

**TOWARDS AN EMPIRICALLY AND DEVELOPMENTALLY
INFORMED ACCOUNT OF VIRTUE**

A Thesis

by

NATHAN LUIS CARTAGENA

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee, Michael LeBuffe
Committee Members, Robert Garcia
Daniel Schwartz
Head of Department, Gary Varner

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I aim to build upon recent attempts to situate a theory of virtue within work on character traits by social-cognitive scientists like Walter Mischel and Yuichi Shoda. I begin by examining the empirical adequacy of global cognitive-affective processing systems (CAPS) based character traits and virtues. I contend that empirical research does seem to support the existence of the former and is compatible with the existence of the latter.

Next, I argue that one model of moral development that is compatible with my findings in the previous chapter is the communal and tradition based model of moral development. I go on to defend the claim that this model is also well-suited to play a significant role in an account of human moral development that is in keeping with my findings in the previous chapter. Here I specifically focus on pre-adult human moral development.

I then turn my attention to consider human moral development in adults. I argue that character-friendships between adult human beings are compatible with and well-suited for CAPS based accounts of virtue that tie virtue to human flourishing. Recent empirical research on the impact of groups on helping behavior does not subvert the moral significance of character-friendships for adult moral development.

I conclude my thesis by considering future issues that CAPS based virtue theorists need to address. This discussion is undergirded by my attempt to extend CAPS based accounts of virtue by defending three primary theses. First, some CAPS based

theories of virtue are empirically adequate. Second, the communal and tradition based model of moral development is compatible and well-suited for such theories, particularly their accounts of pre-adult moral development. Third, character-friendships are compatible with and well-suited for adult moral development in said accounts of virtue. Instead of arguing for a single CAPS based account of virtue, I defend components and models of virtuous development that are consonant with a variety of accounts. Thus, while it excludes some accounts of virtue, my project is broad enough to serve as a framework for a number of different understandings of virtue.

To
Angela
my best friend and loving wife

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary virtue ethicists aim to advance psychologically informed accounts of virtue and human moral development.¹ According to some of these accounts, virtues are global character traits—they are character traits which contribute to an individual’s behavior in widely different situations—and human moral development involves the cultivation and enhancement of those traits. Several prominent philosophers and psychologists have challenged these claims.² They appeal to empirical psychological studies that, they believe, show there are no global character traits. If this is correct, then there are no virtues, much less virtues that could be relevant to an accurate account of

¹ Part of the impetus behind this has been G.E.M. Anscombe’s famous call for philosophers to stop doing moral philosophy until they provide an adequate philosophy of psychology. See Anscombe’s “Modern Moral Philosophy” in *Philosophy* 33 (1958):1-19.

Contemporary virtue theorists distinguish between virtue ethics, virtue theory, and a theory of virtue. According to these theorists, virtue ethics involves the claim that virtue is the central ethical concept to which all other moral concepts relate. Virtue theory, in contrast, involves the claim that virtue is important for moral philosophy, but may or may not be the central concept of an adequate moral philosophy. In even greater contrast, a theory of virtue involves the claim that although virtue is a constitutive component of an adequate moral philosophy, it is not the central concept for an adequate moral philosophy. I believe these distinctions have some merit. I will not, however, use them in this thesis. Instead, I will accommodate them by using the phrase “account of virtue”. I take it that this phrase is broad enough to enable my contributions to apply to all three positions so that I do not have to side with a particular position.

² See John Doris “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics” in *Nous* 32 (1998):504-530; *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gilbert Harman “Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99 (1999):315-33; “The Nonexistence of Character Traits” in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000):223-226; and Maria Merritt “Virtue Ethics and Situationist Personality Psychology” in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 3 (2000): 365-383.

human moral development. In other words, if the challenge from empirical psychology stands, then virtue theory is a non-starter.³

A promising response to these arguments, originally formulated by Christian Miller, is a cognitive-affective processing system (CAPS) based account of virtues.⁴ Building on the work of social-cognitive psychologists Walter Mischel and Yuichi Shoda, Miller argues that a CAPS account shows that global character traits do exist.⁵ Others have filled out and extended Miller's initial argument, and have proposed virtue theories based on a CAPS account of character traits.⁶ Even though these accounts have gone a long way towards providing an adequate theory of virtue, I believe they all share at least two significant shortcomings.

The first deficiency with these accounts is that they either explicitly or implicitly contain the claim that empirical support for the existence of global character traits entails empirical support for the existence of virtues. But the existence of global character traits does not necessarily entail the existence of virtues. It is possible that global character traits which are not virtues may be the only global character traits that exist. Historically

³ For discussion of how many of the initial rejoinders provided by virtue ethicists missed this point, and therefore failed to address the crux of Doris's and Harman's criticism, see Jonathan Webber's "Virtue, Character, and Situation" in *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3 (2006a):193-213 and "Character, Consistency, and Clarification" in *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy* 115 (2006b): 651-658.

⁴ For examples of other responses see Nafsia Athanassoulis, "A Response to Harman: Virtue Ethics and Character Traits," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 215-221; Michael DePaul, "Character Traits, Virtues, and Vices: Are There None?" *Proceedings of the World Congress of Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999); Rachana Kamtekar, "Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Character," *Ethics* 114 (2004): 458-491; and J. Sabini and M. Silver, "Lack of Character? Situationism Critiqued." *Ethics* 115 (2005): 535-562.

⁵ See Christian Miller "Social Psychology and Virtue Ethics" in *Journal of Ethics* 7 (2003): 365-392.

⁶ For examples see Daniel Russell's *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Nancy Snow's *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

speaking, virtue theorists have acknowledged this. They have often maintained that virtues, for example, are global character traits. So an adequate account of virtue requires more than the veracity of the claim that empirical research suggests that global traits exist. It at least requires the veracity of the claim that empirical research is compatible with the existence of virtues.

The second deficiency these accounts share is that they do not provide much of an account of human moral development, let alone one that they demonstrate is compatible with CAPS.⁷ For those who do provide a discussion of human moral development, they tend to focus nearly exclusively on human moral development within adults. Such a dearth of discussion about how pre-adults can or do morally develop is particularly troubling from a CAPS based perspective, because proponents of this perspective emphasize that social learning history plays a central role in the content and structure of character. Thus the relative silence by virtue theorists on pre-adult moral development is quite disquieting given the extremely formative nature of pre-adult years for human beings.⁸

In this thesis, I aim to start to address these shortcomings by extending CAPS accounts of virtue in three ways. First, I argue for the empirical adequacy of some CAPS

⁷ I take it that Nancy Snow provides some of the best discussions of human moral development within a CAPS based perspective in *Virtue as Social Intelligence*. Yet even her work leaves the vast majority of issues involved with human moral development to the side. For a similar observation, particularly regarding Neo-Aristotelian CAPS based accounts of virtue, see Christian Miller's, "Character Traits, Social Psychology, and Impediments to Helping Behavior" in *Journal of Ethics and Social Psychology* 5 (2010).

⁸ I believe this claim applies to nearly all contemporary virtue theorists. To my knowledge, not one of the leading proponents of virtue theory has done much to elucidate the process of human moral development within pre-adulthood.

based accounts of virtue. Second, I set forth a model of human moral development that is compatible with and well-suited for pre-adult human moral development within such accounts. Third, I contend that character-friendships between adult human beings are compatible with and well-suited to play a significant role in adult human moral development from the perspective and resources of the previous model and a CAPS understanding of virtues. I will now briefly explain how I plan to accomplish these three tasks.

I begin my attempt to establish the empirical adequacy of some CAPS accounts of virtue in Chapter II by arguing that there are good empirical reasons to believe CAPS based character traits exist. Because the existence of character traits does not entail the existence of global character traits, I move on to contend that there are good empirical reasons to believe that global CAPS character traits exist. I then evaluate what types of global character traits are compatible with a number of seminal experiments in social psychology. I argue that the findings of these experiments are compatible with the claim that global CAPS based mixed traits exist.⁹ I call these character traits ‘mixed traits’ because even though they are morally relevant and often contribute to what many deem morally appropriate behavior, they consist of one or more motivations that virtue theorists historically have argued are morally inappropriate. It is this characteristic, I take it, that distinguishes global mixed traits from virtues—global mixed character traits

⁹ I am indebted to Christian Miller for the phrase ‘mixed trait’. I will say more about the history and significance of this phrase in the next chapter.

which do not consist of morally inappropriate motivations.¹⁰ I go on to maintain that some accounts of virtue are compatible with the previously mentioned experiments. Here I specifically highlight accounts of virtue that hold that virtues, for whatever reason, are rare. I conclude chapter two by arguing that it seems conceptually and logically possible for human beings to develop global mixed traits into virtues.

Having addressed the empirical adequacy of a CAPS based account of virtue, I turn my attention in Chapter III to human moral development, specifically pre-adult moral development. Here I aim to provide one model of human moral development that is compatible with my claims about CAPS based accounts of virtue and also has the resources to address pre-adult moral development in human beings. I argue that the communal and tradition based model of moral development meets these requirements. Rather than attempt to vindicate this model against competing models, I only contend that it is a model, perhaps one of many, that is compatible with empirically adequate CAPS based accounts of virtue.

In Chapter IV I move on to consider human moral development in adults. Here I attempt to identify a vehicle of adult human moral development that is compatible with my conclusions about CAPS based accounts of virtue and the communal and tradition based model of human moral development. I start by contending that adult character-friendships meet these criteria. I then proceed to argue that character-friendships are well-suited to play a significant role in adult human moral development within CAPS

¹⁰ I realize that this claim is not consistent with every historical or contemporary account of virtue. I address this issue in the next chapter.

based accounts of virtue that tie virtue to human flourishing. I conclude this chapter by maintaining that recent empirical research on the impact of groups on moral issues such as human helping behavior supports rather than subverts the importance of character-friendships in adult moral development.

I conclude in Chapter V by considering a number of issues that virtue theorists who subscribe to CAPS based accounts of virtue need to address. In the end, I hope to provide a framework for CAPS based accounts of virtue that contemporary virtue theorists can utilize to begin to address these issues and in so doing construct an adequate account of virtue. In light of this goal, I have intentionally chosen not to make claims regarding the necessity or sufficiency of the community and tradition based model of human moral development or the role of character-friendships in adult moral development. Nor for that matter do I make such claims about the rareness of the virtues or the view that virtues are tied to human flourishing. I have done this with the hope of presenting a view compatible with a number of rival accounts of virtue.

CHAPTER II

CAPS, MIXED TRAITS, AND VIRTUE

Since the publication of John Doris's 1998 essay "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics", several prominent philosophers and psychologists have challenged the empirical adequacy of accounts of virtue and models of human moral development which incorporate such accounts.¹¹ While I acknowledge that some accounts of virtue are empirically adequate, I do not believe that all of them are.

In this chapter, I will examine and argue for the empirical adequacy of some accounts of virtue that are based on a CAPS based account of character traits. In doing so, I will defend the following theses. First, there are good empirical reasons to believe CAPS based character traits exist. Second, there are good empirical reasons to believe that global CAPS character traits exist. Third, a number of social psychological experiments are compatible with the claim that global CAPS based mixed character traits—character traits which consist of at least one motivation that virtue theorists historically have argued are not compatible with the motivations that are constitutive of virtues—exist. Fourth, these same experiments are compatible with some CAPS based accounts of virtues. Here I specifically highlight accounts of virtue that hold that virtues are rare. Fifth, it appears conceptually and logically possible for human beings to develop mixed traits into virtues.

¹¹ See John Doris "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics" in *Nous* 32 (1998):504-530. See footnote one in chapter one for a comprehensive list of those who agree with Doris.

CAPS: An Outline

In order to defend my claim that there are good empirical reasons to believe that global CAPS character traits exist, I will begin by providing an outline of the salient features of CAPS accounts of character traits. These accounts derive from social-cognitive research on human personalities.¹² Social-cognitivists acknowledge that the underlying assumption behind the methods and conclusions of this research is that human beings are interpretive creatures. Because of this, social-cognitivists argue that attempts to understand and explain human behavior must take into consideration the meanings that situations and behaviors have for the individuals under evaluation. Furthermore, social-cognitivists contend that human personalities and interpretative patterns are the result of the complex interaction of numerous cognitive and affective processes.¹³ According to Mischel and Shoda, the best way to conceptualize and evaluate these interactions is as a cognitive-affective processing system, or CAPS.¹⁴

Mischel and Shoda hold that the social-cognitive units of CAPS—its variables—consist of beliefs, desires, expectations, feelings, goals, self-regulatory plans, and values. They also hold that external and internal stimuli activate these social-

¹² In the following presentation of CAPS, I borrow some of the structure of Snow's presentation of CAPS in *Virtue as Social Intelligence*. See especially pages 19-34.

¹³ For in-depth discussions of these claims see W. Mischel, "Toward a Cognitive Social Learning Reconceptualization of Personality" in *Psychology Review* 80 (1973):252- 283; W. Mischel and Y. Shoda, "A Cognitive-Affective System Theory of Personality: Reconceptualizing Situations, Dispositions, Dynamics, and Invariance in Personality Structure" in *Psychological Review* 102 (1995):246-268, and "Toward a Unified, Intra-Individual Dynamic Conception of Personality" in *Journal of Research in Personality* 30 (1996):414-428, and D. Cervone and Y. Shoda, *The Coherence of Personality: Social-Cognitive Bases of Consistency, Variability, and Organization* (New York: Guilford, 1999).

¹⁴ This is, of course, a strong break from Mischel's early work, in which he provides the ground work for psychological and philosophical situationism. See Mischel's *Personality and Assessment* (New York: Wiley, 1968).

cognitive units.¹⁵ Because the claim about external stimuli is not contested, I will only provide examples of activations in response to internal stimuli.

CAPS proponents typically refer to imaginings and practical reason as token examples of internal stimuli. With respect to the former, I take it that imaginings can include states such as daydreaming and attempts to conjecture about one's health at a future age. For example, Natasha may experience a rush of anxiety as she day dreams about being the star of her new high school's basketball team, because she begins to entertain the possibility that the talents of the other incoming freshmen could jeopardize her long held goal to be the star player. Even though Natasha has never watched any of the incoming freshmen play, and has not heard reports that any of them are exceptional basketball players, she still cannot easily shake off her feelings of anxiety. She decides to address her anxiety by practicing her dribbling and shooting techniques. A CAPS proponent would contend that Natasha's anxiety is a product of internal stimuli. Her daydreaming produces her belief that others may impede her from being the star player. This belief interacts with Natasha's long held desire and goal to be the star player, and produces her feeling of anxiety. The interaction of these social-cognitive units directly contributes to Natasha's decision to practice basketball techniques.¹⁶

Similarly, while conjecturing about his state of health twenty or thirty years in the future, Jim begins to fear that his current lack of exercise and poor diet may lead to

¹⁵ When social-cognitivists use the term activate, I understand them to mean something analogous to 'cause' or 'produce'.

¹⁶ I do not say produces here because that would fail to account for the role that Natasha's practical reasoning plays. I discuss that role below.

heart disease. He quickly thinks about the yearly number of deaths that are caused by heart disease. Fearing that his current lifestyle may keep him from living twenty to thirty more years, Jim recommits to the goal of rigorous exercise three times a week. Thus the interaction of Jim's belief that rigorous exercise will help to diminish the likelihood of him dying from heart disease with his goal not to die prematurely generates his recommitment to exercising. Internal stimuli, argue CAPS proponents, produces this interaction.

The previous examples also highlight how practical reasoning can serve as internal stimuli that activate the social-cognitive units of one's CAPS. In the former case, Natasha's decision to practice basketball techniques is partially the product of her practical reasoning skills responding to her belief that incoming freshmen may impede her goal of being the star of the high school basketball team. That is to say, although daydreaming activates her belief about the possible threat to her basketball goal, her practical reasoning activates her belief that practicing basketball techniques *now* will abate this possible threat. As she considers her goal and what acts will help her attain it, she activates the specific belief that she should practice a certain set of basketball techniques *now*, a belief which she did not have before or during her daydreaming episode. Likewise, Jim's decision to recommit to rigorous exercise is a product of the complex interaction of beliefs and goals that his practical reasoning activates. After thinking about his future health, he engages in practical reasoning to determine how best to mitigate his fear and avoid the possibility of dying from heart disease. This activates his belief that he should recommit to the goal of exercising three times a week. Note that

his decision does not include the alteration of his diet. I have included this absence to highlight that people often do focus on one aspect of a belief or goal that causes them to engage in practical reasoning.¹⁷ Jim does identify his poor diet as a possible cause of heart disease. However, this belief does not continue to influence him by playing a role in his practical reasoning.¹⁸ Before I propose any CAPS based explanations for why this may have happened, I need to introduce three other features of a CAPS account of character traits.

Recall that social-cognitivists believe people always interpret the stimuli to which they respond. According to Mischel and Shoda, pre-existing personality variables such as temperament and social learning history influence how people interpret stimuli. Some people, for example, are temperamentally disposed to feel threatened. Therefore, these people are prone to interpret stimuli through the category of threatening. This influences their reactions to external stimuli, perhaps keeping them within a certain domain of action. Typically it reinforces their natural disposition as well.

