.
- Normandi, Carol Emery, and Laurelee Roark. *It's Not About Food: End Your Obsession with Food and Weight*. Penguin Putnam, 1999.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration. "OSHA 3108 : Safety and Health Guide for the Meat Packing Industry." United States Department of Labor. 1988. Accessed from <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3108/osha3108.html>.
- O'Neill, Onora. *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- O'Neill, Onora. "Kant's Virtues." In *How Should One Live: Essays on the Virtues*, edited by Roger Crisp. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Osofsky, Joy. "The Impact of Violence on Children." *Domestic Violence and Children* 9, no. 3 (1999): 33-49.
- Payne, Ruby K. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty (4th Edition)*. Aha! Process, 2005.
- Polivy, Jean. "Psychological Consequences of Food Restriction." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 96, no. 6 (1996): 589-592.
- Polivy, Jean, Sharon B. Zeitlin, C. Peter Herman, and A. Lynne Beal. "Food Restriction and Binge Eating: A Study of Former Prisoners of War." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 103, no. 2 (1994): 409-411.
- Putman, Daniel. "The Emotions of Courage." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2001): 463-470.
- Reese, Stephen, Oscar Gandy, and August Grant. *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*. Routledge, 2001.
- Richters, John E. "Community Violence and Children's Development: Towards a Research Agenda for the 1990's." *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993): 3-6.
- Richters, John E., and Pedro Martinez. "The NIMH Community Violence Project: I. Children as Victims of and Witness to Violence." *Psychiatry* 56, no. 1 (1993): 7-21.
- Roberts, Dorothy. *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare*. Basic Books, 2002.
- Ruckus Society. "Action Strategy: A How-To Guide." (Undated). Retrieved from <http://ruckus.org/downloads/RuckusActionStrategyGuide.pdf>

- Sakala, Leah. "Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-State Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity." Prison Policy Initiative Briefing. May 28, 2014. Accessed from <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html>.
- Sargent, Lydia. "New Left Women and Men: The Honeymoon is Over." In *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, edited by Lydia Sargent. South End Press, 1981.
- Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.
- Sherman, Nancy. *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Singer, Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 229-243.
- Slote, Michael. *From Morality to Virtue*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Solomon, David. "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (1988): 428-441.
- Spelman, Elizabeth. "Anger and Insubordination." In *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, edited by Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall. Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Swanton, Christine. "Hume and Virtue Ethics." In *Oxford Handbook of Hume*, edited by Paul Russell. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Swanton, Christine. "Nietzsche and the Virtues of Mature Egoism." In *Nietzsche's On The Genealogy of Morals: A Critical Study Guide*, edited by Simon May. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Swanton, Christine. "Virtue Ethics and the Problem of Demandingness." In *The Problem of Demandingness: New Philosophical Essays*, edited by Timothy Chappell. Palgrave MacMillian, 2009.
- Swanton, Christine. *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralist View*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Tessman, Lisa. *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Tessman Lisa. "The Burdened Virtues of Political Resistance." In *Feminist Interventions in Ethics and Politics*, edited by Barbara S. Andrew, Jean Keller, and Lisa H. Schwartzman. Rowmann and Littlefield, 2005: 77-96.

- Thomas, Alan. "Consequentialism, Integrity and Demandingness." In *The Problem of Demandingness: New Philosophical Essays*, edited by Timothy Chappell. Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.
- Toner, Christopher. "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics." *Philosophy* 81, no. 4 (2006): 595-618.
- Tormey, Judith. "Exploitation, Oppression, and Self-Sacrifice." In *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation*, edited by Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky. Putnam, 1976.
- Trivigno, Franco. "A Virtue Ethical Case for Pacifism." In *Virtues in Action: New Essays in Applied Virtue Ethics*, edited by Michael W. Austin. Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Usta, Jinan, and Jo Ann M. Farver. "Is there Violence in the Neighborhood? Ask the Children." *Journal of Public Health* 27, no. 1 (2005), 3-11.
- Varden, Helga. "Critical Commentary on Ann Cudd's *Analyzing Oppression*." *Symposia on Gender, Race, and Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2009).
- Walk Free Foundation. "Global Slavery Index." 2014. Accessed from [http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Global\\_Slavery\\_Index\\_2014\\_final\\_lowres.pdf](http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Global_Slavery_Index_2014_final_lowres.pdf).
- Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. Harper Perennial, 2002.
- Young, Charles M. "Aristotle on Temperance." *The Philosophical Review* 97, no. 4 (1988): 521-542.
- Young, Iris Marion. "Five Faces of Oppression." In *Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance*, editors Lisa Heldke and Peg O'Connor. McGraw Hill, 2004.
- Zaretsky, Eli. *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*. Harpercollins, 1986.
- Zaretsky, Eli. "Socialist Politics and the Family." *Socialist Revolution* (now *Socialist Review*) 19 (January-March, 1974): 83-98.
- Zeus, Leonardo. "Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Race Critique: Political Economy and the Production of Racialized Knowledge." *Policy Futures in Education* 2, no. 3-4, (2004): 483-493.