Book Symposium on Aspiration

The Agency of Becoming

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Precis[1]

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People who are on the lookout for ways to manage themselves—to stay in shape, get more sleep, eat better, be more patient with their loved ones, read more books, etc.—know *what* they want, but they are unsure *how* to achieve this goal. If these people turn to self-help books, online lists of rules, or personal advice, they will encounter a variety of systems for self-regulation in the relevant domain. The proliferation of these methodologies of living invites a carpe-diem backlash: why not just live your life instead of imposing rules everywhere? Eat what you feel like eating!

Suppose one is taking a conscious, reflective, improvement-seeking approach to some area of one's own life, which is to say, one is exercising agency in relation to one's self. One option is to manage oneself by way of some new rules; another is to let go of the reins and gravitate in the carpe diem direction. Either way, one is regulating oneself: "carpe diem" is the special case where the only rule is to follow no (other) rules. But those are not the only options, because not all reflective self-improvement takes the form of self-regulation.

My book *Aspiration* articulates a third way to exercise agency in relation to one's self, one that is not regulative—not even in the thin, carpe-diem sense. Regulation puts into effect some conception— or lack thereof—as to who one would like to be. Sometimes one neither has, nor despairs of having, an answer to the question of who to be; instead, one is in the process of working one's way towards an answer. I call this process "aspiration": it is rational, agential value acquisition.

When I regulate myself, I am trying to bring my behavior, habits, desires and affective responses into line with where my understanding of value already sits. (In the book, I use the phrase "self-cultivation" for the special case of self-regulation in which what one is trying to change about oneself is a *desire*, but on reflection I find it more useful to invoke the broader category.) When I aspire, I am trying to acquire a new value, including the understanding in which the grasp of the value partly consists. Whereas self-regulation is a value-*implementation* process, aspiration is a value-*learning* process.

How does one plot a course to an unknown practical destination, and how does one motivate oneself to follow it? The aspirant faces difficulties unknown to the self-regulator, who can shape one part of herself while residing elsewhere, in a part not

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under construction. If we assume, as I do, that a person's values are who she fundamentally is, then the aspirant, in some sense, creates herself.

My book tries to answer these three questions about aspiration:

1. What reasons do aspirants act on? Answer: proleptic reasons, which is to say, reasons that anticipate a grasp of value they do not yet possess;

2. What kinds of motivational conflict do aspirants experience? Answer: intrinsic conflict, which is to say, conflicts that cannot be adjudicated by deliberation.

3. How is self-creation possible? Answer: teleologically, which is to say, aspirants are guided by norms that are only grasped fully by the self that they are, at a causal level, bringing into being.

Perhaps even more important than providing answers to those questions is motivating the reader to *ask* them, by highlighting what makes aspiration so paradoxical. It is my contention that aspiration, on the most natural understanding of it, does not fit into the background frameworks that currently dominate academic philosophical work in the theory of rationality, moral psychology, and the theory of moral responsibility.

First: if we are internalists about practical reasons, aspiration will seem impossible, because the aspirant doesn't act on an internal reason. Second: if we assume that the most fundamental conflicts are those between incomparable or incommensurable values, we will fail to get aspirational conflict into view, because the aspirant's conflicts not only cannot be *settled* by deliberation, they cannot even be deliberatively *posed*.

Finally: when it comes to moral responsibility, consider the following dilemma: your values are either a product of forces external to you, or they are the results of self-regulation governed by some other value. If we accept the exhaustiveness of this dilemma, then there is no such thing as self-creation: in the first case because one is not creating one's self but rather *being created*; in the second case, because one is not creating a self but rather bringing some subordinate aspect of one's self into line with a prior conception of value that represents the core of the already-existent self.

To dwell on the last point: aspirants are to be distinguished not only from those who merely regulate an already established self, but also from those who acquire a self without authoring it: if someone's values were entirely the products of her environment (via upbringing, peer pressure, brainwashing, etc.), then she did not arrive at them aspirationally. The fact that you ended up somewhere new doesn't entail that you got yourself there.

Because aspiration is flanked by unparadoxical phenomena, there is a strong temptation to eliminate the paradox by way of redescription. The strategy of solving-by-redescribing should be familiar from discussions of akrasia or weakness of will (freely acting against one's better judgment). The skeptic can say, of a purported case of akrasia, "she didn't really believe that it would have been better to act otherwise," or, "she acted under compulsion." The case of the addict and of the person who changes

her mind last minute may raise philosophical problems, but they aren't the same as the ones the theorist of weakness of will was trying to address. For this reason, any novel or radical philosophical moves the theorist of weakness of will makes to address (what she takes to be) the phenomenon are bound to look unnecessary to the skeptic.

The theorist of aspiration is in a similar position: if a skeptic takes a case of aspiration and tweaks the details slightly, he will find himself faced with a case of self-regulation, or one in which the person fails to count as the agent of her own transformation. Neither of those phenomena require us to invoke proleptic reasons, or intrinsic conflicts between evaluative perspectives, or self-creation. The apparatus I invoke in my book will seem otiose to such a skeptic.

This lands us in something of an argumentative quagmire, because calling such a person a "skeptic" already prejudices the rhetoric unfairly in my own direction. The "skeptic's" view is that she is not being skeptical of the existence of anything, because there is no third, distinctive, phenomenon of "self-creation" apart from, on the one hand, self-regulation and, on the other hand, being subject to forces one does not control. She might put her point this way: if there is a change, it must be the product of some forces or other. Either one subjects oneself to forces under one's own control, or one is subject to forces one does not control.

The best way forward—both for defending against redescription and for getting a sense of the argument of the book—is to present a case of the (purported) phenomenon in enough recognizable detail to render those various redescriptions implausible. I offer up the following case, drawn from my own life:

I attended a college with a hefty physical education requirement: three gym classes. A physical fitness test administered in the first week of classes afforded students the possibility of testing out of all, two or one of those requirements, but I was one of the few physically unfit enough to be left with the full requirement. I had always hated gym class, and persuaded myself that the requirement was not serious. I was wrong. Midway through my senior year, my academic advisor informed me that unless I immediately replaced 3 of my academic courses with an intensive, 3-in-1 gym class, I would not be allowed to graduate.

I still remember the first day of the class, looking at the hostile, sullen faces of the students who were in the same position as I was. I was unsettled by the realization that my face must have looked just like their faces—so closed to the possibility that there was anything to be learned here. On the spur of the moment I decided not to be like them. Instead of 'pretending' to use machines, I made some effort; I jogged slowly, but I jogged rather than walking; I tracked my progress on log sheets somewhat less ironically than my fellows. At the end of the quarter, I still hated gym class.

I thought perhaps what I had hated was the "class" aspect of it, so in the following years I did a lot of exercising on my own: jogging, hiking, biking, swimming. I lived in a beautiful place, and it was nice to be outside, but I still didn't like exercise very much. I wove back and forth between individual and group exercise—I joined a biking club, and I took a variety of classes both at the University gym and at yoga studios. Over

time, I moved in the group-exercise direction: I found myself picking smelly, crowded gyms over beautiful landscapes in which I had to exercise solo.

20 years after having decided to try and appreciate "gym class," I can say I do. In fact, I like all the things I hated about it as a child: the fixed time constraints, the externally imposed rules, the invidious comparisons of scantily clothed bodies, the locker room socializing, the fear of doing something 'wrong' and being ridiculous, and above all: the shared suffering.

Let us consider what we can learn about aspiration from this example of it. First, notice how this process started. The beginning of my aspiration was punctuated by a decision—"I am not going to be like them!"—but it was not very efficacious, intelligent, or motivationally sustaining. It was close to a whim, and one could easily imagine the story going nowhere from that point.

Second, notice how it proceeded. Most of the work was a matter not of deciding or intending or choosing to be some kind of person, but of doing. I changed my attitudes towards exercise *by exercising*—but, I should add, exercising in a distinctive way, namely, accompanied by the feeling that "this is not how I should be doing this. I am not doing it right." In the early years, I was quite self-conscious in group exercise classes, I often felt silly, awkward, like I was faking something. Also relevant was the way in which I conducted *not* exercising—there were long stretches in which I did no exercise, but I didn't feel ok about that. I felt I was missing something.

Third, how it ended: Nowadays, when I'm dancing around in a smelly gym, I don't feel at all as though I'm pretending. I am all in. It feels natural. But I worked hard for that "natural" feeling. I've noticed, over the years in locker rooms, that the young women with perfect bodies are the ones who contort themselves so as to undress behind a towel; we middle-aged ladies stroll around naked, comfortable in our skin. But we've had decades to get there!

If you had asked me, early on, what I was working *for,* I wouldn't have been very articulate in explaining what I was after. Now, however, I am in a position to tell you the answer: There is a beauty in synchronized movement on which no demands for aesthetic value are placed, and in pushing your body to its limits under the command of another. There is deep camaraderie in the experience of shared pain, suffering and exhaustion. I learned, over the years, that the animality of exercise frightens me somewhat, and this fear emerges most pointedly when I am alone; the temporal and spatial confines of group exercise blunt and contain the danger. "We are animals" is a safer thought, to me, than "I am an animal." Even the element of competition, serves, for me, to humanize the activity. I like being naked with other women in the locker room after class: we have done all we can, we have 'used ourselves up.'

Although exercise is a classic arena of self-regulation, I don't think my story fits that mold. I didn't have some independent conception of the value of exercise—health, weight loss, stress-relief—in the service of which I was trying to "drag myself" to the gym. I wasn't trying to inculcate habits in myself, for the simple reason that I didn't take myself to be in a position to know which habits to inculcate: I was exploring,

experimenting, learning as I went along. This was an active process, so it would also be inaccurate to characterize the change as one that just happened to me. I didn't somehow, passively, "end up" appreciating something. I was trying to see what was to be said for (and felt and wanted in) a certain domain—I was acting under the suspicion that there was more to the thing I hated than met the eye. I was trying to wise up.

If having a reason for action means knowing why you are doing something, then there is a sense in which, for a long time, I did not have a reason for engaging in exercise. Or at least: I did not "have" that reason as much as I (could see that I) would later, once I had wised up. In a case of aspiration, the point of what you are doing is something you are in the process of learning, and therefore do not yet (fully) know. This is how aspiration contrasts with self-regulation, in which you know full well why you are doing what you are doing.

But it would also be wrong to say I had "no reason" for exercising. At the outset I had a very flimsy reason ("don't be like them!"), and as I went along, I grasped more and more of the answer I am now in a position to articulate. And it is important that I understood myself to be actively engaged in reaching for a better answer. Not even at the outset did I feel that "to be different from the other physically unfit college seniors" was the real or complete reason to exercise. Even at the time, I would have been somewhat ashamed to present that as my reason—though I would also have been unable to offer more. My own understanding of what I was doing was insufficient, and that fact itself did not escape my notice.

In such a case, an account of my motivation cannot restrict itself to "a desire to be different"; it must also include a kind of placeholder spot for the understanding I would later acquire. My name for the kind of reason someone acts on where (she sees that) part of her rationale is as yet ungrasped is "proleptic." Her action outstrips her current valuational understanding and points towards her future one. The divide between the two 'faces' of her reason—e.g. exercising in order to be different, and exercising for its own sake—is a deep one. The 'inward' face captures what she can already grasp about the value of exercise, and the 'outward' face represents the evaluative perspective she will have on exercise once her aspiration is completed.

These points of view cannot be reconciled by deliberating. To illustrate: suppose 'wanting to be different' is not a strong enough reason, in the face of physical pain, to exert myself in using the weight-lifting machines; but I also feel that once I become someone who values exercise for its own sake, I will view that pain as in some way good. For the person I aspire to be, the balance tips readily in favor of weightlifting. (Or so I believed at age 21. As a matter of fact, I never ended up warming to the machines.)

The aspirant has not quite succeeded in acquiring a new value system, or in losing her old one. For this reason comparisons that straddle these value perspectives are difficult: how do I weigh a consideration that dominates a point of view I am trying to lose against one that is central to the point of view I do not yet have? The fissure contained in a proleptic reason is not one the aspirant can heal by reflection or de-

liberation. Instead, aspiration affords her a diachronic path to unity: over time, she comes to more completely inhabit the second point of view. But this only works if, at a given time, when she must decide between lifting weights and slacking off, she regularly manages to proleptically 'overreach' her current grasp of the value of exercising. The value of being different might not, by her current calculations, outweigh the disvalue of the pain; she does it anyway.