Suppose that Harry, for example, is temperamentally disposed to feel threatened. Furthermore, suppose that one way Harry manifests this disposition is by feeling fear when he hears people speak loudly; whenever Harry hears loud voices, he feels fear and believes that he may be in danger. In other words, Harry's temperamentally laden interpretation of the external stimuli of loud voices activates his feeling of fear and belief

¹⁷ I do not here mean to suggest that once Jim comes to a decision via his practical reasoning that his practical reasoning will no longer play a role in his immediate decision making. There often is a feedback loop between the result of one's practical reasoning and further instances of practical reasoning.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the role of CAPS in dietary change and maintenance see Alexander Rothman, et.al. "Reflective and Automatic Processes in the Initiation and Maintenance of Dietary Change" in *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 38 (2009):S4-S17.

that he may be in danger.¹⁹ This picture becomes significantly more complex when we take into consideration the influence of Harry's social learning history on his natural temperament.²⁰ The relationship between these two entities is that of a feedback loop. Harry's natural temperament contributes to him interpreting the stimuli of loud voices through the category of threatening. When threatening things do correlate with loud voices (perhaps Harry is excoriated or physically attacked) Harry's natural temperament and aversion to loud voices is reinforced. Thus there is a feedback loop between Harry's temperament and social learning history.

This does not mean, however, that the feedback loop is deterministic. Indeed, CAPS proponents present the feedback loop in probabilistic terms. Where noises consistently produce undesirable events, Harry is more likely to respond with fear to new noises. Where they do not, he is less likely. In other words, if Harry encounters numerous instances when the activation of his fear and belief about being threatened prove to be unwarranted because nothing undesirable happens, then his temperament, method of interpretation, and activation of the former feeling and belief may significantly subside. Thus one is only warranted in speaking and thinking probabilistically about the influence of temperaments and their reinforcement in an individual's social learning history.

¹⁹ The exact chronological order of these does not matter for the purposes of this example.

²⁰ As I understand it, there are at least three ways a temperament can be natural. A temperament may be caused by genetic factors, prenatal developmental factors, or a combination of the previous two factors. I take it that all three ways are plausible, and that particular temperaments may be rightly attributed to any of them.

The reinforcement of Harry's temperament does point to another feature of CAPS based accounts of character traits. CAPS theorists maintain that the repeated activation of a specific set of social-cognitive units to a specific set of stimuli can build a rather stable personality or character trait. The consistent and repeated interpretation of a set of stimuli leading to the repeated activation of a set of beliefs, self-regulatory plans, desires, and goals can forge a stable and reliable trait. In Harry's case, his temperaments, feelings of fear, and beliefs that he may be in danger all could contribute to a stable and reliable trait such as timidity.

This brings us to the third feature of CAPS based accounts of character traits that I want to highlight. CAPS based theorists draw a distinction between the structure of character traits and the dynamics of trait interaction.²¹ Mischel and Shoda contend that traits are specific sets of social-cognitive units that have been regularly activated in response to internal or external stimuli. The social-cognitive units that make up a trait are interconnected in the sense that the activation of one *can* activate the others. I emphasize the word 'can' because Mischel and Shoda also argue that the activation of some social-cognitive units can impede the activation of others. For example, seeing a homeless man on the street may activate my belief that I should give money to people in need. This belief may activate my belief that one is not necessarily helping another if one provides the financial means for that person to continue to harm themselves. Perhaps that belief activates my desire not to give money to people who would use it to harm themselves. The activation of the previous belief and desire may well keep me from

²¹ I am indebted to Nancy Snow for this formulation. See Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 20.

giving the homeless man money and thus impede the activation of plans that would have been in keeping with my initial belief.

We are now ready to reconsider why Jim may not have committed to altering his diet. Perhaps Jim has developed a stable trait that consists of (1) the belief that he could die from heart disease; (2) the belief that exercise is a way to abate the threat of dying from heart disease; (3) the desire to exercise to avoid dying from heart disease; (4) specific exercise goals; (5) self-regulation plans that help him achieve the latter goals; and (6) the feeling of confidence. The structure of this trait allows for the possibility that Jim never thinks much about dietary changes. The activation of his first belief could easily lead to the activation of the other social-cognitive units that make up the rest of the trait without activating the belief that he should change his diet.

To this point, I have considered five features of the CAPS account: the assumption that human beings are interpretive creatures; the claim that the interpretation of external and internal stimuli activates social-cognitive units; the belief that pre-existing personality variables influence how people interpret stimuli; the claim that repeated activation of a specific set of social-cognitive units to specific set of stimuli builds a rather stable character trait; and the distinction between the structure of character traits and the dynamics of trait interaction. With accounts of two final features, we will be in a position to discuss the empirical adequacy of global CAPS character traits. These features involve the generalizability of CAPS. Because of the nature of character traits, Mischel and Shoda argue that traits can be described in terms of “if...then” behavioral signatures. Behavioral signatures describe the relationship

between a person's behavior and their construal of stimuli, especially external stimuli, over time.²² Thus the "ifs" do not only refer to the objective stimuli in a situation, but also to the meaning or interpretation a person typically gives to those stimuli. Nancy Snow summarizes the point well when she says that given a substantial amount of evidence "of consistent behavioral reactions under certain psychological conditions, we can typically predict behavior and attribute traits."²³ For example, we could make the following conditional statement about Harry: "If Harry perceives that he is being threatened, he will typically be timid."²⁴

The second aspect I wish to note is that CAPS character traits can be generalizable over a wide range of objectively different situations. This is because the meanings or interpretations individuals give to objectively different situations can, over time, build up and activate the same trait and trait-based response. The components of Harry's timidity may activate because he perceives the tone of his wife as being threatening. Similarly, the same trait can activate because Harry perceives the glance his boss gives him as being threatening. In both situations the trait can be the same, because

²² The amount of time varies. In one experiment, Mischel and his colleagues composed behavioral signatures for eighty-four children after six weeks of observing them at a summer camp. See Y. Shoda, W. Mischel, and J.C. Wright, "Intraindividual Stability in the Organization and Patterning of Behavior: Incorporating Psychological Situations in the Idiographic Analysis of Personality" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67 (1994):674-687.

²³ Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 21.

²⁴ Note that this formulation captures the probabilistic nature of CAPS that I highlighted in my discussion of the feedback loop between social history and trait reinforcement.

repeated encounters with stimuli that Harry perceives as being threatening have built up the stable trait structure of timidity.²⁵

Global CAPS Character Traits: A Brief Defense

We are now in a position to consider the empirical adequacy of the claims that CAPS character traits and global CAPS character traits exist. So far my examples have only served to help elucidate the conceptual issues involved with CAPS accounts of character traits. From these examples it obviously does not follow that CAPS accounts of character traits, global or otherwise, are empirically adequate. Before we consider any experimental findings, we should note that CAPS can be global traits. This follows from the fact that human beings can cultivate CAPS so that they are generalizable over a wide range of objectively different situations.²⁶ This, of course, does not mean that they have to or as a matter of contingent fact always do become so generalized. Let us now turn our attention to consider whether any empirical findings in social psychology support the empirical adequacy of the claims that CAPS character traits and global CAPS character traits exist.

One of the significant studies Shoda, Mischel, and their colleague Wright performed to verify their account of CAPS took place at a children's summer camp in

²⁵ For similar arguments see Miller, "Social Psychology," 382-389, Russell, *Practical Intelligence*, 323-331, and Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 31-34.

²⁶ See my discussion of the fourth and fifth features of CAPS character traits for a presentation and defense of this claim.

New Hampshire.²⁷ Over the course of six weeks, researchers observed eighty-four children participate in objective situations such as woodworking sessions, and five different interpersonal situations—(1) positive contact between peers; (2) teasing, provocation, or threatening between peers; (3) praising by adults; (4) warning by adults; (5) and punishing by adults—that occurred in the objective settings. The observers focused on the interpersonal situations, which the researchers chose based on previous interviews they had held with the children that enabled them to gain an understanding of the types of interpersonal situations that were important for the children at the camp. We should note that, “[e]ach of the interpersonal situations incorporated a different combination of two psychologically salient features: whether the interpersonal interaction was initiated by a peer of the subject or by an adult counselor, and whether the interaction was valenced positive or negative.”²⁸ Table 1 below shows examples of how observers recorded these features.

²⁷ For the complete details of this study, see Y. Shoda, W. Mischel, and J.C. Wright, “Intraindividual Stability”, 674-687. At times I will borrow from the structure of Nancy Snows presentation of this study. For her presentation, see Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 21-25.

²⁸ Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 21-22.

Table 1: Shoda, Mischel, and Wright

Objective Situation	Interpersonal Situations	Psychological Situations
E.g. Woodworking	(1) <i>When peer initiated positive contact</i>	Peer, positive
	(2) <i>When peer teased, provoked, or threatened</i>	Peer, negative
	(3) <i>When adult praised</i>	Adult, positive
	(4) <i>When adult warned</i>	Adult, negative
	(5) <i>When adult punished</i>	Adult, negative

Source: Shoda, Mischel, and Wright 1994, Table 1, 676.

Throughout the study, subjects experienced each of the five interpersonal situations at a minimum of six times. Additionally, during each hour of camp events, observers recorded the frequency of five forms of behavior that subjects demonstrated in the five interpersonal situations: (1) verbal aggression; (2) physical aggression; (3) whined or displayed babyish behavior; (4) complied or gave in; and (5) talked prosocially.²⁹

Within this setup, Shoda, Mischel, and Wright tested two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that subjects would exhibit stable situation-behavior profiles that are unique to each subject and illuminate each subject's personality. For example, if child #11 is teased by a peer, he may consistently react with physical aggression, regardless of the situation. If child #19, on the other hand, is teased by a peer, he may consistently react with verbal aggression, regardless of the situation. In other words, "researchers

²⁹ I am indebted to Snow for this succinct formulation of the five behaviors the observers looked for during the study. Also, 'prosocially' refers to conversations in which children expressed a concern for the needs of others apart from what may have benefited them.

hypothesized that consistent reactions to different interpersonal situations give insight into an individual's personality."³⁰

The second hypothesis the researchers tested is that meaning across-situational behavioral consistency is undergirded by the similarity in meaning that different situations have for human beings. For example, if child #3 reacts with physical aggression to being teased by his peers, regardless of what objective situation, his behavioral consistency in these different situations is undergirded by the meaning that the interpersonal situation of a peer teasing him has for him.

The researchers' findings supported both of the hypotheses. With respect to the first, each child had a unique situation-behavior profile. For example, although a number of children had unique and relatively stable profiles for verbal aggression, child #17's was the most stable. According to Shoda, Mischel, and Wright, situation-behavior profiles "[t]ended to constitute a predictable nonrandom facet of individual differences."³¹ In other words, the stable tendencies the observers recorded highlight the uniqueness of each subject's personality and character.

As for the second hypothesis, that cross-situational behavioral consistency is undergirded by the similarity in meaning that different situations have for human beings, researchers found that the likelihood of particular responses to a similar interpersonal situations in a wide range of situations was greater than the likelihood of its occurrence across different types of interpersonal situations. Furthermore, as Snow observers,

³⁰ Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 22.

³¹ Shoda, Mischel, and Wright, "Intraindividual Stability", 682.

additional “[s]upport for this claim is provided by the researchers’ finding that as the number of shared psychological features of interpersonal situations decreased, the consistency of individual differences in behavior also decreased.”³²

The findings of this experiment suggest that CAPS based character traits exist. Furthermore, the findings also support the claim that there are good reasons to believe that global CAPS based character traits exist. The fact that the children had distinct, stable behavioral profiles across a wide range of situations is in step with the notion of a global character trait. Let us now turn to another experiment to consider whether it supports the two claims in question.

A group of researchers performed a study to better understand why white males in rural and small suburban areas in the southern states of the USA are twice as likely to commit a homicide as a result of an argument than their northern counterparts.³³ The researchers tested the hypothesis that these results are due to a culture of honor that exists in the southern states, but not the northern states. They took a sample of all white male citizens of the USA studying at the University of Michigan and divided them into two groups, southerners (someone who lived in a southern state for at least six years) and northerners (someone who had lived in a southern state for less than six years, including none at all). The average southerner had lived eighty percent of his life in a southern state, whereas the average northerner had only lived five percent of his life in a southern state. The researchers concluded before the study that evidence for the

³² Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, 24.

³³ See Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Oxford and Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).

hypothesis would correspond to the existence of signs that southerners were significantly more likely to react violently to insults than northerners.

The format of the experiment was quite simple. Each subject would complete a questionnaire, deliver it to a room at the other side of a long corridor, and return to the initial room. Some subjects passed an individual in the corridor who had to close a filing cabinet to let them pass on the way down and back. The person closing the cabinet would use their shoulder to bump the subject as they passed. The person would then mutter an insult. Subjects who served as the control for the experiment walked down an empty corridor. The experiment consisted of three further variations. In one variation, the subjects had to complete a story, which involved Jill telling her fiancé Steve that a mutual friend Larry, who knew they were engaged, had been attempting to make moves on her, and only stopped when he thought Steve saw him trying to kiss Jill. Seventy-five percent of insulted southerners completed the story with Steve harming or threatening to harm Larry, whereas only twenty percent of control southerners did so. Whether or not northerners had been insulted made no statistically relevant difference to the way northerners completed the story.

In the second variation, subjects took saliva tests both before they completed their questionnaire and after they returned from delivering it at the other end of the corridor. Researchers measured the differences in two hormones: cortisol, which associates with high levels of anxiety; and testosterone, which associates with aggression. In southerners who were insulted, cortisol levels rose by an average of seventy-nine percent, whereas in control southerners, it only rose by an average of forty-

two percent. In northerners who were insulted, cortisol levels only rose by an average of thirty-three percent, whereas in control northerners, it rose to an average of thirty-nine percent. The researchers observed similar results in testosterone levels. In southerners who were insulted, testosterone levels rose twelve percent, whereas they only rose four percent in control southerners. In insulted northerners, testosterone levels rose six percent, whereas in control northerners it only rose four percent. Thus there clearly is a significantly greater average increase in the two hormone levels for insulted southerners than for either northern group.

In the third variation, the subjects returning from the end of the corridor encountered someone coming from the other direction: a large college football player. Every subject gave the football player space to pass. Yet the amount of room that they gave varied. Insulted southerners provided an average of three feet of space, whereas control southerners gave about nine feet. Insulted northerners provided an average of six feet of space, whereas control northerners gave five and half feet. Thus the impacts of insults on southerners were significantly greater than insults on northerners.

The findings of this experiment once again provide good reasons to believe that CAPS based character traits and global CAPS based character traits exist. The likelihood that an individual would manifest a more aggressive or violent behavior or substantial physiological response strongly correlated with the geographical location in which the person had lived most of his life.³⁴ In other words, the claim that many southerners have

³⁴ Numerous other studies have confirmed the existence of such geographically influenced traits. We will consider two such cases in the next section.

a character trait to act aggressively and violently to insults has the explanatory and predictive power to account for the results. Because many male southerners have an interpretive framework and set of beliefs, feelings, and goals that activate when they construe a situation as an instance where someone insults them, they are likely to act in an aggressive or violent manner when they construe that someone has insulted them.

While I recognize that the cross-situational nature of this experiment is far more limited than that of Shoda, Mischel, and Wright, I think that when one considers it in light of the fact that southern whites from rural or small suburban towns are twice as likely to commit a homicide as a result of an argument than their northern counterparts, one has good reasons to believe that global CAPS based character traits exist. Many male southerners have a global character trait that helps to produce aggressive and violent behavior across a wide range of situations. So long as they perceive that someone has insulted them, the global character trait involved with this behavior will activate. The activation of this trait is likely to cause a strong physiologically and psychologically response in the southern male.

CAPS, Mixed Traits, and Virtues: A Taxonomy and Defense

Thus far I have presented the salient features of a CAPS account of character traits and have argued that two experiments support the claims that CAPS character traits and global CAPS character traits exist. Given that virtues are by definition global character traits, it seems at the very least plausible that virtues are a subset of CAPS. In other words, because on this view all character traits are a form of CAPS character traits,

virtues are by definition a subset of CAPS character traits. Of course, it does not follow from this that all CAPS character traits are virtues. Virtue theorists readily acknowledge this. They maintain that vicious character traits, e.g. self-centeredness and pride, and non-vicious character traits, e.g. promptness and tidiness, do exist.³⁵ Furthermore, virtue theorists also acknowledge that these character traits can be global in nature. I may, for example, demonstrate the character trait of tidiness over a wide range of locations and situations. Although a global nature is not a logical requirement that non-virtue character traits must meet to be a subset of CAPS character traits, I believe that we should recognize this so that we do not hold that virtues are conceptually distinct from other character traits because they and they alone are global in nature.

To understand why the latter point is significant, let us consider an important question that arises when we acknowledge the existence of CAPS character traits that are not virtues: What distinguishes a virtue from other character traits? We clearly cannot answer this question by asserting that virtues are global character traits, whereas non-virtue character traits are not. Although being global is a necessary condition for a virtue, it is not a sufficient condition. Again, most virtue theorists would not argue that my global character trait of tidiness is a virtue. Thus not only does this definition fail, but its failure demonstrates that the existence of global character traits does not necessarily secure the existence of virtues.

³⁵ For examples of how virtue theorists distinguish between virtues and other character traits see Julia Annas's *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Robert M. Adams's *A Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). I will say more about this below.

Historically speaking, many virtue theorists have willingly conceded this fact, and have gone on to provide definitions of virtue that incorporate additional necessary conditions. I believe we can summarize a number of these definitions with the following working definition: virtues are globally efficacious dispositions to do a good or right action in a specific situation for good or morally appropriate motivations.³⁶ We should note several components of this definition.

First, the phrase ‘globally efficacious’ highlights the cross-situational, global, nature of virtues. If I have the global character trait of courage, then I will typically act in a courageous way when I am in objectively different situations where courage is morally appropriate. Second, the term disposition serves as a stand in for the term character traits; character traits simply are dispositions that consist of social-cognitive units like beliefs, feelings, and goals.³⁷ As such, these mental entities play a causal role in the behavior of the agent who possesses them. Recall timid Harry. Because Harry possesses the globally efficacious character trait of timidity, he has a disposition to act timidly when he perceives that a situation is threatening. Third, virtues are distinct from non-virtue character traits like timidity, which typically does not contribute to good or right action, because they typically cause one to act well or in accordance with right

³⁶ I admit that this formulation does not account for all of the historically significant definitions of virtue. Because of this, much of what proceeds will not apply to a number of important accounts of virtue (e.g. Adams’s (2006), Driver’s (2001), Hume’s (1740, 2007), Hurka’s (2001)). However, I take it that this formulation is in keeping with the important accounts of virtue championed by Aristotle (2001), Augustine (1953, 1955, 1971), Thomas Aquinas (1992, 2005), and Julia Annas (2011). I will address the significance of the diverse range of definitions of virtue later in this thesis.

³⁷ Dispositional language is not new to contemporary accounts to virtue. Julia Annas points out that “all ancient theories understand a virtue to be, at least, a disposition...” See *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9. I take it that at least one significant difference between a disposition and a habit is that it is not a necessary condition of habits that they consist of goals, feels, beliefs, and desires whereas these are necessary conditions for a disposition that is a virtue.

action. Here I use the word ‘typically’ to accommodate instances where a feature of a situation makes it impossible for one to manifest their virtue. Let us pause to elucidate what I mean.

Suppose, for example, that I have the virtues justice and compassion. Further suppose that I live in a death camp where I do not receive adequate nutrition, and therefore am emaciated, and I frequently witness the brutal and gratuitous execution of multitudes every day. As I witness a guard prepare to drag and execute a young child, I may interpret the situation in such a way that both my virtues of justice and compassion move me. These virtues activate my desire to stop the guard from killing the child. Yet my emaciated state and lack of weapons keep me from acting on these virtues. I can only turn away as I hear the echoes of the guard’s discharged gun. This example elucidates the type of features that virtue theorists believe make it truly impossible for a virtuous person to act in accordance with their virtue. Simply experiencing a minor impediment, such as being in a poor mood, does not qualify as something that makes the manifestation of a virtue impossible.

The fourth component of the definition of virtue I have provided that we should consider is the phrase ‘specific situation’. Virtue theorists incorporate this to emphasize the non-abstract nature of the actions that virtues cause. That is to say, they believe virtues are traits that help one act well given the specifics of their situation. They believe this focus on the particulars of concrete situations is a strength that their moral theory has over those which stress abstract moral reasoning that involves the application of

abstract moral principles. Indeed, this feature is one reason why virtue theorists have historically emphasized the importance of the virtue of practical wisdom.

The final component we need to consider is the phrase ‘for good or morally appropriate motivations.’ Virtue theorists use this to draw attention to the importance of the motives that cause one to perform a particular act. In order for an action to have its origin in a virtue, virtue theorists argue, the proper motives must produce said action. Furthermore, I take it that virtue theorists who would subscribe to my definition of virtue would deny that any action proceeded from a virtue if an improper motivation played a causal role in its production. For example, these virtue theorists would contend that even if part of the motivation for my successful attempt to rescue Bill Gates from a collision with an oncoming car was that I thought it would cause him to give me a large amount of money, then I did not manifest a virtue like courage, bravery, or compassion.

With our working definition of a virtue in hand, we may now return to our consideration of the relationship between CAPS character traits and virtues. From what we have said thus far, even though there are good reasons to believe that global CAPS character traits exist, it still does not follow that virtues, as I have described them, exist. Given the empirical and predictive nature of our working definition of virtue, I believe we must once again turn to empirical psychology to ascertain whether or not virtues exist. Although an exhaustive or comprehensive presentation of the relevant findings is beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that a brief consideration of some of the most

germane experiments will allow us to get a good sense of the common trends in the findings. Thus let us turn to consider four of the relevant experiments.³⁸

Some of the most seminal experiments in social psychology are the so-called Milgram experiments.³⁹ In order to better understand how ordinary human beings could participate in atrocities like the Holocaust, Stanley Milgram set up an experiment designed to illuminate how human beings respond to authority. Subjects in the experiment received a slip of paper which informed them that they were to serve as ‘teachers’ in a scientific experiment on memory. The subjects sat in a room with a monitor and electric dial. In addition to marks which designated 15 volt intervals from 15 volts to 450 volts, the dial also had eight labels: “Slight Shock”, “Moderate Shock”, “Strong Shock”, “Very Strong Shock”, “Intense Shock”, “Extreme Intensity Shock”, “Danger: Sever Shock”, and “XXX”. In a room adjacent to the subject’s sat the subject’s students, also known as learners. The subjects would ask the learners questions that supposedly tested their memory. If the learner answered a question correctly, nothing happened to them. If, however, they answered a question incorrectly, the subjects had to turn the electric dial and administer a shock to the learner. Throughout the experiment a person in a white coat observed and at times encouraged the subject to administer the shock when the learner failed to answer a question correctly. This was, the person reminded, their responsibility as ‘teachers’.

³⁸ I will only provide examples from experiments concerned with obedience to authority and helping traits such as compassion and empathy. Part of the motivation behind this decision is that much of the relevant literature deals with precisely these three traits.

³⁹ See Stanley Milgram “Behavioral Study of Obedience” in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963):371-378; and *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

Unbeknownst to the subjects, the learners actually were actors, and the dial never actually released an electric shock. Yet every time a learner incorrectly answered a question, the subject believed they truly administered a shock to the learner. The learners further encouraged this belief by moaning, screaming, and begging the experimenters to cease the experiment at the higher levels, because they could not handle the pain from the electric shocks. The learners increased the intensity of their sounds as the power of the shock supposedly increased. If the subject questioned whether it was appropriate to continue the experiment, the person in the white coat would encourage them to proceed.⁴⁰ At the conclusion of the experiment, 65% of the subjects had continued the experiment to the 450 volt limit labeled “XXX”. That said, we should note an important observation that Milgram made in a famous passage about one of the subjects. According to Milgram, “I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse.”⁴¹ Even though this businessman did continue the experiment to the 450 volt limit, he manifested a number of significant physiological and psychological effects that suggest that he did not at all approve of his behavior.

⁴⁰ The observer had a list of four responses to make when a subject voiced their concern about the experiment: (1) “Please continue” or “Please go on”, (2) “The experiment requires that you continue”, (3) “It is absolutely essential that you continue”, and (4) “You have no other choice, you must go on.” The observer was only allowed to make these responses in sequence. If the subject continued to express concern after the fourth response, the subject was excused from the experiment.

⁴¹ Milgram, “Behavioral Study”, 377.

Since Milgram published his findings, social psychologists have carried out a number of similar experiments.⁴² For example, David M. Mantell found that Germans were considerably more obedient than Milgram's American subjects. Whereas 65% of American subjects continued the experiment to 450 volts, 85 % of Mantell's German subjects continued the experiment to 450 volts.⁴³ In an experiment with Australians, Kilham and Mann found significantly different results. Only 28% of their subjects continued the experiment to 450 volts.⁴⁴ Before I discuss the possible significance of these findings for accounts of virtue, let us turn to consider three other relevant experiments. I will cover the features of these experiments in less detail.

To better understand the influence of pleasant smells on human helping behavior, Robert Baron conducted an experiment in which he compared people's helping behavior in front of clothing stores and restaurants specializing in sweet baked goods.⁴⁵ Baron observed that 12.5% to 25% of subjects demonstrated helping behavior near the clothing stores, the control locations of the experiment. In contrast, 45% to 61% of subjects demonstrated helping behavior when they had just passed by restaurants like

⁴² As Jonathan Webber notes, "This experiment was repeated with thousands of subjects in various countries across three decades..." See Webber, "Virtue, Character, and Situation" in *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3 (2006a):196.

⁴³ David Mantell, "The Potential for Violence in Germany" in *Journal of Social Issues* 27 (1971):101-112.

⁴⁴ W. Kilham and L. Mann, "Level of Destructive Obedience as a Junction of Transmitter and Executant Roles in the Milgram Obedience Paradigm" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29 (1974): 696-702.

⁴⁵ Robert Baron, "The Sweet Smell of...Helping: Effects of Pleasant Ambient Fragrance on Prosocial Behavior in Shopping Malls" in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23 (1997): 498-503.

Cinnabon and Mrs. Field's Cookies. According to Baron, subjects acknowledged that the pleasant fragrances of the restaurants had put them in a relatively good mood.⁴⁶

In another experiment on helping traits, Latane and Darley designed situations meant to test the impact that groups and group settings have on human helping behavior. They arranged for subjects in a variety of types of groups to encounter a man experiencing what appeared like an epileptic seizure. They found that strangers in a group responded significantly slower to a perceived epileptic fit than friends in a group.⁴⁷ Additionally, they observed that subjects in a group helped at the same rate and speed as subjects who were alone if the subjects in the group had some prior interaction with a victim of a seizure.⁴⁸

The final experimental findings we will consider come from a study performed by Manucia, Baumann, and Cialdini. Researchers varied the mood of some subjects by asking them to recall and reflect upon past sad experiences. They then gave the subjects a drug which the subjects did not know was a placebo. The researchers told half of the subjects that the drug would freeze their present mood, and kept this information from the other half. When the subjects began to leave the experiment, other researchers provided them with an opportunity to volunteer their time to make a number of calls of

⁴⁶ For similar results for control subjects, see Isen and Levin "Effect of Feeling Good on Helping: Cookies and Kindness" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 21(1972):384-388; and Levin and Isen "Further Studies on the Effect of Feeling Good on Helping" in *Sociometry* (1975): 38.

⁴⁷ Latane and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help?* (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1970), 105-106.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

their choosing (between 1 and 10) for a local nonprofit blood organization.⁴⁹ The results are below in table 2.

Table 2: Manucia, Baumann, and Cialdini

	Sad Subjects	Controls
Labile Mood	58% volunteered, mean of 3.25 calls	33% volunteered, mean of 1.25
Fixed Mood	42% volunteered, mean of 1.25 calls	42% volunteered, mean of 1.58

Thus, “[S]ad subjects helped more than neutral mood controls only if they believed their mood was alterable. When sad subjects were led to believe that helping could not improve their mood, they were no more helpful than neutral mood subjects.”⁵⁰

I believe the previous four findings reflect trends within experiments in social psychology that have numerous implications for the empirical adequacy of virtues. Consider, for example, the varied results in the different versions of the Milgram experiment. American subjects were considerably more likely to obey the authority figure in the experiment than Australian subjects. Yet American subjects were also considerably less likely to obey the authority figure in the experiment than German subjects. Although one must exercise caution when one extrapolates from a handful of experiments, it does seem reasonable to interpret these findings to suggest that: (1) the

⁴⁹ I am indebted to Christian Miller for this data table. See Miller “Character Traits, Social Psychology, and Impediments to Helping Behavior” in *Journal of Ethics and Social Psychology* 5 (2010), 12.

⁵⁰ As cited in *Ibid.*.

frequency and stability of traits may vary from geographical location to another⁵¹; (2) the impact that the presence and commands of an authority figure have on a person vary, even for people from the same geographical location; and (3) for some people the presence of an authority figure who tells them to continue despite their reservations suppresses their trait to act in accordance with compassion or empathy. I take it that of these three claims, (3) is the least straightforward. I now turn to defend it.

Recall Milgram's description of the businessman before and after he completed the experiment. The physical and psychological responses of the businessman to the experiment and his participation in it suggest that he experienced a high level of internal turmoil. Elsewhere Milgram notes that many other subjects also displayed "striking reactions of emotional strain" during the experiment, and that upon completion of the experiment reported high levels of stress and nervous tension.⁵² From the perspective of a CAPS account of character traits, these responses strongly suggest that some subjects in the experiment who turned the dial to its maximum level experienced a tension between at least two competing character traits: a compassion-like trait and a trait to obey authority figures. I say compassion-like trait instead of compassion because, if the subjects had the virtue of compassion, where compassion has the features of the definition of a virtue that I defined above, then the subjects should have manifested it by not turning the dial to administer a lethal amount of electricity to a person who merely

⁵¹ I take 'geographical locations' to signify a broad range of locations including specific communities, cities, regions (e.g. states or provinces), and countries.

⁵² See Milgram, *Obedience*, chapter 8 and chapter 12 for more on experiment 13.

failed to answer a question correctly in a voluntary science experiment.⁵³ Yet these subjects did manifest features of compassion. So it seems appropriate to say that they did possess a compassion-like character trait that inclined them to cease their participation in the experiment. Moreover, they did manifest that trait in part. We see this in their physiological and psychological responses. However, this character trait ultimately was overridden by their character trait to obey authority.

Latane and Darley found similar results in their experiments on the impacts groups have on human helping behavior. According to them, “[m]any of these subjects [who did not help] showed signs of nervousness: they often had trembling hands and wreathing palms. If anything, they seemed more emotionally aroused than did the subjects who reported the emergency.”⁵⁴ I take it that such physiological and psychological responses are manifestations of compassion-like traits. Yet once again, the failure of these subjects to act fully in accordance with the virtue of compassion requires that we do not claim that they manifested compassion.

So far I have argued that the Milgram experiments and the experiments performed by Latane and Darley suggest that character traits which are not quite virtues do exist. I believe that the other two experiments also support this claim. According to

⁵³ To my knowledge, no virtue theorist who would adhere to the definition of virtue I have provided would disagree with this claim. In addition, proponents of the situationist critique highlight that the causal significance that minor situational factors have in experiments like the four we have considered should alarm those who believe in the existence of virtues. For example, “both disappointing omissions and appalling actions are *readily* induced through seemingly minor situations. What makes these findings so striking is just how insubstantial the situational influence that produce troubling moral failures seem to be” (Merritt et. al, “Character” in *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, Ed. John Doris and the Moral Psychology Research Group (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 357, emphasis theirs.

⁵⁴ Latane and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander*, 100.

my definition of virtue, a situational factor as trivial as the fragrance of cinnamon rolls and cookies should not contribute to the likelihood that human beings manifest virtues like compassion and empathy. Baron, however, found that these features do impact the likelihood that many human beings will exhibit helping behavior. Similarly, Manucia, Baumann, and Cialdini found that the ability to alter one's mood significantly impacted whether or not some people exhibited helping behavior. In this case, it seems that subjects were far more likely to help other people if they believed doing so could contribute to a change in their mood.⁵⁵ The causal influence of this selfish motive seems out of step with the notion that a virtue only consists of good or morally appropriate reasons and motives. Yet both of these findings, which social psychologists have replicated in hundreds of experiments, are compatible with the existence of a compassion-like character trait that consists of social-cognitive unites that are also constitutive components of selfishness.⁵⁶ That is, a specific selfish desire or goal may be a constitutive component of one's compassion-like trait. In addition, the extent to which and variety of locations in which social psychologists encounter these types of character traits in human beings suggests that they are quite common.

⁵⁵ A number of social psychologists believe the best model of the relationship between bad moods and helping behavior is the mood management hypothesis. According to this model, if a human being has a bad mood, then that bad mood will contribute to a motive in that human being to terminate the mood and return to a psychological state of equilibrium. See M. Schaller and R. Cialdini, "Happiness, Sadness, and Helping: A Motivational Integration," in *Handbooks of Motivation and Cognition*, Ed. E Higgins and R. Sorrentino (New York: The Guilford Press, 1990): 265-296; and S. Taylor, "Asymmetrical Effects of Positive and Negative Events: The Modilization-Minimization Hypothesis," in *Psychological Bulletin* 110 (1991): 67-85. I am indebted to Christian Miller for initially bringing this model to my attention.

⁵⁶ See Miller's "Character Traits" for a discussion of how often social psychologists have encountered and/or replicated these sort of findings in a wide range of experiments.

I believe the following working definition adequately captures both the nature of these common mixed traits and how they differ from virtues. Mixed traits are dispositions which may be generalized that contribute to an increased or decreased likelihood that one does a good or right thing. The motivations of these actions are mixed in that they are not completely good or morally appropriate.

Because of mood management mechanisms, mixed traits can either increase the likelihood that one performs a compassion-like act, for example, or that one refrains from doing so. The behavior an individual exhibits will depend upon their interpretation of their situation and the other beliefs, goals, and character traits that their interpretation activates. If they possess the goal to alleviate bad feelings through an action that they perceive is likely to cost them the least by way of personal difficulty, then they may not make a number of phone calls to a nonprofit blood organization. They may believe that this will take away too much of their time. Instead, they choose to drop a few coins in the Salvation Army Christmas container as they walk to their car. These traits are probabilistic, because they only contribute to the overall likelihood that one will or will not perform a particular action. As we have seen, the motivations are clearly mixed. Yet they always seem to consist of at least some good or morally appropriate motivations. This rules out that they are, as I have defined, vices. Finally, the experimental findings are compatible with the claim that these traits are global. From a CAPS based perspective, a global take on these traits is not only compatible with the findings, but helps to provide a rich explanatory and predictive component to the findings. For example, because global mixed traits are common in human beings, many subjects in the

Milgram experiment who continued the experiment to 450 volts demonstrated a number of compassion-like responses, e.g. suggested to stop the experiment, as they supposedly administered high levels of voltage to learners. The resources of a global CAPS character trait framework allow us to explain and predict these behaviors.

CAPS, Mixed Traits, and Virtues: A Second Defense

Thus far I have argued for three claims: (1) there are good empirical reasons to believe CAPS based character traits exist; (2) there are good empirical reasons to believe that global CAPS character traits exist; and (3) a number of social psychological experiments are compatible with the claim that global CAPS based mixed traits exist. I will now defend my final two theses: (4) these same experiments do not show that all CAPS based accounts of virtues are empirically inadequate; and (5) it appears conceptually and logically possible for human beings to develop mixed traits into virtues.