Let me end with one final moral from this story: aspiration is self-creation, and selves are quite particular and idiosyncratic. Part of why I'd always hated gym class was that, as a cerebral, asthmatic, clumsy and friendless child, I was terrible at every aspect of it. Over the years, I've improved only somewhat: I still fall more often than the people around me. The solution to this predicament preached at me for years was becoming less competitive: stop measuring yourself against others, ignore them, just do your personal best, focus on being healthy, etc. Those were values put forward by gym teachers, as to the meaning of exercise *for them,* but they failed to provide a kind of meaning I could ingest. I am a very competitive person, and looking around me at what others are doing was helpful in sustaining my attention in physical activity; moreover, considerations of health are not very motivating for me. Instead, I have found ways to revel in the group dynamics, in the suffering, and in my own lowly place in the athletic hierarchy. I've found the meaning of exercise *for me.*

Review of Agnes Callard, *Aspiration*[(2)]

Paul Katsafanas

Callard's goal is to give an account of "aspiration", which she defines as "the rational process by which we work to care about (or love, or value, or desire...) something new" (p. 4). The aspirant sees the possibility of having a new value and strives to acquire it. But there's a twist: in the cases that interest Callard, the aspirant will have only an inchoate or partial understanding of the value that she seeks to acquire (p. 6). So the aspirant works both to acquire a new value and to come into a fuller understanding of this value.

Let's illustrate this with one of Callard's examples, to which I'll repeatedly return. Consider two students who are taking a music class. One student— let's call him Brad—m erely seeks to attain a good grade in the class. If he can do that without coming to understand music's value, that's fine with him (p. 70). The other student—l et's call her Jane—also wants good grades, but she would reject any approach that resulted in good grades without also being conducive to her goal of appreciating music (p. 70). Jane "is genuinely oriented toward the intrinsic value of music" in the sense that she aims at valuing music for its own sake (p. 70). Nonetheless, Jane hasn't yet become a person who values music for its own sake. This shows up in two ways. First, she "is unable to articulate, to her own satisfaction, what she expects to get out of her music class" (p. 70). She doesn't quite grasp the value of music, though she wants to. Second, her behavior differs from that of agents who do value music for its own sake. Jane may have to force herself to listen to symphonies, or promise herself chocolates if she listens for a bit longer, or engage in fantasies about what it will be like to enter a concert hall while appreciating music; but "someone who already valued music wouldn't need to motivate herself in any of these ways" (p. 69).

In short: Jane wants to appreciate music for its own sake, but she's not there yet; and to get there, she needs external inducements. Nonetheless, Jane is different than Brad; she wants to deepen her appreciation of music and she'd reject external inducements if they weren't conducive to her goal of valuing music. So Jane is an aspirant; Brad isn't.

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Callard claims that aspiration is a "distinctive form of agency." It is distinctive because:

> If aspiration is to be an exercise of human agency, aspirants must be responding to practical reasons of some kind. Behavior qualifies as agency insofar as it exhibits the distinctive intelligibility of being a response to reasons... There are, however, problems in identifying the reason on which the aspirant acts.
>
> (p. 9)

Standard accounts of rational agency are, Callard claims, unable to identify the reason on which the aspirant acts. Callard argues that in order to account for aspiration, we have to introduce a new type of reason, *proleptic* reasons. Proleptic reasons have "two faces: a proximate face that reflects the kinds of things that appeal to the person she is now and a distal one that reflects the character and motivation of the person she is trying to be" (p. 73). So Jane has *one* reason, a proleptic reason, which incorporates two considerations in a non-additive way. And that's Callard's distinctive claim: in order to account for aspirational action, we need to introduce proleptic reasons.

I'm skeptical. There's no doubt whatsoever that people engage in the sorts of activities that Callard is describing: people sometimes do aim at acquiring new values. The question is whether this raises any distinctive philosophical puzzles. I'm not convinced that it does. *If* we make certain assumptions about aspirational actions, these actions will look distinctive; but below I'll question whether we need to make the assumptions. First, I'll question Callard's attempt to explain months- or years-long actions in terms of discrete desires. Second, I'll object to Callard's method of individuating reasons. Third, I'll ask how much the aspirant knows about her goals.

1. Why Try to Explain Action With Isolate Desires?

The agent aims to deepen her grasp of a value that she possesses only inchoately. This is supposed to be one thing that renders aspirational actions distinctive, for Callard claims that deepening one's grasp on a value requires proleptic reasons.

To see why, return to Jane once again. Callard emphasizes that the desire to appreciate music may be quite weak, may need reinforcement with the prospects of chocolate, may need inducements. In part for that reason, we can describe the agent as desiring to desire music more than she currently does. And this, Callard thinks, demands a special account. She writes,

> If your activity of music listening is directed at desiring music more than you currently do... then that activity cannot be explained (non-proleptically) by the desire you currently have. For the desire you

> currently have, considered in abstraction from its aspirational (proleptic) component, would only explain pursuit of the satisfaction of that desire. It cannot explain the deepening or intensification of that desire.
>
> (p. 93)

Here, Callard claims that we cannot explain the deepening or intensification of desires without appealing to proleptic reasons. I take it that she means that we can't explain why it would be *rational* for an agent to try to deepen her desires. After all, desires are fluid: they sometimes deepen, sometimes regress; sometimes intensify, sometimes evaporate. I used to have strong, intense desires to play in sandboxes and, a bit later, to drive fast cars; but those are gone, and others have arisen. But this was just a matter of things happening to me rather than my doing things; I didn't try to bring about these changes, they just occurred. No need to invoke proleptic reasons there. So let's focus on the case of intentionally trying to deepen one's desires. Can intentionally trying to deepen a given desire be explained by that very desire?

I think the answer depends entirely on how much we're willing to take for granted. Here's a case. A long time ago I detested the process of running but wanted to enjoy it. I liked the way in which running long distances gave me opportunities to clear my mind, to be outside, to engage only with what was immediate; I liked the challenges it provided. But I also hated it: there was no moment at which I did not want to stop. I deliberately tried to make myself enjoy it, to desire not just what was incidentally related to running but running itself. And I succeeded. After a while, I came to love the process itself and not just what was contingently connected to it.

So that's a case in which I intentionally deepened my desire: a mild desire to run, supported almost entirely by features of running which were extraneous to the running itself, was transmuted into a strong desire to run for its own sake. But why is this action supposed to be mysterious, calling out for explanation in terms of proleptic reasons? It's true that to explain the intentional deepening of my desire to run, we have to appeal to other desires (a desire to be outside, to overcome challenges, to clear my mind, etc.). But so what? It's hard to imagine any real case in which only *one* desire bears on a given action, so we'll always need to consider a set of desires. (In fact, given that there's no uncontroversial standard of individuation for desires, any case that looks like it's explained in terms of one desire can be re-described as a case of explanation in terms of multiple desires. For example, as I eat my lunch, am I acting on the desire for salad or a desire for something crunchy and a desire for something satisfying and a desire for something healthy?)

Let me put that question differently: in explaining this action, how much can we take for granted? Here are some facts:

As I ran, running became easier. What was grueling, effortful, and unpleasant became something almost effortless. There's no need to appeal to proleptic reasons in order to explain this feature. We can just note that in the early days, the grueling and unpleasant nature of running counted to some extent against it, whereas in the later

days those aspects were gone. So the balance of reasons changed, and we can explain why it changed without appealing to proleptic reasons.

Moreover, as I ran, I began to appreciate features of running that I hadn't formerly noticed. For example, I enjoyed feeling various pains while holding myself to a course of action despite them. I enjoyed having a sense of control over my own fatigue, and ability to bend my actions to my will. So the way in which I understood my activity in the early days differed from the way in which I understood it in the later days. But again, this just means that the balance of reasons in the early days was different than the balance of reasons in the later days. We can explain this without appeal to proleptic reasons.

So let's grant Callard the claim that a desire *taken in isolation* cannot explain why the agent has reason to deepen that very desire. Still, it's not clear why we would ever want to explain any extended action in terms of isolate desires.

So there's a question about how much we can take for granted. Why can't we just say that in the early days, I had sufficient but not overwhelming reason to engage in running; and then, as time progressed and my skills and abilities and thoughts and preferences changed, I had overwhelming reason to run? The running is rational at each instant; but the factors rendering it rational change, over time, and the reasons counting in favor of it multiply. Just so with the aspiring music student.

2. The Individuation of Reasons

Let me now turn to the aspect of Callard's account that I find most dissatisfying. Callard wants to locate *the* reason on which the aspirant acts.

> Sometimes we do something for more than one reason: I went to the store in order to get milk and for the exercise. Proleptic reasons are double in a more fundamental way. The good music appreciation student is listening to the symphony assigned for her class because music is intrinsically valuable and because she wants a good grade. If she merely cited the first as her reason, she would be pretending to a greater love of music than she currently has; if she merely cited the second, she would be incorrectly assimilating herself to the bad student. But her motivational condition is also not one in which she has merely added the first reason to the second, because that situation would describe a music-lover who is (strangely) taking a music appreciation class. The fact that music is intrinsically valuable and the fact that she wants a good grade somehow combine into *one* reason that motivates her to listen. The reason on which she acts has two faces: a proximate face that reflects the kinds of things that appeal to the person she is now and a distal one that reflects the character and motivation of the person she is trying to be. Her reason is double because she herself is in transition.

(p. 72–73)

Callard feels the need to say that the agent acts on *one* reason with two "faces". Let me raise some objections.

First, the idea that agents act on just one reason is controversial enough in simple and immediate cases: when I walk to my office, why can't I be acting on several reasons (enjoying the weather, getting to my destination, etc.)? Moreover, once we consider the months- and years-long actions of becoming an appreciator of music or a doctor or a lover of wisdom, why would anyone be tempted to think that we can locate *the* reason? What would that even mean? Consider Callard's example of the aspiring doctor, the medical student who "has only a schematic understanding" of what being a doctor involves (p. 35–36). The medical student's days and years are occupied by a variety of tasks: going to classes, reading books, administering shots, talking with colleagues, caring for patients. All of these are in part informed by her overarching goals of becoming a doctor and understanding the value of helping people, but they're also informed by much more particular features: if you want to know why she gives *this* patient *this* shot, you need to say much more than that she's trying to become a doctor. So it already seems to me artificial to isolate some years-long action, *becoming a doctor,* and to look for *the* reason for which this action is performed. That larger action is made up of an assortment of more particular acts, each of which is informed by multiple reasons.

But suppose we set that aside and grant Callard the claim that the long-term aspirational action should be treated as a singular unit, and that we should look for the reason for which it's done. Callard claims that in the relevant cases, we need to find *one* reason because the reasons aren't additive. But why should the lack of additivity entail that we need to introduce a distinctive type of reason? There are plenty of cases in which we can say that two reasons that seem contradictory or at least opposed combine into one reason. Take masochism. The masochist wants both pain and pleasure. If you simply said that the masochist wants pain, you'd be incorrectly assimilating him to someone who just seeks pain as such; if you said that he just wants pleasure, you'd be incorrectly assimilating him to someone who just seeks pleasure as such. So the reasons of pain and the reasons of pleasure somehow combine into one reason, a masochistic reason. But there's nothing mysterious about this reason and it doesn't call out for a special account of dual-faced reasons, with one "face" offering pain and the other pleasure. So again, the mere fact that the aspirational acts involve a reason with two aspects that can't be separated doesn't make it distinctive.

Or take a person who seeks challenges in some domain. The skilled athlete wants to play against people who present him with real challenges. So he wants opposition and the possibility of defeat but also wants to win. If you simply said that he wants challenges, you'd be inadvertently assimilating him to someone who just wants life to be difficult, who might satisfy this desire by tying his shoes together or stuffing rocks in his socks. If you simply said that he wants to win, you'd be inadvertently assimilating

him to someone who would find equal satisfaction in besting children or incompetent opponents. So the reasons of seeking challenges and the reasons of wanting to win somehow combine into one reason, a reason to seek challenging but not unbeatable opponents. But again, there's nothing mysterious about this reason.

So, from the fact that we can't account for the music student's action merely by adding the desire to get good grades to the desire to appreciate music, it doesn't follow that we need to introduce proleptic reasons. For there are many cases in which reasons combine in non-additive ways, with the one reason modulating the other.

3. Being Inarticulate About One's Goals

Above, I've granted Callard the assumption that aspirational activities involve a form of inarticulacy about one's goals. But now I want to push on that assumption. Notice that whether we count the aspiring music student's understanding of the value of music as inchoate depends on our standards for attributing knowledge.

Depending on how much specificity we require, our grasp of *any* goal or *any* value can be said to be attenuated or inchoate. Consider a fairly localized action. I get in an argument with a friend. In one sense I know what I'm doing: arguing about who is at fault. In another I don't; there may be hidden motives, jealousies, resentments, compensation for past failures, and all of this may modify the way in which I'm pursuing the goal. Surely the action is intentional, but there's plenty about it that I don't grasp.

Or take a case that more explicitly involves certain values. Take a standard political case. A person advocates for restrictions on immigration and takes himself to be defending his country's status in so doing. But we, looking at this person, see fears, economic anxieties, racism, and so forth. He knows what he's doing but doesn't know *all* of what he's doing. Again this is a perfectly ordinary case.