The first point we need to note as we consider thesis (4) is that the empirical evidence is compatible with global CAPS character traits. This is important for virtues because they are by definition global character traits. We have seen that this alone is not enough to secure the existence of virtues. Nor is it enough to show that the empirical evidence is compatible with the existence of virtues. I take it that this would help secure the empirical adequacy of some accounts of virtue. If the empirical findings are compatible with the existence of virtues, then perhaps some accounts of virtue are empirically adequate.

I believe we have good reason to hold that the empirical evidence is compatible with some accounts of virtue. In the Milgram experiments, for example, there are always people who refuse to harm a learner by admitting a painful or high electric shock. In Latane and Darley's epileptic experiment, there were always groups of people and individuals within the different types of groups who helped the man who seemed to need immediate assistance. Similarly, in the study Manucia, Baumann, and Cialdini performed, some people offered to make calls for the nonprofit blood organization even though they had reasons to believe that it would not help them alter their mood. The existence of these sorts of subjects surely does not entail that virtues exist. However, the fact that these people are found in every relevant experiment is compatible with some accounts of virtue. At the very least, it is compatible with the rarity thesis championed by virtue theorists such as Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Michael DePaul, and Christian Miller. By 'rarity thesis' I mean the theory that only a small number of people have the virtues, as I have defined them. The point of this theory is not to champion the importance of virtue because it is rare. Rather, the aforementioned virtue theorists hold it because they believe that it is a contingent fact about the world that few people have the virtues. Perhaps in a possible world this is not the case. The rarity thesis does not speak to that. It only consists of claims about our world. And the empirical findings in this world are compatible with this claim. Therefore, a CAPS based account of virtues that holds to the rarity thesis is compatible with the empirical evidence. From this it follows that at least some CAPS based accounts of virtue which consist of the rarity thesis are not empirically inadequate.

Even if some CAPS based accounts of virtue are empirically adequate, those accounts need to provide a story about how human beings can acquire and cultivate the virtues. As Christian Miller recently noted, such a story is conspicuously absent in contemporary accounts.⁵⁷ I believe one possible way virtue theorists can proceed in this endeavor is to hold that human beings can cultivate mixed traits into virtues. This is both conceptually and logically possible within a CAPS framework of character traits.

According to CAPS theorists, human beings can augment, eradicate, and bolster even stably developed character traits. This could involve, but is not limited to, the cultivation of a new interpretive perspective, belief, or goal. Given the ability to alter these components, I believe virtue theorists can reasonably argue that moral development from a mixed trait to a virtue will involve transforming one's mixed trait into a virtue. I recognize that this will be difficult, and probably will require a significant amount of time. Yet given the resources of the CAPS framework and the empirical findings of social psychologists, I see no reason to hold that this is impossible.

Conclusion

Contrary to the claims of several prominent psychologists and philosophers, I have argued that virtue theory still is a live option. Within the perspective of a CAPS based account of character traits, virtue theorists may offer empirically adequate theories of human behavior. The existence of mixed traits does not keep them from this. Rather, they can conceptually and logically serve as a stepping stone in the process of the moral

⁵⁷ See Miller, "Character Traits", 30-31.

development of virtues. I recognize that I need to say much more about the story of the development of mixed traits and virtues. I aim to begin to provide such a story in the next chapter. It is to that endeavor that we may now turn.

CHAPTER III

COMMUNITY AND TRADITION WITHIN

A CAPS BASED ACCOUNT OF PRE-ADULT MORAL DEVELOPMENT

We have seen that some CAPS based accounts of virtue are empirically adequate. In addition to the primary features of CAPS, these accounts consist of the claims that global mixed character traits exist, that human beings can develop global mixed character traits into virtues, and that virtues are rare.⁵⁸ I believe these claims raise several important questions about moral development. How, for example, does one acquire a global mixed character trait? Are human beings naturally born with them? If not, when do human beings acquire them? Once an individual has a global mixed character trait, how do they develop it into a virtue? Finally, and perhaps most troubling, how does one even know what constitutes as a virtue?

In this chapter, I hope at least to begin to answer these questions by discussing moral development in pre-adult human beings. I will do this in the process and context of arguing for four theses. First, I will argue that two important contemporary approaches to moral development are inadequate. Second, I will argue that one set of models of pre-adult moral development that does not have these shortcomings includes

⁵⁸ As I noted in the introduction, I am not arguing that a CAPS based account of virtue must contain the rarity thesis. I simply have argued that this thesis is compatible with the empirical findings we considered.

the community and tradition based models of moral development.⁵⁹ Third, I will contend that the broad framework of these models is compatible with the features of the CAPS based accounts of virtue that we discussed in chapter two. Finally, I will contend that these models are well-suited to play a significant role in pre-adult moral development within such CAPS based accounts of virtue and moral development.

Poor Models of Moral Development: A Refutation

During the 1970s and 80s, philosopher and psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg developed one of the most influential contemporary accounts of moral development.⁶⁰ Building off of the work of Jean Piaget, Kohlberg claimed that moral development involved six distinct stages in moral reasoning, all of which revolved around the notion of justice.⁶¹

The first two stages of Kohlberg's account deal with what he calls preconventional morality. In stage one, human beings primarily perform moral reasoning about justice based on notions of obedience to rules, which they believe are unchangeable and absolute, in order to avoid punishment. In stage two, human beings begin to reason about what is just for individuals on an individual basis. In other words, people judge the justness of an action based on whether or not it meets the needs of the individual in question. Kohlberg argues that both of these stages primarily relate to how

⁵⁹ Throughout this paper I will use the terms 'model' and 'models' rather interchangeably. While I realize that this fails to account for an important distinction, the existence of versions of this model, I do this to allow myself to speak freely about the broad framework these models have in common.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays in Moral Development 2 Vols.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, 1984).

⁶¹ Kohlberg held that "virtue is not many, but one, and its name is *justice*." See *Essays*, vol. 1, 39. For Piaget's influential works, see *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (New York: Free Press, 1932), and *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

children perform moral reasoning. Furthermore, he characterizes children in rather monolithic terms. That is, he typically neglects the differences between children of the same age, and therefore argues as though nearly every child undergoes the same stages of moral development at particular times in their lives.

The third and fourth stages of Kohlberg's account of moral development deal with what he calls conventional morality. These, along with the remaining two stages, characterize adolescents and adults. Here individuals take the concerns of society along with societal pressures into consideration during their moral deliberations. In stage three, often known as the "good boy-good girl" orientation, individuals focus on meeting social expectations and the specifics of their social roles. Kohlberg believes that human beings in this stage often focus on conforming to societal norms and on how their actions will justly or unjustly impact human relationships. This focus on others becomes crucial in stage four. Here individuals direct their moral reasoning to considerations about how a society functions smoothly. Thus they fixate on the justness of obeying the law and performing their duty.

Kohlberg characterizes the final two stages of his account of moral development as postconventional morality. Human beings in these stages focus on the need for societal consensus on issues of justice. In stage five, human beings perform moral reasoning with the aim of coming to conclusions upon which members of their society should agree. In so doing, they take into consideration the various values and beliefs of the other members of their society. In the sixth and final stage, human beings obey what have become internalized abstract principles about justice. They believe that these

principles hold true for all societies, and that they should follow them even if they conflict with the mores and laws of their society. According to Kohlberg, these types of principles are only accessible to individuals with high capacities for moral reasoning, i.e. extremely morally mature adolescents or morally mature adults.

Over the past fifteen years, philosophers and psychologists have increasingly questioned Kohlberg's account. For the purposes of our discussion, I want to consider what I take to be one of the most serious empirical deficiencies of his view. I here refer to a number of recent experiments in child psychology that have shown that children exhibit moral reasoning capacities that are far greater than what Kohlberg deemed possible. Indeed, children seem to manifest behavior that is more in keeping with the higher two stages. For example, psychologists have found that three and four year old children often can distinguish moral judgments from social or conventional judgments *and* from personal judgments.⁶² According to Kohlberg account, children cannot have the reasoning capacities necessary for making such distinctions. Furthermore, children often identify and act on rather abstract moral principles. For example, psychologists have found that children recognized and acted on the principle of equality, the claim that a group should equally divide its resources.⁶³ Again, according to Kohlberg's account, children cannot possess let alone act upon such abstract moral principles.

⁶² E. Turiel, *The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and *The Culture of Morality: Social Development, Context, and Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Although I believe these experiments with three and four year olds are problematic for Kohlberg's view, I believe recent experiments on the moral behavior of infants are even more devastating for his account. For example, childhood developmental psychologist Jessica Sommerville has found significant evidence that 15 month old infants can possess a working understanding of moral concepts such as compassion and the principle of equality.⁶⁴ When alone and encountered by a stranger who drops their pen near the infant under observation, many infants will pick up the pen and attempt to hand it to the stranger. Many infants also share their toys when they are in a situation where they can see that one particular adult stranger does not have any. Finally, many children manifest a mixture of surprise and frustration at adults who did not equally share their toys with another adult. Again, children are not supposed to have such high levels of moral reasoning and understanding on Kohlberg's view.

Before I move on to critique one other approach to moral development, I want to make two points that we should remember from Kohlberg's shortcomings. It seems that an adequate account of pre-adult moral development needs to begin at least at infancy, particularly 15 months of age. I highlight 15 months because most experiments that I am familiar with have not found anywhere near the same level of moral behavior in younger children.⁶⁵ In addition, we must refrain from viewing children, and for that matter human beings in general, in a monolithic manner. The experimenters of the studies I have referenced all cite that different children within their subject groups exhibited varying

⁶⁴ See Sommerville et al., "The Development of Fairness Expectations and Prosocial Behavior in the Second year of Life" in *Infancy* 18 (2013): 40-66.

⁶⁵ For a similar observation, see Sommerville et al. "The Development of Fairness".

levels of understanding of moral concepts and consistent moral behavior. When it comes to moral development, we need to recognize and take into consideration the differences that exist between different human beings.

As I mentioned above, I am not the only person to find Kohlberg's account of moral development inadequate. Numerous philosophers and psychologists have leveled a wide range of critiques against his position. This group includes several prominent contemporary virtue theorists.⁶⁶ I believe that many of these philosophers share a common problem; their accounts of moral development almost exclusively deal with moral development in adults. Therefore, they are inadequate, because they fail to account for the importance of pre-adult history in human moral development. Here I shall content myself with a brief examination of one of these accounts.

Nancy Snow's presentation of a CAPS based account of virtue and the development of virtues is, to my knowledge, the most empirically informed account of its kind.⁶⁷ In it she draws upon several leading psychologist in an attempt to provide a detailed account of the relationship between habitual actions, habitual virtuous actions, and goal-dependent automaticity. I find much of what Snow says about these relationships persuasive. What does trouble me, however, is that even though Snow's account involves the claim that "...repeated encounters with situational cues trigger an agent's virtue-relevant goals outside of her conscious awareness, resulting in her

⁶⁶ I believe Robert M. Adams offers a rather even handed treatment of Kohlberg's account of moral development in his book *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. chapter 12.

⁶⁷ See Snow's *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010). For the purposes of this discussion, see chapter 2.

habitual performance of virtuous actions in those circumstances”, it contains little by way of explaining how the pre-adult history of human beings impacts their development of virtuous actions and goals. Rather, Snow designates most of her account to considerations about how adults can cultivate virtues on her view. Let me suggest two reasons why this is troublesome.

As we have already seen, there are a number of studies that support the claim that even 15 month old infants are alert to moral concerns. If, as Snow would acknowledge, one’s character traits are shaped by one’s experiences and one’s methods of interpreting those experiences, then it seems reasonable and important to begin our discussions of moral development with the early stages of human experience and development. Recall, for instance, our discussion of Harry in the previous chapter. From a CAPS perspective and the perspective of the other psychological theories Snow embraces, it is possible that Harry’s temperament to feel fear when people speak loudly is connected to his experiences as an infant. It is quite possible, for example, that throughout his infancy his parents engaged in verbally loud fights that caused him great concern, hurt his ears, and contributed to his interpretative process that produces fear when he hears loud voices. Let’s assume that this pattern of behavior remained throughout the course of Harry’s pre-adult life. Given how deeply entrenched his method of interpretation is to the situational cue of loud voices, Harry may find it especially difficult to act courageously when people raise their voices at him. Whereas Snow’s account has the resources to acknowledge this and shed light on how difficult it is for Harry to act courageously in

these situations, Snow does not discuss these sorts of examples. Rather, her illustrations ignore the relevance of the entirety of an individual's history.

A second reason why Snow's nearly exclusive discussion of adults is problematic is that it ignores the importance of the stage of human life that psychologists call emerging adulthood.⁶⁸ According to psychologist Jeffery Jensen Arnett, emerging adulthood is the stage of life in which most human beings transition from adolescence to adulthood.⁶⁹ This typically takes place between the time an individual is 18 to 25 years of age.⁷⁰ During these years, most human beings decide who and what they want to become. While this is especially true of vocations and romantic relationships, Arnett notes that it is during this time that individuals look for a job and relationship that will provide them with a sense of fulfillment, it also holds for the more general moral views to which individuals subscribe. For example, many people determine whether or not to make their parent's values and goals their own during emerging adulthood. This includes the decisions to either maintain or terminate their relationship with the social group with which their parent's raised them. Either way, most human beings will assent to an idea about what they want life to be like, and they commit themselves to develop themselves in such a way that they can attain this goal.

⁶⁸ Much of my understanding of emergent adulthood is based on Erik Noftle's lecture "Stability and Change in Early Emerging Adulthood." One can access the video of this lecture at the following link on the Character Project's website: <http://thecharacterproject.com/videos.php>.

⁶⁹ Arnett pioneered the field on emerging adulthood. For his three most influential works on this see Arnett and Taber, "Adolescence terminable and interminable: When does adolescence end?" in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 23 (1994):517-537; "Learning to stand alone: The contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context" in *Human Development* 41 (1998): 295-315; and *Emerging Adulthood and the Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁰ Arnett argues that although the onset of emerging adulthood is consistent, its termination is more flexible. Indeed, he notes several instances when it seems ended when an individual was 29 years of age.

Given the importance that Snow places on how one interprets situational cues in light of their goals, it seems to me that the absence of any discussion of the role and significance that emerging adulthood has on individuals is a significant shortcoming of her account. Again, it is in these pre-adult years that human beings most clearly exercise their ability to choose who they will be and what they are willing to do to become that person. This involves the active cultivation of certain character traits, behaviors, and interpretive frameworks. Because Snow's view does not do this and it fails to address the impact of pre-adulthood on moral development, it is inadequate.⁷¹

Community and Tradition Based Model of Moral Development: A Sketch

I now want to turn to consider a model of moral development that I believe avoids the pitfalls of the previous two models. I shall call this model the community and tradition based model of moral development. Although contemporary philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Lawrence Blum have recently brought this model to the

⁷¹ At this point, one may be inclined to think philosophers such as Kohlberg and Snow do not say much about child psychology because they are not confident in our knowledge about child psychology. I have three responses to this position. First, it certainly cannot apply to Kohlberg. Indeed, his views about moral development in children come from his own experiments with children and his understanding of Piaget's findings about child psychology. Second, no contemporary virtue theorist that I know of has explicitly expressed this belief. While this does not disprove that they implicitly assume this claim, it does, I believe, place the burden of proof on those who do maintain it to show the veracity of their claim. Finally, given the amount of literature on this topic, I believe philosophers who desire to provide an account of virtue that is empirically informed need to at least acknowledge the existence of this literature and begin to interact with it. This may simply involve the recognition that philosophers need to account for this the findings in this literature. Virtue theorists, to my knowledge, have not even done this.

forefront of discussions about moral development, it is extremely old.⁷² Let us consider several of the features that many versions of this model have in common.

Blum identifies six general assumptions that, I believe, undergird many community and tradition based models of moral development.⁷³ First, human beings are only able to learn and develop virtues within particular forms of social life. Second, human beings require communities to help them sustain their virtues. To put it more strongly, human beings can only sustain virtues within a community. Third, part of every human being's moral identity is constituted by the communities in which they participate and are a part. Fourth, human beings need communities to help them appreciate and apply abstract principles in their daily lives. Fifth, some virtues only are recognizable as virtues from the perspective of a particular community. I take it that this means both that certain goods are only accessible and intelligible within a particular community, and that not all communities agree on what counts as a virtue. Finally, in order to maintain a good community and society, human beings need to cultivate civic virtues. This will, in turn, allow them to cultivate other virtues.

In addition to these features, many of the healthiest historic examples of communities that subscribed to a version of this model seem to have embraced several

⁷² For contemporary treatments of this model, see MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) ; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990); Blum's "Community and Virtue," in Roger Crisp (ed.), *How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 231-250; and *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). As I will discuss below, I take it that similar models are championed by a number of Western philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Aquinas, and Eastern Confucian philosophers including Xunzi (310-219 B.C.E.), Zhu Xi (1130-1200), and Zang Xuecheng (1527-1602).

⁷³ See Blum, "Community and Virtue", 232-234. Space prohibits me from providing a full defense of my claim and Blum's observations. I hope that this chapter at least lends plausibility to these.

more assumptions. All of them, for example, emphasized the historic side of how human beings develop. That is, they believe that human beings develop throughout their life, and that a proper account of moral development must address this. One sees this, for example, in how Augustine and Marcus Aurelius discuss their upbringing. Both of them spend a considerable amount of time detailing and thanking the impacts that various individuals and organizations had on their pre-adult and adult moral development.⁷⁴

A second feature these versions share in common is that they contain a significant strain of fallibilism. One of the clearest examples of this view is medieval Augustinianism. Because of their use of dialectical argumentation to reach first principles, medieval Augustinians emphasized the need to recognize that one should hold any conclusion that one reached in a tentative manner. MacIntyre concisely captures this practice and belief.

Since on the Augustinian conception the movement of enquiry is towards first principles, dialectic is necessarily its argumentative instrument. But since dialectic argues from premises so far agreed, or at least not put in question, to conclusions which are not necessary truths but only the most compelling conclusion to be arrived at so far, the work of dialectic always has an essentially uncompleted and provisional character. A dialectical conclusion is always open to further challenge.⁷⁵

One of the strengths of this posture is that it helps to diminish the static nature of communities. That is, because champions of this model at least theoretically

⁷⁴ For Augustine, see *The Confessions*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1963), especially books I-VIII. For Aurelius, see *Meditations*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth (London: Penguin Books, 1964), especially Book I.

⁷⁵ MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 88-89. I believe a famous historic example of this is Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of Aristotelianism with Medieval Neo-Platonism. Rather than refuse to adopt the ideas of Aristotelianism that challenge Neo-Platonism, Thomas tried to use these to extend and strengthen the Augustinian tradition.

acknowledge that their views and practices may not have *the* answers to questions about the good and social conduct, they are at least theoretically open to revisions of their beliefs and practices about such issues.

The final additional characteristic that I want to highlight is that these models typically consisted of the explicit claim that people within a community should actively seek the development, moral and otherwise, of one another. The purpose of this development was to help the individual in question maximize their potential and their personal good. It was not, for example, to manipulate a person so that they would contribute to an outcome that people within an organization or society desired.⁷⁶ This behavior typically demonstrates a lack of care for the individual. Champions of the community and tradition based model would deem this wrong and unnecessary because it would keep both the individual and their community from actually achieving virtue and the good life. Instead, they would argue that if the members of a community help one another develop and refrain from manipulating each other, they are much more likely to achieve virtue and the good life.

Up to this point we have primarily considered features of the community and tradition based models of moral development. I now want to discuss several important resources that philosophers often associate with this model. I do not mean to suggest that the features of this model do not count as resources of this model. I actually believe they

⁷⁶ One important difference between what I mean by manipulation as opposed to development is that manipulation does not take the good of the person as an important priority in the decision to encourage an individual to take a particular course of action, whereas development does. I believe these are necessary, though I doubt sufficient, conditions for both of these concepts. At the very least, I have this distinction in mind when I talk about development throughout this and the next chapter.

do. Rather, I simply mean that I now want to consider some of the more, if I may, specific resources of this model. As I do this, it is important that we remember that the wide range of resources I will discuss are meant to address this fact about human beings: different things are appropriate at different ages and stages, and different people will need different things at different ages and stages.

The first resource to note is the community. Within the community and tradition model, a number of human beings play a variety of social roles in order to help facilitate the good of that community. This, of course, includes the moral development of the individuals that make up the community. Social roles include but are not limited to familial positions, teachers, and overseers.⁷⁷ The various social roles typically help to reinforce one another. So, for example, parents are usually held as the ones who are primarily responsible for their children. Yet all of the other social roles are meant, in one way or another, to help parents care for their children. Therefore, parents inform their children to obey their teachers, for example, and in so doing help to protect and nurture those in that role. In addition, the plurality of roles within a community helps to ensure that the members of the community have resources for moral development throughout the entirety of their lives. To once again use the example of teachers, the types of teachers one requires when one is an infant are usually quite different than the types of teachers one needs when one is an emerging adult. At least one reason for this is that the

⁷⁷ Historically speaking, many of these models have included social roles such as law enforcement, political leaders, and military personnel. I have refrained from including them here because the nature of the relationship between the government of a community and the tradition of that community is too thorny of a subject, particularly in the history of the West, for me to address in this thesis.

components of moral and physical development involved with these stages of life are substantially different. We should also note that the closeness of relationships between people within the community will vary a great deal depending on the relationships and roles that the individuals in question have. Thus a parent will have a much more intimate role in the life of their child than say an individual who, as an overseer, monthly checks up on the overall health of that family.

At several points in my discussion of community I hinted at a second resource that this model has, namely teachers.⁷⁸ Here I have in mind more of the ancient and medieval conception of a teacher rather than contemporary conceptions about a school teacher. I do not mean to suggest, however, that these two types of conceptions have little in common. On the contrary, I believe they share many characteristics. My point in highlighting this distinction is instead to stress the hands-on, intimate, apprentice like relationship that was a part of the ancient and medieval conception of a teacher. Teachers in this sense are people who serve as traditional gatekeepers and moral developers. That is, they have an extremely important role in shaping how one receives the tradition of their community and what path one takes for moral development. Unlike many contemporary classrooms, where very little time is spent on the moral

⁷⁸ I acknowledge that there is a great deal of fluidity to the notion of a teacher within community and tradition based models of moral development. For instance, although champions of this model often discuss teachers in a manner that suggests that one's teachers are always distinct persons from one's parents, this actually is not always the case. Indeed, many of the functions that teachers carryout in these models are also performed by the parents. Part of the reason for this is that parents, on these models, often have the responsibility to reinforce the teachings of their children's teachers. Recognizing this, I believe that the best conceptual way to distinguish teachers from parents is to think of teachers as non-familial mentors who have the responsibility to pass on the tradition of the community while they help to develop their students.

development of the students, teachers on this conception have the responsibility to impart information, skills, and character traits to their students for their student's moral development.⁷⁹

Many philosophers would find my previous statement rather odd. "How", they might ask, "is one supposed to impart character traits to one's students?" Proponents of the community and tradition based model of moral development historically have answered this question by identifying several resources of their model that teachers have the responsibility to disseminate to their students. I will classify these within three categories: non-fictional texts, fictional texts, and songs. With respect to non-fictional texts, traditions typically have a number of historical recordings (including oral history), sacred texts, sayings of proverbs, and catechisms that members of the tradition are supposed to know. Similarly, traditions usually have a number of fictional texts such as novels, poems, stories, and plays that their members are also supposed to know. These texts serve a number of purposes. For example, they contain important doctrines that shape the tradition and community. Together these doctrines convey a portrait of what the good life for the community and the individuals within it can and should look like. The texts also convey beliefs, desires, goals, feelings (in short, virtues), ways of life, and

⁷⁹ In a recent educational meeting I attended, I heard several prominent educational figures assert that it is not the job of teachers and professors to develop their students' characters. Rather, they argued, they are simply responsible for providing them with the information they need to go on to serve within their discipline's particular professions. Ironically, I later attended a career services meeting in which several human resource managers claimed that companies are desperate to find and hire people with good character. They argued that although the job market is flooded with competent individuals, it lacks virtuous people.

somewhat concrete examples of all of these.⁸⁰ Once again, these constitute the overall picture of what the good life consists in. Songs likewise convey doctrines, beliefs, desires, pictures, etc. that help to provide yet another distinct vehicle through which individuals encounter the components of the morality and moral tradition of their community.⁸¹

Teachers, on this model, have the responsibility to ensure that their students learn these texts and songs. Within this role, teachers help their students to face, and sometimes avoid, a number of challenges. Focusing on texts, philosophers within the Confucian tradition have argued that the first challenge teachers help their students avoid is the possibility that they read inappropriate or unhelpful texts.⁸² If, for instance, the tradition of the community consists in the belief that greed is evil, teachers should try to help their students abstain from encounters with texts that present greed as attractive or good. The same holds for songs. Furthermore, the style and form of the texts and songs

⁸⁰ I do not intend this to serve as an exhaustive list. Rather, I use it to help capture the breadth of important features within these texts. Also, I recognize that some of the philosophers I associated with this model of moral development devote different amount of attention and roles to texts within their specific accounts. Plato and Aristotle, for example, do not seem to give much credence to the importance of literature. Yet they both argue that poems and dramatic plays are important for moral development (See Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, and Aristotle's *Politics*). In contrast, Philip Ivanhoe has pointed out that "...for Confuscians, an appreciation of literature and other arts has always played a central role in developing the humane sensibilities thought to be characteristic of the sage." For more on this particular difference, see Ivanhoe's "Literature and Ethics in the Chinese Confucian Tradition" in *Moral Cultivation: Essays on the Development of Character and Virtue*, ed. Brad K. Wilburn (New York: Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2007): 29-48.

⁸¹ I believe there is no reason to doubt that this method of dissemination transpires within pluralistic societies. On the contrary, I believe there a number of historic and contemporary examples that support that this does happen in pluralistic societies. Studies on Christian communities that existed during the 2nd - 4th centuries certainly seem to support this. I believe the United States is also an example of this. Indeed, my childhood experiences in public schools in New Jersey, one of the more pluralistic states in the U.S., has provided me with ample anecdotal evidence where teachers busily disseminate certain texts to shape students and their interpretative framework so that through socialization they become certain types of citizens.

⁸² Ivanhoe, "Literature and Ethics," 32.

are also important, according to many champions of this model of moral development, because they too communicate values and a vision of what one should pursue and appreciate in life.⁸³

I believe the previous statements raise an important question. Do members within a community on this model have access to resources that are external to their community and tradition? For many historic examples of these models, the answer is yes. One reason for this is that many texts that the members within a community would learn referenced rival traditions and communities. Part of the teacher's responsibility is to present these rival traditions and explain how their tradition responds to them. While I recognize the presentation that the teachers give is shaped by the teacher's tradition, I still believe this practice provides access to resources and perspectives that are external to the tradition. A second reason is that many of the historic examples of communities that engaged in this model of moral development lived in rather pluralistic settings. This required that these communities interact with the different and often time rival traditions and philosophies of their neighbors. Thus the members of all of these communities had access to external resources in so far as they had access to the rival traditions and communities in their societies.

Returning our attention back to teachers, it is important that we understand that as teachers provide their students with the proper curriculum, they also help them face the challenge of correctly interpreting this curriculum. Confucian philosophers often

⁸³ For an excellent treatment on how texts contribute to moral development, see Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

described this difficulty in terms of the fact that most of the important texts of their tradition were difficult to understand and apply. In this regard, teachers helped their students eschew inappropriate interpretations and grasp the actual lessons that their tradition's texts had to teach.⁸⁴ This already seemingly difficult task is in fact more difficult than most contemporary philosophers have recognized. The reason for this is that many champions of this model believed that students required a certain constitution before they could properly grasp the meaning of the texts. In order to acquire that constitution, however, the students needed to have grasped the meaning of the texts. I believe MacIntyre captures this paradox in the following comment about the Augustinian tradition.

In medieval Augustinian culture the relationship between the key texts of that culture and the reader was twofold. The reader was assigned the task of interpreting the text, but also had to discover, in and through his or her reading of those texts, that they in turn interpret the reader. What the reader, as thus interpreted by the texts, has to learn about him or herself is that it is only the self as transformed through and by the reading of the texts which will be capable of reading the texts aright. So the reader, like any learner within a craft tradition, encounters apparent paradox at the outset, a Christian version of the Paradox of Plato's *Meno*: it seems that only by learning what the texts have to teach can he or she come to read those texts aright, but also that only by reading them aright can he or she learn what the texts have to teach.⁸⁵

This claim raises an obvious question. How could one possibly meet the conditions set forth in this bi-conditional interpretive paradox?

The answer to this question, medieval Augustinians contended, lies in the role of the teacher. To once again quote MacIntyre,

⁸⁴ Ibid., 36-39.

⁸⁵ MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 82.

The person in this predicament requires two things: a teacher and an obedient trust that what the teacher, interpreting the text, declares to be good reasons for transforming oneself into a different kind of person—and thus a different kind of reader—will turn out to be genuinely good reasons in the light afforded by that understanding of the texts which becomes available only to the transformed self.⁸⁶

Although human beings in any stage of moral development must exercise varying degrees of the trust that MacIntyre describes, it is especially important that they do so in a high degree during the early stages of their lives. This, of course, is what human children do. They trust (perhaps instinctively) their parents and teachers to teach them well. One condition that often proves crucial for this level of trust is that these relationships are characterized by love. That is, children, and for that matter all human beings, tend to flourish developmentally when they are in relationships where they know they are loved by those who are molding them.⁸⁷

One of the most important ways that teachers begin to help their students rightly interpret texts and songs is by teaching them the language of their tradition, particularly its moral concepts and terms.⁸⁸ Indeed, it is because numerous champions of the community and tradition based model recognized the importance of linguistic education that they often required parents and teachers to teach their children catechisms.⁸⁹ These texts were usually set in question and answer format, and were written in a manner that

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ For a similar argument, see chapter 1 of Jennifer A. Herdt's *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008). I am indebted to Herdt for initially bringing this aspect of moral development to my attention.

⁸⁸ For a similar view on the importance of moral language, see chapter 12 of Robert Adams's *A Theory of Virtue*.

⁸⁹ The histories of both Western and Eastern Christian communities are filled with examples of this. Indeed, even those who constructed the historic creeds of Christianity did so in such a way as to make them easily learnable. I am indebted to Daniel Schwartz for this observation.

lent itself to memorization. Teachers made sure that they taught even the more difficult concepts and terms (moral or otherwise) within these catechisms, because they believed that the children needed these conceptual resources so that they would have a relatively high level of familiarity with them once they were old enough to understand them more fully. This too, therefore, was a method through which teachers formed their students so that they could receive what they had to teach, even if part of this included what they or someone else would teach them later in life.

The previous comment hints at another important aspect of how teachers instruct their students on this model. Although I have already touched on it, I believe it is important to once again address how teachers accommodate the process-like nature of moral development. That is, teachers must teach their students in a way that corresponds to their particular stage of development at that particular time. Often this requires that teachers use different resources for different stages of development. Yet even if they use the same resources they will use them in different ways. Here, of course, it is important that the teacher knows their student and can meet them at their developmental level. So with respect to texts, a teacher should know what texts the student can handle and when they are ready to move on to a different and perhaps more difficult or mature text. For example, a teacher will probably need to teach a child a catechism differently than they teach it to an adolescent.

One aspect of teaching texts and songs that I have not done much to highlight up to this point is how doing so shapes the interpretive mechanisms of students. To my knowledge, every community that has embraced this model of moral development has

maintained that when teachers teach texts and songs they provide their students with access to concepts and construals that are constitutive of the good life. As one sings a lament, for example, one becomes more aware of what is involved in the emotion of sorrow. Furthermore, adherents to this model of moral development often argued that one learned sorrow differently through singing songs than from reading about sorrow a character felt in a book. In other words, not only do the variety of texts and songs provide human beings with important concepts and construals, but they often do so in ways that the other cannot. Clearly, a good teacher is aware of these issues, and would keep them in mind as they train their students.

I want to highlight one final responsibility that teachers typically have in this model. Teachers usually knowingly serve as exemplars for their students. That is, they actively try to exemplify the various values and beliefs that their tradition and community uphold.⁹⁰ This allows students to gain access to the various components of the teacher's virtues, for example, in a rather concrete manner. As they interact with their teachers and watch how they behave over a period of time, they gain insight into the morality of their tradition and community. They see, for instance, the actions appropriate to their community's understanding of compassion. Furthermore, they gain an understanding of when such actions are appropriate. This helps them to understand what the values and beliefs of their tradition look like in practice.

⁹⁰ There are a number of rich mimetic traditions in both the East and West that included this activity. Here I have in mind the Stoics, Augustinians, Jesuits, and Confucians. For a rich treatment of this in Western philosophy, see Herdt's *The Splendid Vices*. For a contemporary take on this, see Linda Zagzebski's "Exemplarist Virtue Theory" in *Metaphilosophy* 41 (2010): 41-57.

At this point I want to make a few brief observations about the stages of the relationship between individuals and their teachers. As we have seen, teachers teach their students different things depending on students' level of development. We have also noted that sometimes students' will have different teachers for different stages of development. What we have not considered is that in most community and tradition based models there comes a point when the student in question learns what their pre-adult teachers have to teach them. At this stage the individual is at a place where they must choose either to embrace or reject the tradition and the community. In other words, they must choose to make the values, beliefs, and way of life that their instructors have taught them their own. Those who do embrace the tradition and community should be well-suited to contribute to their tradition and community as informed and well-shaped members of their tradition and community.

There is one more resource of community and tradition based models of moral development that I want to highlight. All of these models have a variety of liturgies in which the members of the community participate. By liturgy I mean tradition informed public services or events in which members of the community that subscribe to that tradition participate in conveying, experiencing, and reinforcing the beliefs and values of their tradition. It seems that at least one reason for the existence of liturgies is that they further the sense of common identity and experience between the members of the community. As they participate in a ceremony or ritual that exemplifies the commitments of their tradition, they continue to shape themselves so that they better exemplify those same commitments. The Greeks, for example, often participated in

feasts in which members of the community rehearsed plays intended to instruct the community and remind them of their identity. Religious communities, historically speaking, usually have liturgies in which the members actively participate in rituals that reinforce the doctrines, feelings, and actions that the community supports. Moreover, these services often engaged all five senses and memory of the participant. This, I take it, helped to further the way in which the content of the service was internalized.

Community and Tradition Based Model of Moral Development: A Defense

We are now in a position to examine two claims about the community and tradition based model of moral development. The first of these is that it avoids the shortcomings involved with Kohlberg and Snow's accounts of moral development. On the one hand, the primary inadequacy with Kohlberg's model is that it fails to account for empirical findings on the moral thoughts and behaviors of infants and children. Because of this, his account ignores this important stage of development. I take it that the community and tradition based model of moral development eschews this failure. Its emphasis on developing individual children in accordance with their level of moral development, particularly when it comes to the use of catechisms to teach them moral concepts as early as possible, seem to at least partially account for this.