What should we say about these cases? The person has a rudimentary awareness of what she's doing and why, but she doesn't possess a deep understanding of her goals. Nonetheless, most accounts of action will treat her as acting intentionally. Take Anscombe's account: it's sufficient, to show that an action is intentional, for the agent to be able to offer some rudimentary conception of what she's doing and why. The conception doesn't need to be deep; it doesn't need to illuminate every aspect of the action; it doesn't need to reveal the action in all its complexity.

Why can't we account for the aspirational cases in the same way? Sure, the music student can't say much about the value of music. But she can say a bit. Minimally, she can say that music seems to her to be of value, though she can't articulate why this is. And she can say that she's trying to become more articulate about why it has value. This is enough to render the action intentional. Or she can point to people she is trying to emulate: she can see that individuals who she respects value music, and she can try to understand why. Certainly that's a perfectly intelligible reason for action.

(Incidentally, it's an interesting feature of Callard's examples that all of her cases of aspiration are *conventional:* they are ones in which the aspiring agent has clear models of what it would be to possess the value. The agent has exemplars from whom she can learn. Callard does not, as far as I can tell, consider any cases in which an individual aspires to appreciate the value of something *that no one else values.*)

Callard writes that "The problem posed by large scale transformative pursuits is this: they require us to act on reasons that reflect a grasp of the value we are working so hard and so long to come into contact with, but *we can know that value only once we have come in contact with it*" (p. 76, emphasis added). But, as the above discussion indicates, the claim that we know the value only at the end of the aspirational process is true only if we have a very demanding account of what constitutes knowledge.

So we can agree with Callard that the aspirant lacks comprehensive, articulate understanding of her goal. But most of our actions share that feature. And I don't think the conclusion should be that most of our actions are aspirational or that they demand some special account of the reasons for which they're done. Standard accounts of action are already constructed in light of the idea that we are not omniscient about our goals.

So here's my final question for Callard: if standard treatments of rational agency allow the agent to be inarticulate about actions which are nonetheless done for reasons, why do aspirational actions raise any distinctive problems?

4. Conclusion

I've raised several questions about aspiration. I've suggested that aspirational actions look distinctive only when we make several assumptions: (1) that we should explain the rationality of months- or years-long actions in terms of a single desire or goal, without appealing to contingently related desires or goals that would render performance of the action rational; (2) that the non-additive nature of "proleptic" reasons calls out for a special account of dual-faced reasons, whereas the non-additive nature of many other reasons (those involved in masochism, challenge-seeking, etc.) does not; (3) that the aspiring agent's incomplete understanding of her goal requires a special account, whereas the pervasive forms of incomplete understanding in ordinary cases of action do not.

I reject these assumptions and thus remain unconvinced that aspirational activity raises any distinctive puzzles. Nonetheless, Callard's book is stimulating, nuanced, and well-argued. It deserves great credit for focusing on long-term stretches of activity rather than punctual moments of choice; for emphasizing the way in which central cases of human activity involve striving for a change in one's values; and for rejecting simplistic accounts of these topics.[1]

[1] Thanks to Joel von Fossen for helpful comments on this review.

Critique of Agnes Callard, *Aspiration*[3]

Richard Kraut

One of the principal goals of Callard's incredibly rich and provocative book is to (a) to state a puzzle or paradox that philosophers have generally ignored; and (b) to propose a solution. The puzzle has to do with large-scale life changes that typically take many years and much effort. One goes to college to become an educated person. Moves to a foreign country and begins a new life. Adopts a child, befriends someone, gets married, becomes a philosopher, or sports fan, or opera lover, or gourmet. The puzzle, she says, is that at first those who embark on these projects have little reason to do so; they have only a partial or faint grasp of what an education is, or the value of opera, or what it will be like to be married to so-and-so. And yet, she claims, these processes, by which we acquire new values, are guided by reason. We are thinking our way towards becoming a new person, a person we do not yet know, someone with very different desires from the ones we now have. We must recognize, then, the existence of a type of reason she calls "proleptic." The weak, inadequate reason we presently have for embarking on these major changes is temporarily standing in for the fuller reason we will come to have when our new selves emerge and the values we dimly appreciate are finally understood.

Callard's name for this process is "aspiration," and the person who undertakes it an "aspirant." More precisely, this is someone who:

> a. is trying to acquire new and better values;
>
> b. realizes that her grasp of those values is presently partial and defective;
>
> c. is conflicted, because she is attached to the old values that must be abandoned;(d) therefore needs extrinsic rewards to motivate her to acquire the new values.

An example that recurs several times is a beginning student of classical music who would rather be doing something else, has to struggle to stay awake at concerts, and promises herself treats if she manages to sit through her music appreciation class. She

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has some inkling of the value of this music, but is confident that her appreciation of it is defective. Typically, she is guided and encouraged by mentors, but needs external incentives. Only later (if she persists) will she fully recognize the value of her aspirational goal – and that later recognition makes it the case that she did have sufficient reason to pursue it.

This is a more precise and restricted use of "aspiration" than the one we are familiar with. Suppose someone who visited Paris once in his youth is saving his money, in later years, in order to return. We would normally count that as an aspiration, but none of the conditions listed above need be met. Or a young child might immediately be intrigued by the sound of the violin and wholeheartedly aspire to learn the instrument, needing no external rewards for practicing. Her grasp of the repertoire for violin is as yet rudimentary, so clause (b) is fulfilled, but she aspires to become a violinist even though conditions (c) and (d) are not met.

Nonetheless, ordinary usage is not inviolable. I take Callard to be using "aspiration" in a more restricted way because doing so makes the phenomenon she is studying – value change – a richer source of philosophical puzzlement. Aspirants, as she defines them, are going against the grain for the sake of something unknown to them. They are "giving up ... known goods for an unknown thing that may or may not be good" (p. 196). How could that be rational? It is a good question, and Callard deserves high praise for her stunning originality in raising it, and for the fascinating solution she proposes.

She takes herself to be studying not just value *change* but change for the better – value *learning*. Some things, she assumes, are more worth wanting and seeking than others, and she will count someone as an aspirant (in her restricted sense) only if the change in valuation sought by the aspirant is justified. What one gives up, as one transforms oneself, is of lesser value to oneself than what one eventually attains. This commits her to saying that if I devote myself to tennis in a serious way, hoping to become a professional, but a tennis career all along was not the right choice for me (too little ability, motivation, and money), I am not an aspirant. Similarly, if I devote myself to a religious life, seeking a better understanding of the transcendent source of value, but in fact there is no such divine reality, my project was not genuinely aspirational. These are further ways in which she deviates from ordinary usage, but for good reason. What she wants to understand is how value change can be a good thing, and so her examples must not be misguided "aspirations".

A skeptical reader might challenge Callard in the following way: "Just as an atheist denies that someone who aspires to understand and love God is acquiring better values, so I deny that there is good reason for people to marry, or have children, or listen to opera, or study philosophy – unless that is what they want to do. There is no such thing as 'the value' of these activities, dimly or fully grasped, that we should conform our desires to; rather, it is our desires (or the ones we would have when fully informed) that determine what we should pursue." That is a conception of well-being Callard must reject.

She must also reject rational hedonism. The hedonist will point out that we are pre-rationally drawn to pleasure, and that what we must learn is not how to change our values for the better, but how to get the most pleasure out of life. The beginning student of music who has trouble staying awake at the opera may indeed be right to struggle towards a deeper appreciation of this genre, but if so, that is not because a change in values would be good for her, but because she will more fully achieve the one good goal that she already has.

Callard seems, then, to presuppose what is sometimes called an "objective list" conception of well-being – one that takes many different sorts of things (not just pleasure) to be valuable. Readers who reject that sort of theory are not the ones she seeks to convince.

I turn now to a different sort of concern: even if one has a conception of well-being that is not at odds with Callard's approach, one can ask whether she has succeeded in her attempt to show that aspiration, as she conceives it, is a paradoxical or puzzling phenomenon, one best solved by the recognition of what she calls a "proleptic" reason.

Her discussion is often cast in terms of a "grasp" of the value of things, a grasp that in the beginning stages of aspiration, is dim, defective, and partial; but then (at or near the final stage) becomes full. Only when the aspirant finally becomes a new person does she really see why she had good reason to transform herself. Only the knowledgeable opera lover fully appreciates the value of this kind of music. Only after many years of study and thought can the true value of philosophy be understood. When the aspirational project has reached its goal and the value in question is fully appreciated, the aspirant can say to herself for the first time: "now I see what I was after all along" (p. 87, 288). The reason for creating a new self is now fully available.

'Intrinsic value' is a crucial term in Callard's vocabulary. Aspirants, as she describes them, seek a better grasp of the intrinsic value of their goals. She imagines, for example, a beginning student of music who says: "I want to want to listen to music for its own sake, in order to appreciate the intrinsic value of the music" (p. 86). But here and in many other similar passages, I believe that Callard is mis-characterizing the phenomenon she is trying to understand. The first part of the sentence just quoted does make good sense: this student does not yet listen to music for its own sake, but wants to get to the point where she does. But then the student adds: "in order to appreciate the intrinsic value of the music." This is where I think Callard goes wrong. This is not how we should understand the goal of aspirants – even the restricted group of aspirants that Callard seeks to understand.

Suppose a music student did utter the sentence in question. I would say to her:

> "I think I know what you mean, but you are entering difficult philosophical terrain when you describe yourself this way. You say that you want to appreciate the intrinsic value of music. What I think you mean is that you want to understand and love the music itself (not some property it has – its intrinsic value); and you want this to become so strong a motive that

> it needs no supplementation by external incentives. In your studies, you won't be taught to look for the intrinsic value of a Haydn trio, or a Mozart symphony, or a Beethoven piano sonata. And later, when you become a sophisticated musician, you will not finally be able to articulate what the intrinsic value of classical music is. That will not be part of your training. Rather, you will be good at listening to it and performing it; you will know what to look for, and you will love what you find."

It is open to Callard to reply that, for all that, classical music does have intrinsic value, and musicians ought to come to see that it does. G. E. Moore would agree. He would say that in a universe devoid of listeners it would still be a good thing if a recording of a beautiful piece of music were being played. But I doubt that Callard's use of 'intrinsic value' is meant to convey that she is adopting Moore's framework for thinking about value. The people she counts as aspirants are not seeking to bring more value into the world – they are doing something for themselves, not for the universe.

The assumption underlying Callard's talk of intrinsic value might be – as I suggested earlier – that well-being is by itself a good thing for those who possess it, and that the goods sought by aspirants are components of well-being. The successful musician has something that is, in this sense, valuable in itself, and she continues to love music because doing so is part of her well-being. With that assumption I am in complete agreement. But her theory is an attempt to get inside the aspirant's head, and to solve a philosophical problem about how to understand her mental life. The aspirant, for Callard, is trying to grasp the intrinsic value of music, philosophy, marriage to so-and-so, etc.; and has only a partial grip on it. It would be better, I suggest, not to describe aspirants in this way. They want to understand and appreciate such-and-such works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, or such-and-such books of Descartes, Hegel, Wittgenstein. It is not also part of their aspirational project to see why these objects of study have intrinsic value or are components of their well-being.

That something is amiss in Callard's depiction of aspiration is also indicated by her remark that when the aspirational goal is achieved, the agent is able to say, "now I see what I was after all along" (p. 87, 258). That makes it sound as though there is always, at the end of any aspirational project, an "Aha!" moment, when the aspirant finally has an experience of grasping what she was looking for – like someone searching her memory for a name she has forgotten and suddenly finding it. Aspiration is seldom like that. Students of music or philosophy often acquire, by slow degrees, a better understanding of and greater love for the musical or philosophical works they study, but it would be unusual for them to say, at some point, "now I finally understand why I have been devoting myself to this subject." Of course, there are such "Aha!" moments: a writer fussing with a sentence, or an artist repainting a canvas, might finally feel she has gotten it right. But there is no reason to make that sort of experience definitive of the aspirational pursuits that are Callard's subject.

I turn now to Callard's central conceptual innovation – the idea of what she calls a "proleptic reason." In her words: the agent "is moved by a consideration that, taken by itself, would (in her view) provide an inadequate reason" for what she is doing. She is moved by that reason "as a stand-in for another one" (p. 88). Callard also speaks frequently of the "partial grasp" that the aspirant has of the intrinsic value of what she undertakes. That grasp, she thinks, being partial, cannot by itself motivate the aspirant. It is not enough of a reason to make the sacrifices and encounter the difficulties that will be required if she is to reach her dimly viewed and poorly understood goal. And yet, Callard insists, the aspirant persists and ought to persist. Why so? What is going on in her mind that makes her aspiration rational? Callard replies: the aspirant is looking up to a better person, the person she hopes to become when she clearly grasps what she is seeking. It is as though the normative force of the fully grasped reason that later comes into view is operating by way of a substitute with which the aspirant makes do at the present. Callard acknowledges that this sounds strange. "Like everyone else, I have trouble getting aspiration into view. ... I find it natural to conceive of rational agents as reasoning from value rather than toward it. In writing this book, I embarked on a project that entailed fighting against these tendencies in myself; the completion of the project is something that will, I believe, call for fellow soldiers" (p. 261).