On the other hand, Snow's model neglected much of the historical nature of human beings, particularly their pre-adult history. This is problematic given the influence that one's pre-adult history has on their character development, especially the significant role emerging adulthood has on the type of person one decides to attempt to

become. Indeed, as one aims to become a particular sort of person, one adopts an interpretive framework that helps one become that sort of person. It seems to me that the community and tradition based model of moral development also addresses these issues. The model clearly accounts for the history of pre-adult moral development. It also seems to account for emerging adulthood. According to this model, once individuals reach a certain level of development, they must decide to either embrace or reject their pre-adult instruction, along with the tradition and community that undergirded it. This, it seems to me, is in keeping with what Arnett points to in his account of emerging adulthood. That is, Arnett's account stresses that human beings get to a certain point where they choose what type of person they want to become, and the community and tradition based model of moral development actually includes that stage of development. Furthermore, it has resources that help to prepare individuals for that point.

I believe it is important that I pause to clarify one aspect about the community and tradition based model of moral development before I argue that it is compatible with our findings from the previous chapter. Whereas I have not said much about how this model addresses adult moral development, champions of this model have gone to great lengths to do so.⁹¹ Indeed, I believe that the features of this model that I set out provide the resources for this. Unfortunately, the purpose of this chapter and limitations of space do not permit me to expand on this issue. Although I will say a bit more about this in the next chapter, I will now set this issue aside for the remainder of this chapter.

⁹¹ I take it that Blum and MacIntyre are two token examples of contemporary thinkers who have done this.

To return our attention to pre-adult moral development, I now want to argue that the community and tradition based model of moral development is compatible with our findings about CAPS based accounts of virtue in chapter two. I will begin my argument by establishing that the model is compatible with the seven salient features of CAPS accounts of character traits.

The first feature of CAPS that we discussed is that CAPS theorists maintain that human beings are interpretive creatures. The emphasis on developing how individuals interpret the world within the community and tradition based model of moral development is surely compatible with this claim. The second feature of CAPS is the belief that the interpretation of external and internal stimuli activates social-cognitive units. Once again, the emphasis that the community and tradition based model places on the relationships between interpretation, character, and action is compatible with this. The third feature of CAPS is the assertion that pre-existing personality variables influence how people interpret stimuli. This is compatible with the assumption in the community and tradition based model that different people will need different things at different ages and stages. That is, it is quite plausible to argue that one of the reasons different people need different things at different ages and stages is that they have different pre-existing personality variables that influence how they interpret stimuli. This, for example, is something that parents and teachers would need to account for in their dealings with children.

The fourth feature of CAPS is that repeated activation of a specific set of social-cognitive units to specific set of stimuli builds a rather stable character trait. This is

precisely what teachers assume when they expose their students to texts and songs. That is, they at least implicitly acknowledge that continued exposure to the material in texts and songs will form their student's character. In addition, they also assume that their student's exposure to them and their (the teacher's) behavior will also impact their character.

Although not explicitly covered by the community and tradition based model of moral development, the fifth feature of CAPS seems compatible with our model. That is to say, the distinction between the structure of character traits and the dynamics of trait interaction does not conflict with any of the tenets or resources of the community and tradition based model.

The sixth and seventh features of CAPS are compatible with the overall approach to development that undergirds the community and tradition based model; this model assumes that human beings can accurately express human behavior in terms of "If...then" signatures, and that character traits are generalizable. Indeed, these are working assumptions for any model of moral development that emphasizes the role and importance of virtues. The very nature of virtues requires this. These are, of course, what the community and tradition based model attempts to address through resources such as teachers and liturgy. In other words, champions of this model believe that teachers and liturgy help to form consistent and global character traits in the members of communities.

So our model is compatible with the features of CAPS. This, however, is not enough. We must also determine if our model is compatible with the existence of global

mixed character traits and the rarity thesis. With respect to global mixed character traits, we need to note that there is substantial empirical evidence that these traits are not found in children anywhere near to the extent that they are found in adults. I side with Christian Miller's interpretation of this evidence when he claims that these findings support "...the idea that such traits are not features of human nature but are acquired habitually over time."⁹² I also believe this interpretation is consistent with the empirical studies on infant prosocial behavior that I referenced earlier. Thus our model needs to be compatible with the initial acquisition and further development of mixed character traits so that they become global character traits.

I take it that this requirement is similar to that of the development of CAPS character traits in general. Thus it is through resources like a community, teachers, texts, songs, and liturgies that individuals initially acquire mixed character traits, and subsequently go on to develop them into global mixed character traits. Furthermore, it seems possible that individuals can go on to develop these into virtues through additional participation in methods of moral development. I do not believe this claim is unique to me. It seems that most accounts of virtue have consisted of the claim that human beings have to work at cultivating their character traits so that they become virtues. Champions of the community and tradition based model of moral development are no different in this regard, and thus can accommodate the development of mixed character traits.

⁹² Miller, "Character Traits, Social Psychology, and Impediments to Helping Behavior" in *Journal of Ethics and Social Psychology* 5 (2010), 27.

As for the rarity thesis, I see no reason to think that it is not compatible with the features of the community and tradition based model of moral development. That is not to say that every virtue theorists holds to this thesis. Nor do I mean to suggest that every historic example of this model is consistent with this thesis. That is a more nuanced matter upon which particular traditions and communities have disagreed.⁹³ Indeed, many of the particular details of the historic models differ. This is simply one such example of a point of disagreement. In some ways this is an outworking of the fifth feature of these models that Blum identifies—namely, some virtues only are recognizable as virtues from the perspective of a particular community. If these communities disagree on what counts as a virtue, it ought not to surprise us that many other details about their accounts also differ. Because I have tried to provide only a broad framework that these models share, I do not believe this is a problem for my presentation. I will say more about this below.

By arguing for the compatibility of the community and tradition based model of moral development with our findings about CAPS based accounts of virtue, I tried to hint at reasons why that support my second claim: that this model of moral development is also well-suited to play a role in an account of pre-adult moral development within a CAPS based account of virtue. The emphasis that this model places on interpretation, the development of social-cognitive units, the historic nature of human development, and number of individuals involved and invested an individual's moral development surely

⁹³ I should note, however, that many of the leading virtue theorists in the history of the West embraced this view. These thinkers include but are not limited to Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas.

are well-suited for such a CAPS based account of virtue that acknowledges the existence of global mixed character traits and the rarity thesis. In saying this I recognize that as one fills in this model with more details this may not hold. Yet I do not believe this is a problem for my argument. I simply am trying to propose the framework of a model that is compatible with our findings in chapter two and the beginning of this chapter. I am not trying to provide an exhaustive account of virtue or moral development. Such a project goes well beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I take it that I have accomplished my end.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for the inadequacy of two contemporary models of moral development that one could try to utilize within a CAPS based account of virtue. I have gone on to argue that the community and tradition based model of moral development avoids the shortcomings of these models and is both compatible and well-suited for a CAPS based account of virtue that is in keeping with our findings in chapter two. In doing this, I have paid special attention to the historic nature of moral development. Yet I stopped my discussion of moral development with emerging adulthood. Given the extremely formative nature of this stage of human life, it seems important that I provide at least some sort of an account for human moral development post-emerging adulthood. To this end I wish to consider one vehicle of adult moral development which I believe is both compatible with but not restricted to the model of moral development I have argued

for here. It is to a presentation and defense of this vehicle of adult moral development that we now turn.

CHAPTER IV
CAPS, CHARACTER-FRIENDSHIPS, AND
MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADULTS

Up to this point we have seen that some CAPS based accounts of virtue are empirically adequate, and that the community and tradition based model of human moral development is compatible with and well-suited for pre-adult human moral development within such accounts. In this chapter I want to further extend the account of moral development from which virtue theorists who embrace CAPS can draw by considering one vehicle of moral development for adult human beings—namely, character-friendships.⁹⁴

In what follows I will defend four claims about character-friendships within a CAPS based account of virtue and moral development. First, the existence and role of character-friendships within adult moral development is compatible with the community and tradition based model of moral development. Indeed, there is a sense in which such friendships naturally follow from how that model portrays moral development in emerging adulthood. Second, character-friendships are possible within CAPS based accounts of virtue that recognize the existence of global mixed character traits and tie virtues to human flourishing. Third, character-friendships are well-suited to play an important role in the moral development of adult human beings within CAPS based

⁹⁴ John M. Cooper coined the phrase character-friendships in his essay “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship” in *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 30 No. 4 (1977):619-648.

accounts of virtue that both recognize the existence of global mixed character traits and tie virtues to human flourishing. Fourth, recent empirical research on the impact of groups on human helping behavior does not subvert the importance of character-friendships in adult moral development. This is because its results are mixed and the understanding of friendship is too poorly defined to be relevant.

Character-Friendships: A Sketch

There are six salient features of character-friendships that I will outline in this section. I will introduce each feature by referring to a passage in which Aristotle seems to discuss that feature. My primary aim, however, is not to defend a particular interpretation of Aristotle. Rather, I am trying to motivate qualities of character-friendships that I and others have attributed to Aristotle's account in order to highlight how these qualities are relevant to CAPS based accounts of virtues that tie virtues to human flourishing.⁹⁵ Thus my primary aim is to introduce aspects of character-friendships that are intelligible within certain CAPS accounts of virtue, and my secondary aim is to show that it is not unreasonable for one to take character-friendships so described to be closely related to the traditional Aristotelian notion.

The first feature of character-friendships is an assumption or belief that undergirds all of the other features: there are states and things that truly are good for

⁹⁵ My understanding of Aristotle's account of character-friendships has been influenced most by Julia Annas, Talbot Brewer, John M. Cooper, and Nancy Sherman.

human beings and these states and things are a part of human flourishing.⁹⁶ Aristotle famously begins the *Nicomachean Ethics* by inquiring into the nature of these states. He avers that they correspond to the proper function or activity of human beings: “...human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue” (NE 1098a15-17) If one rejects the assumption that some states and things truly are good for human beings goods, then the other features of character-friendships become unintelligible. This is because they assume that there are real human goods which are part of human flourishing. This is not to say, however, that one must commit to a specific theory of meta-ethics to hold this view and make the other features of character-friendships intelligible. As we have seen, Aristotle defines the human good in terms of metaphysical beliefs about human forms and human nature.⁹⁷ Yet the notion of specifically human goods is not specific to Aristotle. One could, for example, explain the general human good in terms of the proper functions that have been selected for in the evolutionary history of humanity.⁹⁸ Likewise, one could define the human good in terms of a design plan or participation with the Good.

⁹⁶ Throughout this thesis I will understand human flourishing as something that is constituted by a number of goods things (states, objects, etc.), and is itself a good thing.

⁹⁷ See NE 1156a5-1158a26 for a discussion on how Aristotle ties character-friendships to the human good.

⁹⁸ I realize that this claim may appear to run contrary to Philip Kitcher’s claims in “Essence and Perfection” in *Ethics*, 110, (1999):59-83. However, Kitcher only addresses attempts to ground accounts of virtue in a biological essence that all human beings share. If one utilizes Ruth Milikan’s account of proper function (1984a; 1989a; 1998), then one can avoid this. Therefore, this account is immune from the devastating critiques Kitcher levels at biologically minded perfectionist accounts of virtue.

However one does it, one must account for this to make the below features intelligible.⁹⁹

The second feature of character-friendships is that they are an outworking of the fact that human beings are social creatures. Being in relationships with other human beings is part of the human good. According to Aristotle, human well-being “is relational, whereas in the case of a god, he is himself his own well-being.” (E.E.1245b18-19) Elsewhere Aristotle claims that human flourishing consists in living life with parents, children, spouses, friends, and fellow citizens because “a human being is by nature political and social.” (1097b9-11; See 1169b18-19) Some of these relationships are instrumental to human flourishing, and others are intrinsic to human flourishing. Aristotle seems to maintain that friendships are both instrumental and intrinsic to human flourishing.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, friendships are instrumental, because without them human beings cannot perform the actions of which human flourishing consists.¹⁰¹ On the other, friendships are intrinsic to human flourishing because the lack of them “spoils one’s flourishing.”¹⁰² As we will soon see, Aristotle argues that the best sorts of friendships that are intrinsic to human flourishing are character-friendships.

⁹⁹ Humean accounts of virtue, for example, are not compatible with this feature of character-friendships, because they do not tie the virtues to human flourishing.

¹⁰⁰ For a similar interpretation see Sherman “Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 47, No. 4 (1987):593-594.

¹⁰¹ “Yet evidently, as we said, [human flourishing] requires in addition external goods; for it is impossible or not easy to do excellent deeds without resources. For an individual performs many actions through the use of instruments, through friends...” (NE 1099a31f)

¹⁰² See NE 1099a31-b4, 1169b10, 1154a4, 1155a5-6, and 1169b16-17. Although Aristotle uses *philia* in an extremely broad manner, these passages are, I take it, examples where he rather clearly has the genuine forms of *philia* in mind. That is, those instances where human beings reciprocate goodwill (*eunoia*) between each other. See NE 115b32-35.

The third and fourth aspects of character-friendships are closely intertwined. Character-friendships are based on reciprocal affection and choice, respectively. As Aristotle explains,

It is apparent from these things that the primary sort of friendship, that among good persons, requires mutual affect and mutual choice with regard to one another... This friendship thus only occurs among human beings, for they alone are conscious of reasoned choices (*prohairesis*). (EE 1236b3-6).

Later in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle reiterates the reciprocal choice involved in character-friendships.

If the activity of friendship is a reciprocal choice, accompanied by pleasure, of the acquaintance of one another, it is clear that friendship of the primary kind is in general a reciprocal choice (*antiprohairesis*) of the things that are without qualification good and pleasant, because they are good and pleasant (1237a3off).

The significance of these claims involves Aristotle's use of the term *prohairesis*.

Prohairesis is a "reasoned choice that is expressive of a character and the overall ends of that character."¹⁰³ In this regard, Aristotle believes that when human beings choose character-friends they chose someone who shares their commitments and ends. These commitments and ends reflect what one understands human flourishing in general and one's form of this flourishing in particular to consist of. Character-friendships are the product of two individuals' understandings of human flourishing and the character, goals, and way of living that the individuals form in light of this understanding. So, before one can have character-friends, one must hold a particular view of human flourishing and live in light of it.

¹⁰³ Sherman, "Aristotle on Friendship," 597. I am indebted to Sherman for initially drawing my attention to the role that *prohairesis* plays in Aristotle's account of character-friendships.

This claim raises an important question: How does one ascertain whether or not another individual is committed to a view of human flourishing that is in keeping with their own? The answer to this is the fifth feature of character-friendships. According to Aristotle, one can only determine this by spending a significant amount of time with another individual.

Further, such friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other till they have ‘eaten salt together’; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for a friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not (NE 1156b25-32).

Because one’s actions reflect their character, and one’s character reflects their deeply held beliefs, desires, goals, and plans for attaining their goals, spending a substantial amount of time with an individual will provide one with the opportunity to gain an accurate view of whether or not another individual could be one’s character-friend. This idea is what motivates Aristotle’s understanding of *homonoiia*.¹⁰⁴

According to Aristotle, character-friends will have the sameness of mind regarding how they pursue their shared ends through practical means. As Aristotle explains,

Some have thought friendship to be unanimity of feeling and those who have such a consensus to be friends. But friendship is not a consensus concerning everything, but a consensus concerning practical matters for the parties involved and concerning those things that contribute to living together (EE 1241a16-18).

¹⁰⁴ I am indebted, once again, to Sherman for helping me see the importance of *homonoiia* in Aristotle’s account of character-friendships.

In choosing a character-friend, one chooses to live life with another human in such a way that one commits oneself to pursuing a common view of human flourishing within a range of practical strategies. In so doing, one is committed to both one's own flourishing and the flourishing of one's friend. This, of course, holds for the other individual as well. So time spent with another person is what enables one to make the reasoned choice to befriend someone once one ascertains that that person shares one's ends and methods for attaining those ends.

The sixth and final feature of character-friendships we will consider is how character-friendships help to enable the individuals in these friendships improve and develop one another. Aristotle argues that

The friendship of good persons is good, being increased by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mold of characteristics they approve (NE 1172a10-15).

Two ideas here deserve emphasis. First, even good people, people who are widely recognized for their positive moral development, can improve. This is because Aristotle believes that human beings never reach a point where it is appropriate or good to cease their moral development.¹⁰⁵ One reason Aristotle makes this claim is that he does not believe virtues, character, or human flourishing are static. He believes that the cultivation of all three of these is an ongoing process with various rhythms that depend upon the particular person and their situation. He discusses this in the *Politics*, for

¹⁰⁵ Julia Annas's recent claim that the drive to aspire is a necessary part of a virtue seems to highlight this point as well. See Annas's *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) especially pp. 17-26, 54-58.

example, when he says, “Inasmuch as these different functions belong to a different prime of life, and one requires wisdom and the other strength, they are to be assigned to different persons” (Pol. 1329a9ff). Note that Aristotle’s description of the non-static nature of moral development seems to assume that what is good for an individual at one stage of life may not be good for that same individual at another stage of life. In other words, the metaphor of reaching a finish-line does not fully capture the nature of the human good. Rather, the metaphor of running a long race, taking into account the components and stages involved in such a race, which at least does not end until death is a more accurate metaphor.¹⁰⁶

The second point to note from the previous quotation about character-friends is that one of the ways human beings can improve is by molding themselves in light of the positive characteristics of their character-friends. For example, as I consider the virtues my character-friend Lawrence has cultivated and developed, I may observe that he is more virtuous than me with regard to courage. Perhaps because of reasons related to moral luck, Lawrence simply has had more opportunity to develop courage than I.¹⁰⁷ As I come to recognize this and appreciate the particular excellence Lawrence has achieved, I can begin to mold myself to have the courage I see in Lawrence. Furthermore, because of the reciprocal nature of character-friendships, he has committed to help me cultivate and develop the courage I admire in him. Note that in this case Lawrence serves two

¹⁰⁶ Of course, Aristotle contends that observers cannot know at the point of death if the deceased individual lived a good life. They must wait, perhaps several years, before they will have the information required to make that judgment.

¹⁰⁷ For a clear and seminal discussion of moral luck see Thomas Nagel’s essay “Moral Luck” in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 3.

roles. First, he serves as a concrete example of courage from which I gain a richer appreciation of myself and the virtue of courage. Second, he serves as a co-laborer in my project to become more courageous.

Character-friendships and the Community and Tradition Based Model of Moral Development: A Defense

Before we consider the compatibility of character-friendships with CAPS based accounts of virtue, I want to make a few brief observations about the relationship between character-friendships and the community and tradition based model of moral development. I ended our discussion of moral development in the previous chapter by discussing how the community and tradition based model addresses the distinctive marks of moral development that psychologists associate with emerging adulthood. Recall that it is at this stage of development that many human beings determine who they want to be and what types of goals they will pursue to that end. Thus, as we noted, this often is the stage of life in which human beings decide whether or not they will remain members of the community and tradition that shaped them during their pre-adult years. This is because at this point in life they should have a level of understanding about their community and tradition that enables them to evaluate as an informed insider. That is, they should, all things being equal, have the resources to evaluate their community and tradition from the perspective and resources of their community and tradition.¹⁰⁸ We also

¹⁰⁸ I have focused on the internal resources of the community to avoid philosophical questions about the access that individuals within a community have to evaluative resources that are external to their community. Yet in the previous chapter I noted that members of a community do have at least some access

noted that at this level of development individuals should, all things being equal, have the ability to realize where and how they need to develop and extend themselves and their tradition. By my lights, these characteristics make the end of emerging adulthood an extremely appropriate time for human beings to make the sort of relationships that are involved in character-friendships.

I take it that it is not particularly interesting or important that the first and second features of character-friendships, the beliefs that certain states and things are good for human beings and that human beings are social creatures, are compatible with the characteristics of the final stages of emerging adulthood. This compatibility seems somewhat trivial. What I think is particularly interesting and important is that the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth features of character-friendships are strongly compatible with the outcomes of emerging adulthood. Furthermore, I take it that this suggests that character-friendships are an appropriate vehicle for adult moral development that naturally picks up such development where we finished our discussion of the previous model. Let us briefly consider this claim.

A reasoned choice, reciprocity, like-mindedness, and the desire to help one another improve, the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth features of character-friendships, are precisely what becomes available at the end of emerging adulthood.¹⁰⁹ That is to say, it

to the perspectives of other communities because this is included in their education. I take it that this gives them some access to resources that are external to their community. That being said, I believe it is better for me to set this issue aside for the remainder of this paper. The task of addressing it is simply beyond the confines of this paper.

¹⁰⁹ I do not mean to suggest that these are unavailable prior to emerging adulthood. I believe they are available before and after emerging adulthood, and, in a manner that is tough to pin down, within the process of emerging adulthood. Yet there is something distinctive about the way that human beings choose

is at the end of this stage that human beings typically select their commitments and ends for themselves. Thus in a very real and strong sense, if an individual chooses to stay within a community and tradition, the commitments and ends of that community and tradition become their own. They are no longer, for example, simply their parents'. This allows other individuals to determine if they share these commitments and ends, and in turn pursue a character-friendship. Furthermore, because human beings typically choose how they will pursue their goals during emerging adulthood, individuals can also determine if they are like-minded in their pursuit of their shared commitments and ends. The combination of the previous two features provides individuals with the resources to share mutual affection, as Aristotle understood it. That is, the fact that they share so much in common will lend to their ability to care mutually for one another. Because of their commitment to one another and their common ends, they will aid one another in their pursuits to develop themselves and their community and tradition.

So it seems that character-friendships naturally pick up human moral development where we ended our discussion of the community and tradition based model of moral development. At this point I believe that it is important for me to make two points. First, I do not mean to suggest that the community and tradition based model of moral development is irrelevant to adult moral development. To the contrary, I take it that if that model is correct, then one's community and tradition are highly significant to one's adult moral development. What I do mean to suggest, however, is

to embrace a particular vision of life and attempt to become a person that fits within that vision that sets the end of this stage of development apart from the other stages.

that character-friendships seem like a natural component to adult moral development within that model of moral development. Whereas they do not seem quite as feasible for individuals in emerging adulthood, they seem highly plausible within adult human beings.

Second, we should distinguish between a community in the sense that we discussed it in the previous chapter from character-friendships and the social networks that emerge from them. At least one important difference between character-friends and communities is that one does not have to exercise a reasoned choice or mutual affection toward every member of one's community, whereas one does need to exercise these towards one's character-friendships. This is because communities, as we have described them, involve a large number of people, both living and deceased, who help to facilitate and extend the tradition of that group. A Russian Marxist in the 1980's may have great affection for Engel and Marx as members of that individual's community. Yet the Russian Marxist can never be character-friends with Engel and Marx because they cannot reciprocate the individual's affection. Nor, for that matter, could they actively help that individual pursue his ends. Here I take it that both an individual's presence and ongoing agency are necessary conditions for character-friendships. This does not mean that all of the living members of an individual's community are that individual's character-friend. Often times most members of a community will not have mutual affection, as we have described, for one another. For a variety of reasons, including the fact that one can only exercise such affection to a limited number of people, they never enter into such relationships. In other words, every character-friend is a member of an

individual's community, but not every member of an individual's community is a character-friend of that individual.¹¹⁰

Character-friendships in a CAPS Based Account of Virtue: A Defense

We are now in a position to determine if character-friendships are possible within a CAPS based account of virtue. Recall that there are seven salient features of CAPS based accounts of character traits. First, these accounts contain the assumption that human beings are interpretive creatures. Second, they contain the claim that the interpretation of external and internal stimuli activates social-cognitive units. Third, they include the belief that pre-existing personality variables influence how people interpret stimuli. Fourth, they consist of the claim that repeated activation of a specific set of social-cognitive units to specific set of stimuli builds a rather stable character trait. Fifth, they recognize the distinction between the structure of character traits and the dynamics of trait interaction. Sixth, they include the claim that we can reasonably describe character traits in terms of "if...then" behavioral signatures. Finally, they contain the claim that CAPS character traits can be generalizable over a wide range of objectively different situations.

The beliefs that there is an objective human good, that the human good involves the social component of human beings, and that character traits are CAPSs are all compatible. Similarly, the claim that some human friendships consist of reciprocal affection, choice, and sameness of mind is compatible with a CAPS account of character

¹¹⁰ See my admittedly brief defense of this in the previous footnote.

traits. As we have seen, CAPS theorists maintain that over time people reveal their character-traits through the actions that they do and do not perform. Therefore the beliefs, feelings, self-regulatory plans, and goals of which stable character traits consist will manifest themselves in a number of situations where their possessor consistently interprets a particular stimulus or set of stimuli. Thus one can observe the actions of another individual over a period of time and ascertain whether they share one's commitments, beliefs, views, and practical methods of pursuing human flourishing. If they do coincide, and both parties recognize this, then both parties can enter into a character-friendship.

Finally, the belief that character-friends improve and develop one another is compatible with the features of CAPS character traits, particularly one that recognizes the existence of global mixed character traits. As we have seen, CAPS proponents maintain that CAPS character traits are non-deterministic. Because of this, human beings can reinforce, diminish, or establish new CAPS during the course of their lives. So, I can act on the exemplification of courage that I see in Lawrence and actively try to cultivate such courage. Lawrence and I can discuss how he interprets situations in which he acts courageously. Even if he cannot describe his cognitive and affective states when he acts courageously, I still can have insight into them because of how they reveal themselves in his actions over time.¹¹¹ Then Lawrence and I can work to develop the components of

¹¹¹ Aristotle emphasizes a similar point when he maintains that sometimes we are more aware of the virtuous functioning of others than of ourselves. See his arguments in NE IX, 9. For an argument against this position see Julia Annas's "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism" in *Mind, New Series*, Vol. 86, No. 344 (1977):532-544.

courage within me.¹¹² The amount of time this takes will depend on factors such as my interpretive tendencies, my pre-existing courage, and the number of opportunities I have to act courageously. Given that Lawrence will also continue to develop his courage, his efforts will continually remind me about the non-static nature of virtues, character, and human flourishing. All of this is consistent with the existence of global mixed character traits. That is, perhaps the reason I need to further develop my “courage” is that I have not yet cultivated courage whereas Lawrence has. I simply have a global mixed character trait that consists of some of the components of courage. Given the compatibility of the rarity thesis with the empirical evidence, it is also possible that Lawrence has the virtue of courage, and that he must continue to cultivate it. In short, character-friendships are possible within the confines of the types of CAPS accounts we are considering.

Character-Friendships and Moral Development in Adults: A Defense

The fact that character-friendships are possible within the types of CAPS based accounts of virtues that we have considered does not entail that such an account should include the claim that character-friendships are well-suited to play an important role in adult moral development. I will now provide six arguments to support the claim that they are well-suited for such a role.

¹¹² I assume Lawrence would help me based on the commitment and mutual affection he would exhibit as my character-friend.

As we have seen, one of the benefits of global CAPS character traits is that they provide the opportunity to observe the exemplification of global character traits over a period of time. This is in keeping with the claim that character-friendships provide an opportunity for people in general and adults in particular to see concrete exemplifications of virtues in a close friend. Recall my relationship with Lawrence. When I want to think about what courage entails, I do not have to resort strictly to abstract thought and philosophy about the moral properties of courage. Instead, a CAPS account of virtues has the resources to allow me to think about how Lawrence has exemplified courage throughout his life. This is important for at least two reasons.

First, because I can watch Lawrence act courageously over time, I have access to behavior that can provide me with a general appreciation for the motivations, beliefs, emotions, plans, goals, and range of actions that are consistent with courage. This type of appreciation typically is inaccessible when one considers the actions of a stranger, courageous or otherwise. Rightly determining a stranger's motivations, for example, is a notoriously difficult problem. That said, I am not arguing that it is impossible to apprehend the motives behind a stranger's behavior. Rather, I am arguing that the amount of time character-friends spend with one another better enables them to gain a general appreciation of the components of virtues and virtuous actions that they manifest.

Second, character-friendships also provide the opportunity for adults to gain an appreciation of specific examples of virtuous behavior. This is significant because moral philosophers often criticize virtue theorists for not providing something like a manual or

set of principles that guide right action. Instead of conceding this as a weakness of their accounts, virtue theorists typically celebrate it as one of their accounts' strengths. They claim that any moral theory that primarily consists in a procedural guide is too wooden for the complexities of real life. Even if this is the case, I think it is important for virtue theorists to explain the epistemic resources their account provides for reasoning about virtuous behavior in a specific situation.

The typical response virtue theorists provide is that one should act as the virtuous person would act.¹¹³ One could easily interpret this to mean that one should think hard about what the virtuous person would do in this situation. Yet even if one has an understanding of how a virtuous person generally acts, it does not follow that one has an understanding of how a virtuous person would act in *this* specific situation.

Character-friendships help to address this problem, because the friends experience manifestations of the virtues in particular situations. That is to say, character-friends can appeal to concrete and specific instances of virtuous behavior that they and their friends manifested in situations like the one in which they currently find themselves. Here I take behavior to include all of the social-cognitive units of which the virtues consist. Clearly, this access to examples of virtuous behavior does not secure knowledge about how exactly one should act in one's particular situation. Perhaps that is to be expected, though, given the role that practical wisdom plays on many accounts of

¹¹³ For a discussion of why this is a justification and not a criterion for an action see Glen Pettigrove "Is Virtue Ethics Self-Effacing?" in *Journal of Ethics* 15 (2011):191-207.

virtue.¹¹⁴ That said, the range of virtuous behavior that character-friends can draw from surely can help keep their moral deliberations from being either overly abstract or woodenly procedural. Thus character-friends can provide epistemic resources for reasoning about how to act in particular situations in the absence of a manual on morality.

In addition to their role in helping adults develop a general and specific view of particular virtues, character-friendships provide the opportunity for adults to recognize their need to cultivate an underdeveloped virtue that they may have otherwise overlooked. For example, since marrying my wife, I have become much more aware of my need to cultivate empathy.¹¹⁵ I am not saying that I completely lacked empathy before I married her. On the contrary, my wife cites my empathetic tendencies as one of the reasons she wanted to marry me. Part of the reason I had these tendencies is that my parents taught me about empathy and exemplified aspects of it during my childhood. So it is not as though I simply had a natural knack for empathetic behavior.¹¹⁶ My parents cultivated empathy in me. Even with this training, however, I still lacked understanding and possession of several aspects of empathy. Yet I did not realize it. I only became aware of these lacks and my need to address them as I watched my wife.¹¹⁷ Thus my

¹¹⁴ For examples see Adams's *A Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Annas's *Intelligent Virtue*; Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*; Talbot Brewer's *The Retrieval of Ethics*; and MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

¹¹⁵ See EE 1240a36-9 for Aristotle's famous discussion of this virtue.

¹¹⁶ Here I agree with virtue theorists such as Annas and Aristotle who contend that a natural ability or tendency is not a virtue.

¹¹⁷ Here I disagree with Jesse Prinz's claim that "we do not alter personality by seeking to better ourselves or the people we care for. Rather, personality adapts in an involuntary way to life circumstances." As I observed my wife and attempted to develop aspects of virtue that I saw in her, *I* did in fact alter my

ability to witness my wife's excellence in being empathetic has helped me combat my tendency to overlook my need to cultivate empathy.¹¹⁸

A third reason character-friendships are well-suited for CAPS based accounts of virtue which tie virtue to human flourishing is that they provide adults with a social network of people who actively help one another pursue a shared vision of their particular goods within the context of their shared vision of human flourishing in general.¹¹⁹ This is particularly important for at least two reasons. Given the prevalence of global mixed character traits, these social networks serve as a helpful vehicle for the development of global mixed character traits into virtues. Because, for example, Lawrence is aware that I have a global mixed character trait that has some of the components of the virtue courage, he will actively help me try to develop that character trait into courage. Given the nature of the commitment of character-friendships, he will continue to help me do this throughout the entirety of our friendship. This type of support network clearly is helpful for adults who are trying to develop mixed traits into virtues.

personality, traits, and way of interpreting the world. While I acknowledge that there was an involuntary component to this, I do not think that component exhaustively accounts for the change in my trait. See Prinz's "The Normativity Challenge: Cultural Psychology Provides the Real Threat to Virtue Ethics" in *Journal of Ethics* 13 (2009):117-144.

¹¹⁸ There is also an important sense in which my new role as husband came with the demand that I gain a better understanding of empathy so that I could better relate to my wife. I am thankful to Paul Berghaus for pointing this out to me.

¹¹⁹ I do not mean to support fully the notion of social networks set forth by situationists like Maria Merritt. Although I do think they are right to emphasize the importance of social networks for the development and manifestation of cross-situationally consistent behavior, I think they are wrong to hold that this will not involve global character traits. See Merritt's "Virtue Ethics and Situationist Personality Psychology" in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 3 (2000): 365-383.

A second reason that these social networks are important is that the members of them can play an active role in combating fragmentation. Fragmentation is the tendency to view oneself as a number of disconnected persons with disparate goals, desires, beliefs, and responsibilities instead of as a unified person with a unified set of goals, desires, beliefs, and responsibilities.¹²⁰ There is nothing in a CAPS account of character traits that excludes or stymies the formation of fragmented or extremely situation specific character traits. For example, the fact that CAPS character traits are capable of globalization does not entail that all of the character traits a person possesses are global. So one could have a number of highly situation specific character traits that conflict with several of one's generalized character traits and serve as a catalyst for fragmentation. Additionally, one could possess several generalized character traits that are incommensurable and therefore contribute to one's fragmentation. It is possible, for example, that when I am with my army unit I demonstrate immense loyalty. Yet in my "personal life," I am consistently unfaithful to my wife.¹²¹

Character-friendships provide resources for combating these two forms of fragmentation. My character-friends can help me reflect upon and alter my character traits so that I possess and act from a more unified vision of my individual capacities, goals, and callings. They can do this, of course, because they know me well. They will do this because they have committed to help me flourish. Because we share a common

¹²⁰ For similar arguments see Adams's *A Theory of Virtue*, chapters.8, 11, and 12; Annas's, *Intelligent Virtue*; Talbot Brewer's *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapters 2 and 7; and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*.

¹²¹ I want to thank Major Paul Berghaus for pointing out just how prevalent this is within the US army.

vision of the general human good, we can also work towards ensuring that my life is actually intelligible within the framework of the general human good.¹²² Through this process we may steadily deal with my fragmented and inconsistent character-traits.