I must apologize for not volunteering to fight on her side. It seems to me that we can understand what is going on inside the head of Callard's aspirant without using the tool she thinks is needed for this purpose – a proleptic reason. She describes the aspirant as having a partial grasp of some particular value. The student's experience of classical music gives her some reason, but not much of a reason, to work her way through the musical canon. But Callard also recognizes and sometimes emphasizes the fact that the aspirant is not alone in the world. She has parents, teachers, mentors. She may be surrounded by accomplished, passionate, dedicated musicians – good evidence that there really is much more to be appreciated in this sound world than she is currently able to hear. So there are two kinds of reasons for her to undertake a serious commitment to increase her understanding of this subject: (A) her own limited response to the music – her partial appreciation of it; (B) the confidence she has that other people she knows have achieved a deeply rewarding love and understanding of this music. (B) by itself might give her sufficient reason to aspire to greater musical appreciation, but even if it does not, its weight can be added to the small weight of (A), with the result that she has good enough reason, all things considered, to continue her musical studies. By means of her own experience, she is already getting something from her encounter with this sort of music; by way of the testimony and encouragement of others, she has excellent reason to suppose she will get more. These are familiar and good reasons; there is no reason to suppose that we can best understand her perseverance by positing a different (proleptic) kind.

In addition to these two familiar kinds of reasons at work in the minds of aspirants, there is a third, though it is easily overlooked. Everyone who has emerged successfully from childhood knows that there is much to be said for trying new things. We had

to experience the taste of ice cream or chocolate or some other favorite food for the first time. Being willing to do that sort of thing has paid off, and so we recognize that there is good reason to continue to adopt, at least guardedly, an exploratory stance towards parts of the world that are not well known to us. The point applies beyond new tastes. Our favorite authors were once unknown to us. We had to be willing to read the first pages of a new story, or try a new sport, and we have grown accustomed to the idea that many good things take time before we enjoy them very much. The success of these past experiments in living surely plays a role in making us willing to devote time to the cultivation of new interests, even when initially our experience of them by itself provides few psychological rewards.

There is one further problem for Callard's claim that proleptic reasons provide the key to understanding aspiration. As she describes them, these are reasons that come fully into view only when the aspirant has achieved a complete grasp of the intrinsic value of what she has been doing for many years. Callard's theory takes into account only (A) what is going on in the mind of the aspirant now; and (B) what will be going on in her mind much later when she has a full grasp of her goal. The aspirant's project is rational only when (B) is added to (A). What this omits is the period in between. What will the aspirant's life be like all that while? Will she continue to feel conflicted about what she is doing? Will she continue to need external rewards? Will she feel confident that she is getting closer and closer to her goal, or will she frequently feel discouraged and pessimistic? Surely a rational aspirant ought to take these factors into consideration. It is also important for her to ask how long she can expect to have full possession of her aspirational goal. Does she have only a few more years to live? Will she be healthy and strong enough to continue playing soccer, if she begins to devote herself to it so late in life? There is not just one future stage of life that the aspirant must look to – it ought to be the entirety of her future self.

It is open to Callard to reply that we ought to discount or perhaps even entirely ignore these periods between the present and the "Aha!" moment when we have a full grasp of the intrinsic value of our aspirational goal. At any rate, when one's later self says, "now I see what I was after all along," it does not matter that up to that point I often felt conflicted and disappointed. So understood, Callard would be saying that the later self that achieves the aspirational goal is authoritative; if, having grasped the intrinsic value of music or philosophy, she wholeheartedly believes that it was worth it to spend her life trying to get to this point, then her state of mind makes it the case that her many years of conflicted aspiration were worth the effort. After all, now she fully grasps the intrinsic value of music or philosophy; earlier she had only a partial grasp. What she was experiencing during those difficult intermediate years must therefore be heavily discounted.

This idea would have some plausibility if fully grasping the value of a great good were a profound and ecstatic experience that puts in the shade everything that had gone before it. Religious aspiration might fall into this category: the vision of God, however brief, makes all of the struggle to achieve it worthwhile. But there is a reason

why those who strive to achieve a direct vision of God have often held that the years of struggle that precede this vision are followed by an *eternal* reward, not just a moment of ecstasy. It is hard to see why a very lengthy period of suffering can be redeemed by what endures for just a moment of joy and insight.

Aspiration and Internalism[4][5]

Susan Sauvé Meyer

Agnes Callard seeks to draw our attention to a kind of agency that she thinks is both ubiquitous and under-theorized (Callard 2018). Aspiration, as she construes it, is not a mere pro-attitude such as a hope or a wish, but a sustained exercise of purposeful activity. It is manifest in the hard work one performs in order to master such things as music, philosophy, religious practice, or being a parent.[1] Just as it is by repeated exposure to and engagement with music that one comes fully to appreciate its value, it is by immersing oneself in caring for a child that one becomes a parent in the normative sense: one who enjoys and appreciates for its own sake the value of raising a child.

It may sometimes be the case that we undergoe such value-shaping experience or perform the value-shaping activities without anticipating or intending the transformative effect. Many who accidentally become parents in the biological sense become parents in the normative sense as a result of caring for their child. It may also be possible to develop an appreciation for music by having been exposed to and surrounded by it from an early early age, in the way one acquires mastery of one's native language. Still, Callard insists, it is also the case that people seek out these experiences and engage in these activities with the specific goal of learning that value: as when the aspiring music lover takes a music appreciation class or the aspiring (but as yet childless) parent volunteers to help care for her cousin's children. These are cases of aspiration.

Aspiration, so conceived, is a kind of value learning. By valuing, Callard has in mind not simply believing that something is valuable; it involves investing a complex array of cognitive, emotional, and motivational resources into appreciating and responding to the value of that thing (p. 117–120). Since valuing occupies a significant swath of one's practical and epistemic resources, acquiring a new value is transformative of the self. The upshot of Callard's analysis is that not all value learning is passive or accidental. Indeed, she argues, for the most important values in life, we master them

[1] The objects of aspiration invoked by Callard include reading Ancient Greek (p. 75), friendship (p. 180), fashion (p. 206), fine food, politics (p. 207), education, marriage, emigration (p. 209), and traveling to Egypt (p. 274).

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[5] I thank Errol Lord for advice about internalism and Samuel Borislow and Tat Hung for feedback on an earlier draft of this essay.

only by engaging in aspirational activity (p. 207–9). Such purposive self-transformation is an exercise of agency, Callard insists. As such, it must be rational. One of the main burdens of her discussion is to explain how this can be the case.

Callard agrees with Laurie Paul (2014) that the resources of decision theory cannot show aspirational activity to be rational, but she pushes back against Paul's formulation of the problem (that when one decides whether to undergo the value-transforming process one lacks access to the values and preferences one will acquire as a result). Rather, Callard insists, by the time an aspirant makes such bridge-burning decisions as throwing away the birth control pills or getting on the boat that will carry her away to the promised land, she already has some grasp of that value (p. 59–60). That grasp will be imperfect: partial, perhaps intermittent or unduly specific—as when the aspiring parent focusses on the experiences of pregnancy and nursing a newborn, even while knowing "full well" that bearing one's own biological children is not the only way to become a parent (p. 273). The aspirant will be aware that her grasp of the target value is deficient; indeed that awareness, coupled with her appreciation that there is more of value there than she yet grasps, will be part of what spurs her to engage in the activity by which she will learn to value it more accurately and more fully. But she will already have developed some appreciation of that value, and it is on this basis that she moves forward. The aspirant does not, *pace* Paul, lack access to the value that governs her choice.

Callard's nuanced and humane exploration of the halfway status of the aspirant allows her to accomplish something that Paul's analysis cannot. I have in mind here Callard's exquisitely sensitive analysis of the vulnerabilities of the aspirant, worked out in detail in the case of the aspiring parent brought up short by infertility (p. 268–275). While Paul's analysis entails that such grief is not rational,[2] Callard is able to explain it as a rational response to a genuine loss. While it is not a loss on the same level as losing an actual child, the sense of dislocation and upheaval experienced by the aspiring parent reflects the significant distance she has already travelled along the road toward what she aspires to be. Aspiring to be a parent is like being an aspiring tennis player, which is not simply having an intense desire to be a tennis player, but to be already involved in the process of becoming one. The aspiring parent is already embarked on the process of becoming a parent, and her sense of self is already informed by an inchoate grasp of that end.

1. Callard's Challenge to the Internalist

These differences with Paul notwithstanding, Callard still thinks that it is problematic to account for the rationality of aspiration–at least if one is an internalist about reasons. The upshot, she thinks, is that we should expand our conception of reasons to

[2] Paul makes this point herself in "What you Can't Expect when You're Expecting," (2015), quoted by Callard, p. 264–5.

encompass a *sui generis* reason distinctive of the aspirant, proleptic reason (p. 72–3). The challenge she poses for the internalist runs as follows.

The aspiring music lover has a "nascent love of music" (p. 97), but is not experienced or accomplished enough to enjoy or sustain attention to more challenging pieces, such as a Mahler symphony. In order to develop her appreciation of music, the aspirant will need to spend time listening to a more demanding repertoire than she currently appreciates, just as an aspiring tennis player will need to play against more skilled opponents in order to improve. One might expect that this is a straightforward case of instrumental rationality. Given the aspirant's desire to improve her appreciation of music, she has reason to listen to challenging music. Callard, however, finds this analysis problematic for an internalist who takes what an agent has all-things-considered reason to do to be what an impartial third party observer could extract from her current "desires, cares, interests, loves, etc." by a "procedurally rational method" (p. 98). Instead, Callard proposes, the third-party standard that shows whether an aspirant's behavior is rational is the *substantive* rationality of the expert she aspires to become (p. 104–107). This is the "proleptic rationality" that Callard proposes is distinctive of the aspirant: an aspirant is someone acting on reasons that *ex hypothesei* she does not yet have.

Now one might wonder why Callard does not think the internalist may attribute to the idealized third party observer the expert knowledge that the aspirant lacks. After all, the point of the idealization is to make up for the agent's cognitive deficits. If I want to paint the exterior of my house, but don't know what kind of paint is suitable, I have reason to use the type of paint that I would choose if I had the expertise of the housepainter. So why can't the internalist make the corresponding claim about the aspirant: that it makes sense for the aspirant to take the steps that the expert in the field she aspires to master would advise her to do? Callard does not address this question directly, and I will return to it below. But first, let us consider the challenge that she does pose explicitly for the internalist.

The core of Callard's challenge draws on the fact that aspirational activity is hard work. In order to improve, the aspirant needs to do things that are difficult, sometimes boring.

The aspiring student of music needs to listen to challenging music in order to make progress, but at present her appreciation for music is fairly weak. As a result, whenever she has an opportunity to listen to demanding music, there is "virtually always" an alternative that "coheres better with her current set of desires and interests" (p. 97). "Candy, television, alcohol, a nap, video games, internet surfing—pick your poison; it's waiting in the wings" (p. 195). While the aspirant may have a *pro tanto* reason to listen to challenging music, her current constellation of values will never give her an all-things-considered reason to do so.[3]

[3] One might object that the aspirant's desire to improve adds additional weight to the case for attending the concert. Callard denies that this is the case, on the ground that the desire to improve has

This challenge strikes me as too quick. First of all, even if I have a weaker interest in A and a stronger interest in B, it does not follow that I ought always to opt for B over A. Suppose I like chocolate more than vanilla. It is not simply that I get more pleasure from chocolate than from vanilla. I actually appreciate the distinctive taste of each, although I rank chocolate above vanilla. What does this preference commit me to? Presumably it commits me to opting for a life with chocolate but no vanilla over a life with vanilla but no chocolate, if these are my only options. But my preference for chocolate over vanilla does _not_ commit me to forgoing all opportunities for vanilla when chocolate is also available. If opportunities to indulge in chocolate are ubiquitous in my life, such a policy would leave me with a vanilla-less life, which is not preferable, from my current point of view, to a life with both vanilla and chocolate. Given my current set of preferences, I ought to choose vanilla over chocolate *on some occasions*, even if there is no particular occasion on which I ought to do so.[4]

The same goes for the parent who values her children more than her garden, but still values both. Given a conflict between the demands of parenting and the demands of gardening, she will always fulfill her duties as a parent. When she has to choose between protecting her tomato plants from a looming hailstorm and collecting her children to bring them indoors, she will of course choose her children's safety. But the demands of gardening do not usually conflict with the demands of parenting. Not every situation in which one has a choice between an episode of parenting and an episode of gardening is a case in which the *demands* of these pursuits conflict. One can spend time gardening without being a bad parent, and spend time parenting without being a bad gardener. Thus a loving parent is not irrational, in light of her current set of preferences, to spend time in the activity (gardening) that she values far less than parenting. Indeed, it is arguably irrational of her to not devote at least some of her time to gardening (assuming she has the time and resources to do both).

These examples show that it does not follow, from the fact that the musical aspirant has a weaker appreciation for listening to music than for other activities that are readily available, that it is irrational for her to listen to music on any occasion. To the extent that she values music at all, she has reason to listen to it some of the time, even if there is no particular time at which she ought to do so. One might object, at this point, that at most I have shown that the aspirant has reason to listen to the accessible music she already appreciates, not that she has reason to listen to the challenging music that she does not yet enjoy. Such an objection, however, assumes that enjoyment is what the aspirant values in listening to music (rather than being a sign of her appreciation for it). But this is not the case of the aspirant as Callard conceives of her.

Alternatively, one may object that my response does not distinguish the reasons of the aspirant from those of the expert. While both the musical aspirant and the accom-

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the same rational ground as the aspirant's first order (weak) interest in listening to music (p. 99–100).

[4] Except in extremely remote possible worlds (e.g. where opting for vanilla on any occasion will forever cut me off from opportunities for chocolate).

plished music lover have reason to sustain their attention through all four movements of Mahler's first symphony, the music lover, who will fully appreciate the demanding piece, has very different reasons for paying attention. The music lover will be motivated by a full appreciation of the intrinsic value of music, while the aspirant may need to pinch herself to stay awake, or promise herself a treat if she manages to pay attention through the entire performance (p. 69, 210). Can the internalist account for this difference? If the challenge is to show that the music lover has more or better reason to attend the concert than the aspirant, the internalist can rightly complain that the target has shifted. Callard's charge against the internalist is that the subjective motivational set of the aspirant will never give her all-things-considered reason to sit through the symphony, and that charge has been answered. If the demand is now to explain how the aspirant's *motivation* is different from that of the expert, the internalist can simply endorse the very fine account Callard herself has given of the difference. If, on the other hand, the objector demands to be shown that the music lover has *more reason* to attend the symphony than the aspirant, the internalist need not accept the challenge. While the music lover's motivation for attending the concert may be better or purer by some standard, it does not follow that he has "more reason" (greater expected utility?) than the aspirant does for attending. The burden Callard places on the internalist is to show that the aspirant's current cognitive and motivational resources make it rational for her to attend the concert, not that the aspirant has *less reason* to do so than the expert.

One may object here that I have only shown that the aspirant is rationally *permitted* to attend the concert, not that she *ought* to do so. However, the former is enough to meet Callard's charge that the aspirant's current set of preferences will never make it rational for her to choose the difficult activities that aspiration requires. Moreover, being rationally permitted to φ is not simply having a *pro tanto* reason to φ; permissions, like obligations, are all-things-considered reasons. Internalism is not committed to there being one uniquely rational thing to do in every situation in life.

Still, one might worry that the transformative goal of the aspirant makes it irrational from the standpoint of her current scheme of values—and it is here, I suspect, that we may understand why Callard does not think the internalist is entitled to invoke the substantive expertise that the aspirant seeks to acquire. The aspirant, in seeking to acquire a greater appreciation of music, aims to become the sort of person who values music more than she currently does. Given the finite status of a human being's motivational and cognitive resources, valuing music more will involve valuing something else less. Even if there is room in the aspirant's valuational economy to accommodate a fuller appreciation of music, this is bound to have an effect on her other values. Coming to value music more will lead her to value something else less. Thus, for some value B, the aspirant to A currently values A *less than* B, and the expert she aspires to become will value A *more than* B.[5] Since the substantive expertise of the expert entails this

[5] Or, at any rate, will value A more in relation to B; the loving parent who aspires to a career in

reversal of the aspirant's value scheme, it cannot be invoked by a neutral third party observer charged with figuring out what the aspirant's value scheme gives her reason to do.

I take it that something like this is what Callard has in mind when she claims that the aspirant "is in a state of intrinsic conflict between the evaluative perspective she seeks to acquire and the one she seeks to depart from" (p. 179). But should we agree that the aspirant's value scheme *conflicts* with that of the expert? The characteristic feature of the musical aspirant, on Callard's account, is that she has only a weak appreciation for the value of music and Callard insists that, absent a full appreciation of that value, the aspirant is in no position to have a clear sense of how music stacks up against other things she values (p. 208, 275). She may recognize that once she appreciates music better, she will likely accord less importance to things that she currently values, and that she will have to face questions she has not yet had to address, regarding how music stacks up against other things she values. But this is something she needs to work out, not something she already has decided, endorsed, and encoded in her motivational apparatus. Thus we should reject the claim that the aspirant to A currently values A less than B. It is not that she values B more than A or that she values both equally. Rather, her current weak appreciation for A falls below the threshold for valuing it. We may characterize the aspirant as open to valuing A, and to adjusting her other values accordingly.[6]

Here it is important to recognize that being open to valuing B less than A is consistent with expecting that one will continue to value B. Let us suppose that A = parenting and B = economics: a successful economist who values her career aspires to become a parent. She can expect that as a loving parent, she will value her children more than her career, but it is not irrational of her to expect that she will still value being an economist. In valuing her children more than her career, she will be committed to giving up the career in tragic circumstances where she cannot continue with both, and she will be committed to fulfilling the demands of parenting even when they conflict with those of her career (e.g. missing an important meeting if her child is dangerously ill). But as we noted in the case of the gardening parent, one can fulfill the demands of parenting without engaging in parenting activities on every occasion that they are available. In the space of permissions left open by the demands of parenting, there may still be room to fulfill the demands of a career. If there is not enough time or resources to sustain both, then it will be self defeating for the economist to aspire to be a parent. But this is a familiar problem of work-life balance, not an objection to internalism.

But what about the aspirant who aims to purge a value from her system? Those who struggle to rid themselves of racist or homophobic attitudes are paradigm cases of aspirants, according to Callard (p. 230–31). Do we find in these cases the kind of

economics can expect to still value her children above economics, but will value economics more than she currently does. I ignore this complication in what follows.

[6] "[A]spiration *is* openness to value" (Callard, p. 230).

intrinsic conflict that would pose a problem for the internalist? Here it is important to note that not every conflicted person is an aspirant on Callard's view (p. 175). Huck Finn, she reminds us, does not aspire to get rid of the racist values that conflict with his appreciation for Jim as a friend (p. 171). The internalist need not show that Huck Finn has reason to so aspire, only that if he becomes an aspirant, it is not irrational for him to undertake the work that will reform his value system. His goal in that work will be to remove the cognitive, affective, and motivational vestiges of the value system that he no longer endorses. Since reflective endorsement is a necessary feature of valuing (p. 119), the aspirational version of Huck will fall below the threshold of *having* the values of which he retains the vestiges. Thus there is no intrinsic conflict between the value system he actually has and the one he aspires to have. He is not engaged in the self defeating project of undermining what he currently values, but the perfectly intelligible project of escaping the grip of what he no longer values.

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Aspiring to be rational[(6)]

L. A. Paul

How does a person coherently aspire to change who she is? How can someone rationally want to transform themselves into a kind of person they don't currently want to be? This is the central question of Agnes Callard's important new book, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*. The book makes a major contribution to the philosophical literature on practical rationality and moral psychology.

Start by adopting an account of the self in primarily ethical terms, defined by its hierarchical value structure. Ordinarily, when a person is engaged in the process of rational self-improvement, she is engaged in the process of bringing her lower-order values into alignment with her highest-order values. Perhaps she wants to appreciate music, that is, she values valuing music, but has a tin ear. So, she works towards enlarging her ability to appreciate music. Or perhaps she believes that parenting is intrinsically valuable, and so wants to make spending time around babies and children more appealing to her.

These ordinary kinds of value-alignment and self-change are not Callard's target. Her interest is in how we aspire to transform ourselves in "large scale" ways by transforming our core, self-defining values.

To frame the central question, consider two examples, one involving music appreciation and one involving parenting.

Philistine has no taste or appreciation for music. She knows she should appreciate music. In fact, she doesn't just want to cultivate her tastes. She wants to change herself into someone for whom the appreciation of music forms a central way of living her life. Aspiring to transform herself, she enrolls in a music appreciation class and works diligently to transform herself into becoming a music-lover.

Macbeth has no desire to have a child. Nevertheless, his wife, a woman of strong opinions and persuasive powers, believes that he should value fatherhood. Macbeth recognizes that fatherhood will radically affect his life goals and will change the rest of his life. He strives valiantly to transform himself into the kind of man his wife wants him to be, a man who wants to be a devoted father.

The question is, how do Philistine and Macbeth *aspire* to this sort of change? As Callard frames things, they aspire to re-create themselves, to give themselves new core

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values. How can Philistine and Macbeth rationally undertake this process of transformation?

On Callard's view, each of our aspirants, Philistine and Macbeth, must work to transition themselves from their current system of values into new ones. They must work to acquire values they don't currently value, "driving [themselves] toward a different value-condition from the one [they] are in" (p. 180). Importantly, this is a profound change in core values and preferences: a change in who one is. Philistine and Macbeth are attempting to transform themselves into a new kind of person, a new self. (In the ontology I prefer, a person is constituted over time by a series of selves. Thus someone can persist as the same person, metaphysically speaking, even if they are realized by a new self.)

But how can one rationally replace one's self in this way? How can someone rationally undertake a transformative re-creation of oneself? The problem, at root, is the way the new values of the new self are alien to the current self, the self (the aspirant) making the choice to transform. In particular, the aspirant does not have the right sort of cognitive contact with the self that they aspire to become. In a deep sense, they do not understand the self that they propose to transform themselves into. So how can the choice be rational?

Consider the problem for our exemplars. Philistine doesn't value music. So how can she rationally choose to re-create herself as a music lover? Similarly for Macbeth: he simply doesn't value fatherhood. How can he rationally replace his current values with new values, values that he does not value? Rational choice seems to require choosing what you value. Choosing what you do not value, especially when this amounts to choosing to become a self that you do not value, violates this presumption.

Note that there is no problem if the aspirant has higher-order values that guide the lower order value change. For example, there is a version of the case where Macbeth does not value being a father, but his wife has already convinced him to embrace a higher order value: valuing parenthood. He values valuing parenthood, or values valuing valuing it, and is simply working to bring his lower order values into alignment with his higher order values. I do not think this version of the case captures what Callard is concerned with. Aspiration is of interest because the aspirant wants to adopt values that, in some sense, she lacks at every level.

The problem relates to how we are to understand the possibility of rational, radical self-change for the internalist about reasons, who requires that R cannot be a reason for a person if that person is not "moved" or motivated by R. This brings out the cognitive dimension of the problem: being (intrinsically) moved by a value requires one to have it, to know it more than intellectually. The problem is that the aspirant does not have the right sort of cognitive contact with the aspired-to values in order to appreciate them. To be moved to acquire a value, you must appreciate it. But if you do not have that value, by definition, you do not appreciate it, for appreciation of it comes through having it.

So the first problem here is one involving bootstrapping: if change is to come from within, how can we be motivated to replace our current values with values that we do not (currently) hold? In order to grasp a value, you must take it on, you can't just regard it from afar. You have to have the value already in order to be moved by it.

As Callard puts it: "The problem posed by large-scale transformative pursuits is this: they require us to act on reasons that reflect a grasp of the value we are working so hard and so long to come into contact with, but we can know that value only once we have come into contact with it." (p. 76).

In this parlance, to know a value one must "come into contact" with it. Such contact has two important features here: it teaches you how to grasp the nature of the value, and through grasping this nature, you recognize it as valuable. Grasping it involves making it your own, including it among your values.

We can do an end run around the bootstrapping problem, because experience can bring us into contact with value, and through this, it can teach us understanding. In my (2014), I argued that value change can come from having a new kind of experience. Such change from without can cause change from within. New experiences affect us cognitively (and neurally), changing the way we imagine, assess, and represent, thus creating the ability to recognize and value new values that we did not value before. Through experience, one grasps the value directly, and in virtue of this, can embrace it as one's own.

We can distinguish between *knowing that* a value is valuable and *understanding* a value. In some contexts, testimony and other types of information can help us to know that a value is valuable. For example, we can rely on testimony from teachers or experts to tell us that appreciating music is valuable. Changing our beliefs about a value will not teach us to value it, that is, it is not sufficient for us to understand or grasp the value. However, if we know that something is valuable, we can know that we should value it.

Actually coming to have the value involves a different process. What creates understanding is coming into contact with the value directly. That is, the experience of responding to music or the experience of forming an attachment relation to one's child creates a new mode of presentation of the value (music, parenting). This mode of presentation allows the agent to grasp the value, and thus to understand it.