A fourth reason character-friendships are well-suited for CAPS based accounts of adult moral development is that they provide a social network in which one can combat static or conservative attitudes or views about the virtues. Character-friends, by definition, share a commitment to cultivate each others' virtues throughout their lives. This commitment includes continual examination of the shared vision of the virtues and what they entail. Sometimes this leads both friends to extend their understanding of a virtue. Indeed, sometimes they will conclude that being virtuous requires that they significantly alter several of their beliefs and actions that are in keeping with societal mores.¹²³

From the perspective of a CAPS account of character-traits, we can appreciate the difficulty of such a change. Both friends will need to use a new interpretive grid so that when they experience the pertinent stimuli they will now interpret it as grounds for a different type of behavior. They will also need to cultivate a way of interacting with people who disagree with their seemingly anomalous behavior. These two facts alone will require a significant amount of internal reconstruction with respect to the activation

¹²² This is entailed by the reciprocal appreciation and choice involved in character-friendships.

¹²³ I take it that the realist position about human goods and flourishing that I have presented does not entail that human beings have the epistemic ability to grasp all of the details involved with the human good. One could hold that human beings begin with a rather fuzzy understanding of the human good and how it relates to them, and that as they go through the process of moral and epistemic maturity they still only ever attain a partial understanding of the human good in general. Such a position is consistent with this feature of character-friendships. I am indebted to Talbot Brewer for making me aware of this possibility. See Brewer's *The Retrieval of Ethics*, 236-285.

processes of each friend's CAPSs. For reasons like this I take it that character-friendships are well-suited for the arduous and necessary task adult human beings face when they try to extend their view and manifestation of a virtue, particularly when this calls for a breach from societal norms.¹²⁴

A fifth and similar argument is that character-friendships are well-suited to help individuals combat their CAPS based vices. Because of the feedback loop nature of CAPS, if I have cultivated a vice over the course of several years, it will be extremely difficult for me to break it and replace it with a different character trait. Every time I perceive stimuli that have historically activated my vicious trait, I will experience a tug in that direction. This is particularly true of the early stages of breaking a vice. My character-friends should be aware of these issues. They will be familiar with when and why I respond from a vice. Thus they can help me when I experience the initial tug to act on the activation of a belief or feeling that is a part of my vice. Because we share a vision of who I want to be, they can encourage me in ways that combat the activation of my vice by activating my nascent character trait. Moreover, because they are my character-friends, they have committed to help me change and will act on this commitment. This is crucial given how recalcitrant people are when they try to change their deeply reinforced character traits.

¹²⁴ The features of character-friendships, as I have described them, do not rule out the possibility that a misguided friendship could reinforce one's bad ideas and produce cultish behavior in opposition to the good norms of society. A moral philosophy would need more resources than I have provided to deal with that.

Finally, character-friendships are well-suited to aid in CAPS based moral development during the different stages of adult life. For example, I hope that my wife and I cultivate generosity differently ten years from now. I say this because we will need to reexamine what it means for us to be generous with a different income, larger family, or new neighbors. This probably will require that we alter the structure of our character traits. Whether we add beliefs, modify goals, or create new self-regulatory plans, we will both benefit from the assistance of the other as we develop our generosity in light of our common commitments and different stage of life.

Character-Friendships and the Effects of Groups: An Examination

We have seen that there are good conceptual reasons to hold that character-friendships are compatible with some CAPS accounts of virtue. In addition, we saw that character-friendships are well-suited to play a role in adult moral development within CAPS based accounts of virtue that recognize mixed global character traits and tie virtue to human flourishing. Yet at this point someone may question the empirical adequacy of the claim that character-friendships positively contribute to adult moral development. Indeed, there is a large body of psychological literature on the impacts that groups have on human behavior, especially helping behavior. Many of the findings in this literature seem to suggest that groups often serve to hinder helping behavior.¹²⁵ Let us now consider a few examples.

¹²⁵ I am indebted to Christian Miller for bringing this literature and its relevance to character-friendships to my attention.

In their highly influential “Lady in Distress” experiment, Latané and Rodin had experimenters persuade their subjects that they were participating in a marketing survey. During the experiment researchers took the subjects to a small room where they meet a woman who appeared to be a marketing representative. As the subjects proceeded to fill out forms in that room, the representative left the room and walked into a contiguous office. Four minutes after her departure,

...if they were listening carefully, [the subjects] heard her climb up on a chair to get a book from the top shelf. Even if they were not listening carefully they heard a loud crash and a woman’s scream as the chair fell over. “Oh, my God, my foot...” cried the representative. “I...I ...can’t move...it. Oh, my ankle. I...can’t...can’t...get...this thing off...me.” She moaned and cried for about a minute longer, getting gradually more subdued and controlled.¹²⁶

Latané and Rodin made the dependent variable of their experiment whether or not the subject exhibited any helping behavior. This included attempts to go next door and check on the woman, to attempts to call out to the woman to see if she was okay. Furthermore, they established four different versions of the experiment. In one version, the subject was alone in the room. In this context, 70 percent of subjects exhibited helping behavior. In the second version, the subject was in the room with two friends. Once again, 70 percent of the subjects exhibited helping behavior. In the third version, the subject was in the room with two strangers. Only 40 percent of the subjects exhibited helping behavior in this context. In the final version, the subject was paired with a

¹²⁶ Latané and Darley *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help?* (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1970), 58. The original report of this experiment is in Latané and Rodin’s “A Lady In Distress: Inhibiting Effects of Friends and Strangers on Bystander Intervention” in *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 5 (1969):189-202.

confederate who ignored the crash. Only 7 percent of the subjects exhibited helping behavior in this context.¹²⁷

If we, like Latané and Rodin, take the first version of the experiment as the control, then it seems rather clear that the presence of others does have a negative impact on a subject's helping behavior. According to Latané and Darley, even the second version of the experiment, where two friends are present, is in keeping with this claim.

....[w]hile superficially this appears as high as the Alone condition, again there must be a correction for the fact that two people are free to act. When compared to the 91 percent base rate of hypothetical person groups, friends do inhibit each other from intervening.¹²⁸

In other words, if we combine the likelihood that three individuals who are alone will help and compare that with the percentage of subjects who helped when they were with their friends, we find that the percentage of subjects who exhibited helping behavior in the presence of their friends is lower than the hypothetical number.

Many psychological experiments seem to confirm the findings of Latané and Rodin's famous study. As Christian Miller explains,

In examining 48 studies, Latané et al. found that, in group effect studies using confederates, 75% of alone subjects helped, whereas less than 53% of subjects in groups did. For group effect studies using groups of subjects with no confederates, 50% of alone subjects helped, whereas 22% of subjects in groups did.¹²⁹

Do these types of empirical findings subvert the idea that character-friendships can play an important role in adult moral development?

¹²⁷ Latané and Rodin, "A Lady in Distress", 193-195, and Latané and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander*, 60-63.

¹²⁸ Latané and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander*, 63.

¹²⁹ Christian Miller "Character Traits, Social Psychology, and Impediments to Helping Behavior" in *Journal of Ethics and Social Psychology* 5 (2010), 17.

I want to begin my answer to this question by noting that the empirical data from group effects studies does not support the conclusions that groups always inhibit helping behavior or that all groups equally inhibit helping behavior. In one study, for example, subjects in a group of friends responded much more quickly to someone who appeared to be in an epileptic fit than subjects in a group of strangers.¹³⁰ In a different study,

....[s]ubjects in groups of four who had been allowed to meet and interact with each other for 20 minutes helped at a much higher rate than did subjects who were not so allowed (68.9% verses 25.8%). Indeed, highly cohesive groups of four helped more than did highly cohesive groups of two, thereby reversing the group effect.¹³¹

In yet another study, subjects in a room arranged such that they faced each other responded significantly closer to subjects who were alone (80 percent to 90 percent) than subjects in a room that was not so arranged (~20%).¹³² All of these findings demonstrate that the results of group effects studies are quite mixed. These results vary greatly depending on the relationships between the people in the group and the number of people in the group.

Second, I think we should note that the study with the epileptic demonstrates that friends do not always negatively impact helping behavior. On the contrary, sometimes they make it significantly more likely that an individual will exhibit helping behavior.

¹³⁰ Latané and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander*, 105-106.

¹³¹ Miller, "Character Traits", 18-19.

¹³² Darley et al., "Do Groups Always Inhibit Individuals' Responses to Potential Emergencies?" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 26 (1973): 395-399. For more examples see Latané and Nida "Ten Years of Research on Group Size and Helping" in *Psychological Bulletin* 89 (1981), 321; Chekroun and Brauer "The Bystander Effect and Social Control Behavior: The Effect of the Presence of Others on People's Reactions to Norm Violations" in *European Journal of Social Psychology* 32 (2002): 853-867; and Miller, "Character Traits", 18-19.

That is to say, in some cases, human beings are far more likely to exhibit helping behavior if they are with friends than if they are with strangers.¹³³

Third, to my knowledge, none of the experiments involved observations that compared how the same person acted when they were alone as compared to when they were with their friends. This, it seems to me, would provide us with helpful insight into the manner in which friends helped individuals act more or less virtuously. I believe that the lack of this information makes it quite difficult to gauge just how germane these observations are to questions about the empirical adequacy of character-friendships in adult moral development.

Fourth, none of the experiments in which subjects were with friends discuss the type of friendship between the subject and their friend. Recall that even Aristotle acknowledged that a wide range of types of friendships exist, some of which are rather petty.¹³⁴ Without this information, we simply cannot draw conclusions from this data about whether or not character-friendships have a positive role in the moral development of the adults who are in them from the experimental findings. We only have warrant to claim that the empirical data about the impact of friends on helping behavior is mixed, and that we need more information to ascertain how character-friends aid or impede one another's manifestation of virtues within situations where such a manifestation is appropriate.

¹³³ For more on the empirical findings regarding the impact of friends on helping behavior, see Latané and Darley, *The Unresponsive Bystander*, 105-106; and Latané and Robin, "A Lady in Distress", 200-201.

¹³⁴ Recall, for example, Aristotle's discussion of people who are friends simply because they are useful for one another. See NE 1156a7, 1157b1.

Finally, we would need to say much more about what we can learn about the moral development of a human being based off of one action that that individual performs. I for one do not believe we can determine the success of character-friends in adult moral development without information about how an individual in question behaved prior to the individual's participation in a character-friendship. Furthermore, I think we could learn even more about this if we could take those groups that failed to exhibit helping behavior and place them in another situation where such behavior was appropriate. This could begin to help us understand the impact that character-friendships, assuming that these individuals are in such a relationship, have on adults. Of course, it would also help to see how the character-friends of an individual who failed to exhibit helping behavior when the individual was alone could impact that individual's behavior the next time they were in a similar situation. The data as it currently exists unfortunately does not address these types of situations and questions. Indeed, the results of group effect studies are mixed and incomplete.

Conclusion

I have argued that character-friendships are both possible and well-suited within a CAPS based account of virtue that recognizes that global mixed traits exist and ties virtue to human flourishing. In addition, I have maintained that character-friendships are well-suited to play an important role in adult moral development within such an account. In so doing, I have emphasized the importance of social networks for the development and manifestation of consistent virtuous behavior in adults. Indeed, social networks that

consist of character-friends are important for moral development in adults because, as human beings, they are social creatures. Any account of virtue that ties virtues to human flourishing must address this point. As I see it, the features of CAPS based accounts of virtue and character-friendships are well-suited for jointly providing such an account. Finally, I also maintained that the results from group effects studies are too mixed and incomplete for them to establish the empirical adequacy of character-friendships. We could surely enrich CAPS based accounts of virtue if we had such findings. This, therefore, is one way that CAPS based virtue theorists could extend their account. In the next and final chapter, I will propose several other such courses. Let us now turn to that endeavor.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to extend contemporary CAPS based accounts of virtue in three primary ways. First, I argued for the empirical adequacy of some CAPS based accounts of virtue. Second, I set forth the community and tradition based model of human moral development as a model that is compatible with and well-suited for pre-adult human moral development within such accounts. Third, I contended that character-friendships between adult human beings are compatible with and well-suited to play a significant role in adult human moral development from the perspective and resources of the previous model and a CAPS understanding of virtues. Yet even if my arguments for these positions are sound, I believe I and other virtue theorists have much more work to do before we have provided an empirically and developmentally adequate account of virtue. I will now spend the remainder of this chapter outlining issues that CAPS based virtue theorists need to address.

The vast majority of my attempts to extend CAPS based accounts of virtue have involved arguments that concern the compatibility between a particular thesis and various results from empirical psychological studies. While this is an important first step in the process of establishing that some CAPS based accounts of virtue are empirically viable, it is not the strongest relationship that such accounts can have to empirical evidence. Within the philosophy of science, for example, scientists and philosophers usually agree that there are four different types of positive relationships with which a

theory can have with empirical evidence, each of which respectively is more difficult to establish than the other.¹³⁵ First, a theory can be logically compatible with the evidence. Second, a theory can entail the evidence. Third, a theory can explain the evidence. Fourth, a theory can be empirically supported by the evidence. In the last case a theory has the ability to make surprising or unexpected predictions. I believe it is accurate to say that in the majority of my arguments I have tried to establish the first positive relationship between some CAPS based accounts of virtue and the available empirical evidence. Of course, some of my arguments, particularly those about the existence of CAPS and mixed traits, have sought to establish the second, third, and fourth positive relationship between some of my account and the empirical evidence.

In light of this, I believe that one of the tasks virtue theorists who subscribe to CAPS need to undertake is that of establishing all four relationships between the empirical evidence and a CAPS based account of virtue. By empirical evidence, I am thinking about evidence from a wide number of fields including biology, psychology, sociology, history, and theology.¹³⁶ For reasons that I still do not know or understand, many accounts of virtue completely ignore evidence from these fields. Indeed, even though CAPS theorists do pay attention to some psychological findings, they often completely ignore empirical evidence from the other fields. Here I am thinking in

¹³⁵ Here I am borrowing from Larry Laudan's helpful discussion of this in "Demystifying Underdetermination" in *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*, ed. Martin Curd and J.A. Cover (London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998): 320-353.

¹³⁶ I take it that the most surprising member of this list is theology. I have included this field because of the long histories in the East and West of the thoughtful and empirically informed accounts of virtue that have come from religious communities and thinkers. I believe that virtue theorists should not ignore evidence from these sources.

particular of how virtue theorists neglect the findings of biological science. For example, I am still unaware of a single virtue theorist who has responded to or even taken into account Philip Kitcher's critique of human essence based accounts of virtue based on recent findings in developmental biology, evolutionary biology, and genetics.¹³⁷ Until virtue theorists propose an account of virtue that addresses empirical evidence like that offered by Kitcher, they will not provide a fully satisfactory account of virtue.

At this point someone may respond to my call for interdisciplinary work by arguing that the scope of this work is simply so broad that it is infeasible. Perhaps that is true. Even if it is, however, that does not refute the claim that such work is what a fully satisfactory account of virtue requires. Note that I have not up to this point argued that such an account is achievable. I honestly doubt that it is. Still, if virtue theorists want to provide an empirically adequate account, then they must address all of the relevant empirical evidence in at least the fields I have mentioned. Furthermore, they should strive to do more than establish the consistency of their account with that evidence. They should try to establish all four positive relationships between their account and the relevant evidence.¹³⁸

In addition to the immense challenges virtue theorists face concerning interdisciplinary work, they also face immense internal challenges. There are numerous internal debates that virtue theorists still have a long way to go before they resolve them.

¹³⁷ Philip Kitcher, "Essence and Perfection" in *Ethics*, 110, (1999):59-83.

¹³⁸ In the last chapter we saw that one of the empirical and interdisciplinary tasks that virtue theorists need to undertake is the performance of longitudinal studies that would reveal more about issues in moral development in pre-adults and adults.

These include but are not limited to what counts as a virtue, the rarity of the virtues, the unity of the virtues, the universability of the development of virtues, and how exactly it is that human beings acquire virtues. These debates often involve a number of sub issues that virtue theorists have not yet addressed. When it comes to what counts as a virtue, for example, virtue theorists need to address several questions about the relationship between the virtues of various traditions and cultures and those things which truly are virtues. Robert Adams, for instance, attempts to distinguish between cultural “virtues” and the universal or cardinal “Virtues.”¹³⁹ Adams makes this distinction based on virtues that he believes stand in a particular relationship with God (Virtues) with those which do not but are still worthy of the title ‘virtue.’ Clearly many virtue theorists do reject this sort of an account of which “virtues” within a culture are actually virtues. Yet to my knowledge, Adams is one of the only virtue theorists to even attempt to offer a possible theory for how to determine which virtues in a society are actually virtues. Indeed, many virtue theorists seem to assume that all people hold to more or less the same view of what counts as a virtue. This is clearly false. Indeed, we saw this in chapter three.

I will conclude this chapter by proposing one other issue that virtue theorists need to address in order to extend CAPS based accounts of virtue. Virtue theorists need to do more to think about the holistic nature of the features of these accounts. That is to say, they need to do more to address how all of the features of these accounts relate.

¹³⁹ See chapter 11 of Adams’s *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Consider, for example, my remarks throughout this paper regarding the historical nature of human moral development. In just what sense do one's experiences as an infant impact how one interprets the worlds when they are a sixty-five year old adult? While this question may initially sound absurd, I want to point out that there is nothing within a CAPS account of character traits to establish that it is. On the contrary, it seems that the features of that account should require us to take this question seriously. Indeed, scientists and philosophers of science have begun to ask similar questions about the relationships between genes, organisms, natural selection, environments, and the human development. As I understand it, many of the answers that they are proposing involve an extremely holistic approach where they take all of these factors into consideration. It seems to me that virtue theorists probably will need to give similar types of answers. Once again, I realize this poses significant challenges. My hope is that virtue theorists, of all people, will have acquired and developed the patience required to work on these extremely important and multifaceted issues.

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