Philistine dislikes opera. She can't force herself to appreciate it simply because the music expert tells her it is valuable. But once she (somehow) decides she should value opera, she can put herself in a position where her mind can be changed for her. This is why she takes the class. Through having the experiences in her music appreciation class, her abilities are changed so that she has the capacity to grasp and appreciate opera. Her experiences (in the music appreciation class) directly form and shape her cognitive capacities, giving her the ability to understand and appreciate music.

Macbeth dislikes children. He can't force himself to value becoming a father simply because his wife wants him to. But once he (somehow) agrees, on the basis of his wife's arguments, that he should value becoming a parent, he tries to change. He can't

simply create these values in himself, but, like Philistine, he can put himself in the way of external forces, various experiences, that can create this value in him. There's an important catch-22 in the background here. Macbeth does this without actually grasping the value of fatherhood. For it is the experience of forming and standing in the attachment relation to his child that allows him to grasp the value of fatherhood. He has to actually have the child in order to create the ability to value fatherhood in himself.

So the externalist, it seems, can solve some versions of the bootstrapping problem. Something external to the agent can cause them to change, creating the requisite motivation from within. For easy cases of self-change, the internalist can also solve the bootstrapping problem: she can solve it by postulating that the agent has internal higher order values that remain in place across the change. Such higher order values ground the desire to replace the agent's current first order values with new values, values that align with their higher order values. If Philistine already values being a music-lover, or Macbeth already values being the sort of person who wants to become a parent, or values valuing that sort of person, these higher-order values can rationally ground the desire to effect a value change. This solves the *easy* problem of self-change.

However, there is a second, much more serious problem. This is the *hard* problem of self-change.[1] The hard problem of self-change concerns the rationality of transformative value change: value change when the requisite higher order values are not in place. Transformative value change involves replacement of one's values at the highest levels: replacement of one's *self*. How can one rationally aspire to replace oneself by a new, alien self?

Transformative value change is not easy self-change. There is no persisting higher order value that can ground the desire to change. Philistine doesn't value being a music-lover, and Macbeth doesn't want to be the sort of person who is a parent. The internalist should deny that transformative change is rational.

If change comes from without, that is, if it comes from a transformative experience that changes the agent, we have an explanation of how such change is possible. We do not yet have an explanation of how an agent could be *rationally motivated* to choose such change. We can stipulate that our agents are told, through testimony (from the relevant social scientific experts?), that they should choose the new values. But this is not enough for them to actually value these values. If they simply choose to replace their current selves on the basis of testimony alone, they are acting for the wrong reasons. They are alienated from their life-defining choices. So the externalist should also deny the rationality of transformative self-change.

Callard wants to avoid this result. She wants to explain how agents, somehow, could be rationally moved to guide themselves through the transformative process of replacing their core values, to rationally undertake transformative self-change. Her

[1] Paul (2014). With apologies to David Chalmers.

solution is to defend the existence of *proleptic* reasons: Janus-faced reasons that draw an aspirant towards a value they lack in order to allow them to grasp it.

"Proleptic reasons are—I conclude—*the* reasons that rationalize large-scale transformative pursuits. A proleptic reason is an acknowledgedly immature variant of a standard reason. A proleptic reasoner is moved to φ by some consideration that, taken by itself, would (in her view) provide an inadequate reason for φ-ing" (Callard 2018, p. 88).

I think Callard is onto something important, and I am impressed by the depth and sensitivity with which she explores and defends her project. But I am still puzzled. Her account provides an excellent description of one's internal phenomenology, and I see how it can solve the bootstrapping problem. That is, I see how agents with a proleptic phenomenology can be motivated (from within) to change their values. But I do not see how it solves the hard problem: I do not see how it makes transformative value change rational.

The problem, again, with transformative value replacement is that it seems incoherent to choose values you do not value: rationality involves acting in accordance with your values, not acting against them. Moving that incoherence inside a reason, so that you can act in accordance with your (proleptic) reasons when you choose to replace your values, does not remove the incoherence, it merely glosses over it. Hiding our ultimate ends from ourselves in order to act can make us motivated to destroy our current selves, but how can it make such action *rational*?

Callard proposes a stealth approach. She points to a way we approach life choices, such as choosing to have a child, by taking small steps in order to reposition ourselves. We spend time around babies, or read books about parenting, and discuss the possibilities with friends and family. In this way, she argues, we start to change our values and desires about becoming a parent. Think of it as cognitive valuation therapy. We find small ways to present the value to ourselves that, eventually, allows us to grasp it properly.

I agree that we often take these small steps. This is indeed how we prepare ourselves for these changes. We act in indirect, and sometimes stepwise ways, stealthily avoiding revealing to ourselves what we are really doing. The discussion here is right on point. But this will not make such an undertaking rational. The trouble with a stealth approach is that taking an indirect route to changing oneself seems just as rationally problematic as taking a direct route. The same problem of rationally changing one's self arises with a small step just as much as with a big step. If you do not value being a certain kind of person, it is no more rational to choose to *begin the process* of becoming that kind of person than it is to choose to become that kind of person *simpliciter*.

Return to Macbeth, and the catch-22 he faces. He does not value becoming a father, and, we assume, has the higher order value of valuing his current, child-free state. He cannot appreciate the value of parenthood until he actually becomes a parent, and by the same token, he cannot appreciate the value of valuing parenthood until he actually begins to value it. "It is... characteristic of the aspirant that she *must* act in ignorance

of what she is doing, since it is by such action that she comes to learn the value and the nature of her activity" (Callard, p. 219). If Macbeth must act in ignorance, how can he rationally choose to step onto the path that takes him towards valuing parenthood?[2]

Callard's response to this objection will be, again, to propose proleptic reasons: reasons that will motivate us to take steps towards becoming a self we do not currently value. Macbeth's proleptic reasons are to draw him, somewhat mysteriously, towards the self he rejects, perhaps via his desire to satisfy his wife's desires. In the process, he will become a new kind of man.

But again, I ask: how could rational choice and action be based on self-deception? How can choosing and acting through deceiving one's current self be rational?

Callard thinks we can provide a teleological argument for the rationality of aspiration, arguing that the choice of the earlier, creating self normatively depends on the values of the later, created self. But mere normative dependence doesn't resolve the epistemic problem. Rationality requires that when one acts, one acts in accordance with one's current values. Until we get a clear answer to the epistemological and metaphysical question of how rational choice and action are possible in cases of hard self-change, we should conclude that there's more of rationalization than rationality about aspirational self-creation.

Conclusion

Callard concludes with a discussion of aspiring to be a parent. She explores, with sensitivity and thoughtfulness, the pain that a person can feel when they cannot become a parent through ordinary biological means. In the process, she discusses my argument that you can't rationally choose to become a parent based on what you think it will be like, claiming that I'd hold that a person who faces infertility "has no reason to grieve his or her infertility as a loss" (p. 264).

I do not dispute her argument that we need to respond to infertility with humility and sensitivity. I do, however, dispute her characterization of my views. A person who deeply desires to have a child, but cannot, has every reason to grieve, for this person feels a very deep and profound loss. This is not changed one whit when their desire for a child is based on what they think it will be like. For they are in fact experiencing the very significant loss of the opportunity to discover what it is like to be a parent, to discover what it is like to hold their newborn child in their arms, and to discover what it is like to experience the joys and the suffering of parenthood. You can't know what it's like to for you be a parent until you become one—but you can know what it's like to be denied this life-changing opportunity.

[2] To make the choice rational, we could assume Macbeth values his wife's values and is simply acting, consistent with this higher order value, to bring his values into alignment with hers. But this, by stipulation, isn't our case. The move is an illicit attempt to substitute the easy problem for the hard problem.

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Replies[7]

Agnes Callard

Paul Katsafanas makes the most fundamental objection to the project of the book, which is that it is an attempt to solve a non-existent problem. Katsafanas' view is that aspiration only appears paradoxical against a background characterization of agency as— in senses to be further specified below— *simple, unified*, and *transparent:*

1. Simplicity: the agent must have a *single* reason for acting as she does.

2. Unity: this (single) reason cannot be *composed* of non-additive reasons.

3. Transparency: agents understand why they are doing what they are doing.

Katsafanas' view is that there are garden variety, un-paradoxical examples of agency that lack one of these characteristics. Let me take each of the claims in order.

With respect to simplicity, Katsafanas points us not to cases of overdetermination but rather to cases of fragmentation: he wants to assert that, because diachronic agency involves a complex array of sub-actions, it may be unable to be explained with reference to a single overarching desire or goal. So, for example, he notes that over the years of aspiring to become a doctor, a medical student performs many subordinate actions, each of which has its own rational structure. This is correct, but I would distinguish two levels of agency here: the agency involved in (e.g.) giving a particular shot, and the agency involved in becoming a (better) doctor. Even if it is true that I cannot become a better doctor without (inter alia) giving people shots, my reason for becoming a better doctor is not exhausted by my reasons for shot-giving. That project requires an overarching reason.

To see this, imagine two nurses in training, and let us imagine that shot-giving is the only medical activity either of them engages in. Each of the nurses has a reason for giving each specific shot she gives, but if, on top of giving shots one of them is *trying to get better at giving shots,* then that nurse needs an additional reason for engaging in *that* activity. The aspirational nurse's agency is structured at a higher level than the nurse who is not trying to improve, and this extra bit of structure calls for an extra reason.

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So, what I maintain, with respect to (1), is that for anything someone is doing, she must have some reason for doing that thing. My claim is not that she cannot have *more* than one reason, but that she must have *at least* one reason that hits at the right level of specificity. Someone who is trying to get better at what she is doing needs a reason for engaging in that project. And if she has no ulterior motive— if this is not a case of self-regulation, but of aspiration— then she will need a proleptic reason.

Still, one might wonder whether that reason couldn't be *composed* of other reasons. This is what (2) gets at. I think it is possible for someone to want to do something for two reasons, where neither of those reasons suffices, but the two, together, do. For example, I might be in a situation where neither my desire for a walk nor my desire to return an overdue book to the library would suffice to make me break from pressing work, but the two, taken together, do. I think it is possible to act for two reasons, taken together, in this way— but only if those reasons are additive. As Katsafanas acknowledges, the proleptic reason is not like this: the two faces cannot be added together. (The reason for this is that they belong to evaluative perspectives that stand in intrinsic conflict with one another: the perspective of the distal face insists that the one belonging to the proximate face has things (somewhat) wrong. If reason A in some sense "disputes" the validity of reason B, they cannot be added together as reasons for ϕ-ing.)

Katsafanas supports his denial of the unity requirement with two examples: masochism and love of challenge. But are these cases in which someone acts from multiple, non-additive reasons? Of masochism, Katsafanas says, "the reasons of pain and the reasons of pleasure somehow combine into one reason, a masochistic reason. But there's nothing mysterious about this reason." I disagree with both sentences: the latter because I find masochism to be quite paradoxical— and it is regularly treated, in the philosophical literature, and in everyday life, as "a difficult case"— and the former because it is not clear that there are *reasons* of pain and pleasure for the masochist. Masochism, unlike aspiration, is typically understood as a pathology. It appears in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and this means it is not clear how much of a burden there is on the theorist of masochism to offer a unified, rational picture of masochistic action. Perhaps masochism involves being motivated to pursue pain and pleasure in a way that simply doesn't "add up," because it is irrational.

But if we assume this is not the case, then Katsafanas is right to infer that I would hold the theorist of masochism to a high explanatory standard: he would owe us a special account of how the reasons of pain and pleasure combine in such a way as for the pain to ground the pleasure. Such an account would be required to differentiate the distinctive rationality of masochism from that of a case where a painful thing is undertaken because the pleasures associated with it outweigh the pains. I am not committed to thinking that the reasons in question would be proleptic, and I doubt they would be— proleptic rationality is the solution to one form of paradoxical agency, not all.

As for those who love challenges, I think this is likely to be because the challenge gives them an opportunity to test their ability. This provides them with a single, unified reason: I want to know how much I have in me. (Of course some people may love challenges because they are somewhat masochistic, and others might love challenges because they are aspirational and are trying to improve. But those kinds of love of challenge would not constitute an independent basis for objecting to my account of proleptic reasons.)

In sum, then, I do think that if someone does something for two reasons, and if those reasons cannot be "summed" , and if neither is sufficient on its own to motivate the action, then one needs a special account of what allows such an action to nonetheless have the unity that would qualify it as rational.

Finally, let us turn to transparency. Must agents be aware why they are doing what they are doing? Katsafanas is correct that hidden motives are a fact of life: a person can be ignorant of the fact that she is teasing her friend out of jealousy, or that his real motive for arguing for restrictions on immigration is racism. In those cases, however, the agent would not take the "reason" in question to speak in favor of the action. To the extent that a reason is taken to justify the action—t o rationalize it— I think it is in fact true that the agent must have access to that reason, and be able to cite it as a consideration in favor of so acting. Such a person can, as Anscombe says, offer the reason as an answer to the "why" question. Absent some such answer— where we might include "no special reason" or "just for fun" as limit cases of answers—t he action does not qualify as intentional. The transparency of our reasons is a feature of intentional action.

Aspiration presents a challenge for the action theorist precisely because, while it does not fit the usual paradigm of intentional action— unified, single, and transparent— it nonetheless cannot be dismissed by the action theorist as irrational, pathological or unintentional behavior.

Katsafanas is right that the aspirant can say *something* about why she's doing what she's doing— the aspiring music student is able to offer us some articulation, however vague or incomplete, of the value of classical music. Katsafanas wonders why that isn't sufficient. The answer is: because, in order for the student to count as an aspirant she must herself find it insufficient. (The aspiring appreciator of music must be distinguished from someone who only has a minimal, vague appreciation of music, and is satisfied to listen for that reason.) What fuels aspiration is precisely the agent's sense that her own understanding of why she is doing what she is doing does not suffice to meet her own standards for doing it. She is driven forward— to aspire— by the thought that she does not yet grasp the value enough; and that what she is doing now will only make sense in the light of the understanding that lies in her future.

The paradox of aspiration is that it is possible to act, now, for a reason one will only fully understand later. The aspirant's grasp of why she is doing what she is doing is not as good as the grasp she will have once she is capable of the simple, unified, and transparent agency she aspires towards; nor does she straightforwardly lack reasons

for her behavior, as in the case of pathological or unintentional action. Rather, the aspirant's agency grows more rational over time, as the proximate face catches up with the distal one.

1. Response #2: Kraut

Richard Kraut raises what I take to be three distinct objections to my book:

1. It presupposes an objective list conception of well-being.
2. It fails to justify the invocation of intrinsic value and proleptic reasons.
3. It places excessive weight on the final moment of a person's aspirational journey.

(1) Objective List Conception

On Kraut's interpretation of my book, it is committed to "an "objective list" conception of well-being – one that "takes many different sorts of things (not just pleasure) to be valuable" components of well-being. Though I personally find such a conception to be somewhat plausible, the theory of aspiration put forward in my book is not in fact committed to it— or to any relationship between aspiration and overall well-being, flourishing or happiness. For instance, Kraut ascribes to me the view that aspiration has to improve the life of the aspirant, so that someone who (mistakenly) pursues a tennis career where that was the wrong choice for her (too little ability, motivation and money) fails to count as an aspirant.

Kraut is responding to the fact that I restrict "aspiration" to cases in which the value in question is genuinely valuable. I use "aspire" as a success term, along the lines of terms like "see" or "know" or "remember." So, for example, if someone harbors (what she takes to be) religious aspirations, though God does not exist, then I claim that there was in fact no aspiration going on. Such a person might believe she is aspiring, but aspiration is value-learning, and you cannot learn what is not the case. We could speak of "seeming to oneself to aspire" as a common denominator between aspiration and what happens in the no-God-religiosity case, just as we could speak of "seeming to oneself to" see or remember or know or learn. But, I take it, in this case as in those, there is some reason to want a theory that doesn't take the "seeming" case as foundational.

It is important not to conflate the thesis that "aspiration" is a success term with the thesis that every aspirant improves the overall quality of her life. In order to be an aspirant, you must be learning the value of something. So it must have value, and you must be (increasingly) responsive to that value. However, this entails nothing about how your life goes overall: it could be that you make inappropriate valuational sacrifices. So someone could make real, aspirational progress in improving as a tennis

player— over time, she better and better appreciates just what is great about tennis— but that could make her worse off, in general and specifically with respect to how much value she apprehends. (e.g. perhaps she gave up on too many other valuable pursuits in the service of her tennis career).

Consider an analogy: in order to count as learning mathematics, there must really be mathematical knowledge, and your possession of it must increase over time. But it could be that you make such cognitive sacrifices in order to achieve this end (perhaps you forget all the physics and biology you once knew!) that you end up with less overall knowledge. Still, you count has having learned math. Whereas you cannot learn some alchemy: there is simply nothing there to learn.

If you call someone an "aspirant," you are committed to thinking that the value she aspires to learn is not a sham. But this doesn't mean you think there are a multiplicity of values: you could think, for instance, that there is only one value— pleasure— and the person in question aspires to value it more perfectly. Thus the theory of aspiration does not rule out rational hedonism of this kind. It would rule out a form of descriptive hedonism on which pleasure is the only thing we *do* pursue, and it is not of value, and nothing else is of value either. But such a view might not have the resources to call the maximization of pleasure *rational,* either.

In any case, it is true that someone who thinks that nothing is of value (call this person, "the value nihilist") must deny that there is any such thing as aspiration. If nothing is valuable, no value learning is possible. This is analogous to how the person who does not believe that the external world exists cannot think there is such a thing as "seeing," only "seeming to ourselves to see"; and the person who believes that there are no truths thinks that there is no such thing as learning.

I want to make a concession to Kraut: to deny value-nihilism is to presuppose metaethical scaffolding of some kind or other, and my book doesn't provide it. I left this question open because I think the theory of aspiration is compatible with a variety of forms of realism about the existence of (at least some!) value— even ones that are quite deflationary and subjectivist, as long as they do not amount to nihilism. (For example, a subjectivist who thought of valuing in terms of being in a certain subjective state would have to analyze aspiration as moving from a less to a more complete version of that subjective state.) In this way, I am in a similar position to someone who offers an account of learning without offering a theory of what it is for a proposition to be true. One final point. Kraut writes:

> A skeptical reader might challenge Callard in the following way: "Just as an atheist denies that someone who aspires to understand and love God is acquiring better values, so I deny that there is good reason for people to marry, or have children, or listen to opera, or study philosophy – unless that is what they want to do. There is no such thing as 'the value' of these activities, dimly or fully grasped, that we should conform our desires to; rather, it is our desires (or the ones we would have when fully informed)

that determine what we should pursue." That is a conception of well-being Callard must reject.

I am not as far from this "skeptical reader" as Kraut imagines. I agree with her that people have no reason to marry, or have children, or listen to opera, if they lack any kind of desire to do these things. You shouldn't try to learn something you have no interest in: you won't get anywhere. (The same holds for non-value learning.) It doesn't follow from the fact that marriage, child raising or opera are possible objects of aspiration that *everyone* should so aspire. As for the skeptical reader's second sentence, everything depends on what is meant by "the ones we would have when fully informed." If this means "informed by, among other factors, value-learning," then I am entirely on board. If, on the other hand, the idea here is to imagine a world in which the only way peoples' desires could change is nonaspirationally, then, yes, I am in disagreement with such a skeptic, but only because she outright denies the possibility of aspiration. In a world in which there was no aspiration, aspiration would indeed not exist!

(2) Intrinsic Value

Kraut objects to my invocation of "intrinsic value" as the object of the aspirant's striving. He suggests, instead, that such people want "to understand and appreciate such-and-such works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, or such-and-such books of Descartes, Hegel, Wittgenstein." One way to use the term "intrinsic value" is simply to insist that such people want to understand those works/books *for their own sakes*— if Kraut read me this way, he would agree with me.

However, Kraut correctly reads my use of the phrase "intrinsic value" as loading more into it than "for its own sake." Kraut's comments have helped me to see that when I say something has "intrinsic value" I often mean something like: it has a mysterious sort of value that cannot be fully specified. I grant this is an odd use of the phrase "intrinsic value," and I am grateful to Kraut for picking up on the fact that I use it this way. I want to defend the claim that intrinsic value—i n this odd sense—is relevant to understanding aspiration.

The paragon— someone who has completed her aspiration—c an be described in just the way Kraut suggests: she understands and appreciates XYZ. But the aspirant doesn't yet do so. So what does she want? She wants to come to be in the condition the paragon is in. But how does she describe that condition to herself, given that she is not in it? My suggestion is that she must see her target in something like the following terms: "it has some noninstrumental value or other, a value peculiar to it, whose precise nature I cannot yet articulate to myself." This is the work my word "intrinsic value" is doing. And so when Kraut insists that the language of intrinsic value is out of place for thinking about the mindset of the person who has "finally become a sophisticated musician," I think this is exactly correct. But it might, nonetheless be fitting for thinking about the aspiring musician.

In some way, "intrinsic value" is the valuational counterpart to a "proleptic reason." A proleptic reason to ϕ is a reason that can be acted on by someone who understands the point of what she is doing in aetiolated, "intrinsic value" terms. So his objections to my invocation of proleptic reasons might be connected to his objection to the terminology of intrinsic value. In defense of his position, Kraut cites (a) mentors and (b) openness to new experience as factors that can rationalize aspirational actions in the place of proleptic reasons.

In chapter 2, I discuss the case of the mentor, arguing that aspirants rely on mentors in a distinctive way— namely, with a sense that there is something wrong or imperfect or incomplete about the fact that they have to take someone else's word for it: "the testimonial element in aspiration is of a distinctively degenerative kind: the present legitimacy and authority of the mentor's voice are conditioned on, indeed anticipate, its gradual evanescence." (p. 81) Mentorship is not an alternative to proleptic rationality, it is one form proleptic rationality takes.

I would say something similar about openness. It is one thing to show up in a new place and be "open to new experiences" of any kind that might befall one. It is another thing to have the targeted openness of the aspirant, who has the sense that her current understanding of music or philosophy (or, indeed, of some location) is in some way lacking. The aspirant is "open to" something quite specific, namely what she currently takes herself to be missing. And her "openness" is more active than that word indicates: she is not merely willing to come to understand better, but actively taking steps to improve her understanding. The latter form of "openness" is a proleptic one. Thus, as I argue in ch. 2, purported alternatives to proleptic rationality don't actually rationalize aspirational activity unless we give them a proleptic form.

(3) The Last Moment

Kraut worries that my account of aspiration defers gratification and insight until a final moment in which the agent grasps that "this is what I was after all along." He infers, from the fact that the agent only has a full grasp of the value in question when her aspiration is complete, that I place little importance on the intervening period. This would indeed be problematic, since my entire project is one of articulating the rational structure of that intervening period. Let me explain why I do not understand aspiration as a "very lengthy period of suffering...redeemed by what endures for just a moment of joy and insight."

The first point to make is that when the agent arrives at her aspirational endpoint, she has become the sort of person who appreciates something. The result of aspiration is not "just a moment" but a stable state of character, an enduring source of joy and insight. But that doesn't address Kraut's main worry, which concerns the "discounting" of the intermediate period. Kraut is correct that a proleptic reason makes reference to a point of view on value the agent will only have when her aspiration is complete. His mistake, I believe, comes in conceiving of the latter reference as static in nature. As

the agent's aspiration progresses, she has better and better access to the point of view that she will have when she becomes the paragon she aspires to be. She needs fewer external rewards, and finds it easier to motivate herself to continue to her endpoint. Her engagement with the value becomes progressively richer, deeper and more satisfying.

But what if she never gets there? Does it follow that she is bereft of "joy and insight?" No, that simply means she did not acquire all the joy and insight she had been aspiring for. If the aspirant is engaged in making progress towards her value destination, and if that activity is cut off, then her total progress will be whatever she achieved to that point. The interrupted aspirant can say, "this is some of what I was after all along." Analogously: if someone's visit to an art museum is cut short, at least she saw a few paintings. Every aspirant already has in her possession, (some) actual grasp of the value in question. This amounts to: some joy and insight, hers for the taking.

2. Response #3: Meyer

Sauvé Meyer's piece is focused on my challenge to internalism. In its simplest form, the challenge I raise runs as follows: an agent has "an internal reason" to ϕ when ϕ-ing satisfies her current set of desires— but, in the case of an aspirant, ϕ-ing satisfies not her current but her *future* set of desires. So she doesn't have an "internal" reason to ϕ. By itself this would be no problem for internalism, since the internalist could simply use that fact to deem aspiration irrational. But most internalists would not choose that route. One way I articulate the cost, to Sauvé Meyer's approval, is in relation to infertility: if the desire to be a parent is usually aspirational, then those who grieve infertility would have to be described, by such internalists, as grieving the absence of the possibility of doing something they had no reason to do.

Sauvé Meyer agrees with me that we want a theory of rationality that can avoid diagnosing aspirants with irrationality. She departs from me in doubting whether the aspirant lacks an "internal reason" to engage in the relevant aspirational action. Now my presentation of internalism, above, is heavily simplified. I said the action must satisfy her desires, and this compresses complications the internalist analyzes in terms of the existence of a (as Bernard Williams dubbed it) "sound deliberative route" between the action and her desires. The idea of a sound deliberative route can then be further unpacked in a variety of ways; in the book I discuss some of these sectarian disputes among internalists, and argue that aspiration presents a challenge to internalism on all of them.

Sauvé Meyer's challenges do not trade on any specific conception of how we spell out the notion of a sound deliberative route. For this reason, I leave those complications aside. Her objections are grounded in the fact that the aspirant does have *some* desire to engage in the relevant action, and she wants to argue that this desire *suffices to* underwrite the rationality of the action in question.

She raises a series of objections grounded in the observation that the aspirant has *some* reason to ϕ. Sauvé Meyer is correct to note that, unlike Paul, I conceive of aspirational situations as ones in which the aspirant has already made progress along her path. Such a person has *something* to go on, which is to say, *some* desire to act from. If the aspirational action of ϕ-ing— attending a concert, taking a music class, getting on the bus— satisfies that desire, why not think she has an internal reason to ϕ?

My answer is that if the action is truly aspirational, she does not have *enough* of a reason to ϕ. But this insufficiency cannot, as Sauvé Meyer believes, be cashed out in terms of the strength of the relevant desire, because what we need to explain is how someone can be motivated to *increase the strength of that very desire,* and that goal must be bundled into our characterization of "ϕ." Let me explain.

Sauvé Meyer interprets the insufficiency of her desire in terms of the presence of countervailing desires to do other things. She points us to the fact that even in cases where my desire for X is less than my desire for Y, there are many circumstances in which it is nonetheless rational for me to choose Y: though I prefer chocolate, I might on occasion choose vanilla for variety; likewise, someone who prefers parenting to gardening might choose to garden sometimes. I think it is certainly true that there are factors that go into our decision about whether we should ϕ beyond the strength of our desires for the particular items. The internalist may want to analyze this case by saying that the chocolate-lover who rationally chooses vanilla is nonetheless making the choice that satisfies her overall set of desires, which include desires for variety. Likewise, not only do we sometimes lack opportunities for parenting, but it is also true that if we do too much of it we can get burnt out and become worse parents. Reserving time for non-parenting activities might be an expression of someone's commitment to parenting. Certainly it is true that we cannot infer from the fact that someone chooses to garden on a given occasion that she values gardening more than parenting. But I don't think these cases share the paradoxical structure of a case of aspiration, because in all of these cases the importance the person places on the relevant activity can be entered straightforwardly into the (albeit complicated) function outputting what she should do.

The aspirant's difficulty is not that there are other things she also likes to do, or even that she likes to do those things more than the aspirational activity. Sauvé Meyer is right that that would still license, within the confines of internalism, her engagement in the relevant activity, both in ways that are proportional and perhaps also in ways that are disproportional to her interest in it[1]. The problem is that the aspirant is, as it were, suspicious of her own desires and this makes her equally suspicious of the relevant deliberative comparisons. She thinks she likes lounging around too much; and that she likes listening to classical music too little. So she is not inclined to try to figure out,

[1] For an argument that internalist reasons needn't be proportional to desires, see Mark Schroeder, *Slaves of The Passions* (2007), p. 97–102.

"what should I do to balance the value of music against that of lounging?" That would be the internalist reasoner's question. The aspirant's goal— her ϕ— is not simply to listen to music, but to listen to music in such a way as to come to desire to listen to music more.

The aspirant's question is "what can I do to change how much I value music and lounging, respectively?" In aiming for such a change, she is not trying to satisfy her current desire for music, but rather to change that desire. And, as I argue in chapter 2, a question about how to acquire (more of) a desire cannot always be recast as a question about how to satisfy the desires one already has. The problem for internalism is not that the aspirant's desires are too weak to rationalize her action, but that they are a work in progress. And this fact about them cannot be analyzed in terms of the (determinate presence of) another desire, either.

At one point in her discussion, Sauvé Meyer gestures at this fact:

> "[The aspirant] may recognize that once she appreciates music better, she will likely accord less importance to things that she currently values, and that she will have to face questions she has not yet had to address, regarding how music stacks up against other things she values. But this is something she needs to work out, not something she already has decided, endorsed, and encoded in her motivational apparatus. Thus we should reject the claim that the aspirant to A currently values A less than B. It is not that she values B more than A or that she values both equally. Rather, her current weak appreciation for A falls below the threshold for valuing it."

Though there is something importantly right about this passage, I want to dispute a few points. First, I hold that the aspirant does value A somewhat—v aluing comes in degrees, for the same reason desire does. The way I would analyze such a case is: there is in fact 'some precise amount' at which she currently values B or A, but if that is all you know about the case you are missing one of the important facts about the situation, which is that those values are not stable over time.

The "vagueness" that Sauvé Meyer wants to invoke here—t hat there is some sense in which there is no fact of the matter about which she values more— is a correct and important way of capturing a *diachronic* fact about the agent. And I precisely do want to insist that a diachronic perspective is crucial for capturing the distinctive rationality at stake in such a case. But to say that her rationality doesn't come into view at a moment is simply to say that it cannot be understood within a strict internalist framework.

As an analogy, consider the fact that, if you take a high resolution photo you can capture many facts about the position of an object— except the fact that, in the event that it is moving, its position is changing over time. Internal reasons are reasons that apply to a person in virtue of where she currently stands, desideratively speaking. Reasons that apply to a person in virtue of the development of her desires towards a favored condition are, instead, *proleptic reasons*.

3. Response #4: L.A. Paul

Before discussing the details of Paul's criticism, it is worth noting the relationship in which it stands to that of Katsafanas, Kraut and Sauvé Meyer. Katsafanas believes that the phenomenon of aspiration is not especially puzzling or problematic— trying to have new values is a straightforwardly rational activity. Kraut thinks that, while I have identified a distinctive phenomenon worthy of philosophical attention, one doesn't need to invoke proleptic reasons in order to understand how aspirational agency is rational. Sauvé Meyer takes one step closer to me: she agrees that aspiration is distinctive, puzzling, and that it calls for proleptic reasons. What she doubts is my claim that proleptic reasons themselves cannot be incorporated into an internalist framework.

These three philosophers all find the rationality of aspiration to be (to varying degrees) more straightforward and familiar than I claim it to be. Paul differs sharply: she agrees with me that it is difficult to understand how someone could rationally acquire new values, and, specifically, that the reasons such a person acts on do not seem to be internal reasons. But she wants to go even further than I do, to the conclusion that such activity *cannot* be rational.

Here is one way to put the dialectic: we can distinguish between (1) acting *from* value and (2) acting *towards* value. (1) is the case of ordinary, intentional action: we act in order to realize the values we have, for example by trying to satisfy the desires that are constitutive parts of those values. (2) is the case of aspiration: we act so as to arrive at a condition of valuing. In this case, we are acting, first and foremost, on ourselves: we seek to arrive at the very condition from which we would be acting from in (1). Katsafanas, Kraut and Sauvé Meyer all want to render the rationality of (2) unproblematic by assimilating it to (1): acting towards value can be understood as a form of acting from value. Paul, by contrast, recognizes these distinctive forms of agency, and holds that the difference is so great that (2) cannot be rational.

The claim of my book is that (2) constitutes a distinctive form of rationality I call "proleptic." Paul is willing to go so far as to grant that, as a psychological matter, something like distinctively proleptic thinking may characterize the aspirant's mental life. She nonetheless presses: why call this "reasoning?" She puts her point baldly: "Rationality requires that when one acts, one acts in accordance with one's current values." This is a very important objection, and I am grateful to get another chance to defend the thesis that acting towards value can be rational.

In a few places, Paul frames her objection in these terms: "it seems incoherent to choose values you do not value." I want to make two small points about this formulation, before turning to what I take to be the deeper issue.

The first point to make is that those who act towards a value don't fully lack that value. In several places, Paul seems to assume that when I aspire to value something, I do not value it at all. My view is that aspiration gets (kick-) started by way of outside influence: one finds oneself in a culinary mecca, one's parents play one some music, one's friends drag one along on a shopping expedition. Paul is correct that someone with

no interest in cooking, music or fashion would not have reason to orchestrate these encounters. Nonetheless, I want to stress, on Paul's behalf, that this initial contact cannot do the work of rationalizing aspiration. (Indeed I have been making something like that argument against Katsafanas, Kraut and Sauvé Meyer.) The (minimal) grasp of the value I already have cannot explain why I seek to grasp it more— and one way to see this is that we can imagine a nonaspirational counterpart who is satisfied with the minimal grasp such an encounter produces.

The second point is the language of "choice." My view is that one doesn't *choose* to aspire. The rationality of choice is the rationality of what I call "self-standing agency"—t his form of agency applies to an action when it is rationally intelligible on its own terms, by contrast with those that are only rational insofar as they are seen as embedded in a larger, temporally extended process that is not itself an action. (See p. 57–62, 220–222) Aspiration can be rational, and aspirants can be acting on reasons, even if it is not appropriate to speak of them as choosing to aspire, or to value, or to change themselves. This linguistic point marks an important difference: if we incorporate into our theory of rationality too many assumptions based on the peculiar form of rationality that characterizes (1), we will stack the decks against recognizing the rationality of (2).

My substantive response to Paul is, first, on the negative front, to argue that aspiration is less deceptive than she takes it to be, and second, positively, to offer up some (non-aspirational) examples of processes that qualify as rational despite the fact that the person engaged in them is guided by a similarly obscure goal.

FIRST In several places Paul describes proleptic rationality as though it involved self-deception: she speaks of "hiding our ultimate ends from ourselves" or "taking an indirect route" or a "stealth approach." I agree that if aspiration required a person to be less than honest with herself, it would be irrational; and I also want to acknowledge that aspiration is in some ways opaque: the agent does not have complete access to where she is going. But in fact I contend that aspiration entails a distinctively straightforward form of self-engagement when contrasted with the mode of self-engagement Paul proposes as a solution to what she calls the "easy problem" of self change: when someone has higher order values that dictate the acquisition of other values, he can "put himself in the way of external forces, various experiences, that can create this value in him." I agree with her that this solution does not make sense in the absence of higher order values to guide one, but it's worth noting that the solution I've proposed to the "difficult problem" does not require a person to go behind her own back in this way.

Someone who aspires does not submit herself to be changed by outside forces; rather, she changes herself. The engine of this change is her own sense that her grasp of the value in question is insufficient: her awareness of her own (valuational) ignorance drives her to learn. The proleptic structure of her rationality—t he fact that she is motivated by a consideration (the proximate face) that she sees as an inadequate response to the value in question (the distal face)—should be understood not as a form of self-trickery,

but rather a painful confrontation with her own inadequacy. Someone determined to see her valuational knowledge as complete and sufficient is incapable of aspiring. The very fact that the "distal face" has— by way of its acknowledged absence— a psychological reality for the agent should be read as an honest and humble openness to learning. Showing that aspirants are honest with themselves (about their own lack of self-understanding) does not suffice to show that they are rational, but it at least clears out of the way one reason for thinking that they might not be able to be.

SECOND Let me now speak to what may be the most fundamental source of Paul's intuition that aspiration cannot be a rational process. The aspirant comes to acquire a grasp of a value by means of the (disturbing) awareness that she has not yet grasped it. How is such a thing possible? How can one be guided by something— the final value— that one does not, at a psychological level, have a grip on? The problem is not solved by the fact that every aspirant already has some grip on the value in question: what needs to guide the aspirant's progress towards value is not the value, to the degree that she already grasps it— that would simply produce actions *from* value—b ut the value, to the degree that she doesn't. How can her thinking be guided by some object precisely to the degree that she can't represent it? I am not sure of the answer to this question, and I grant that it is a deep puzzle not fully addressed by anything in my book.

However, it does seem to be something that can happen. Consider three examples: recollecting what one has forgotten, solving a mathematical problem, and a journalistic expose.

The one trying to recollect has a vague inarticulate sense that there is something she is trying to remember. She knows some things about it— that it is the name of one of her teachers, perhaps— and as she recollects, she might acquire "bits and pieces" of her target—t hat it ends in "-ton," for instance. What guides her forward progress is always whatever is still missing. If she succeeds, then at the end she knows this name— "Bevington"— was what she was seeking, all along, without being able to represent it that way earlier.

Likewise, someone tasked with producing a geometrical proof, engages in all sorts of exercises— drawings, looking through books for theorems—t hat are geared to progressively "filling in" the parts of the proof he hasn't yet found. Once he finds it, he can write the proof systematically—b ut the route to discovery did not have this same systematic character.

Finally, suppose that an investigative journalist hears a few details of a news story that sound "off"—s omething smells fishy. Over weeks and months of inquiry, she pieces together the giant scandal whose presence she initially only intuited.

In all of these cases, the agent is guided by her target, precisely to the extent that she doesn't yet grasp it— but that target can only serve as target because of her special way of conceiving of something she *does* grasp. The presence of something that could stand in an analogous relationship to the "proximate face" is crucial to each of these investigations: the inquirer knows she is looking for the name of that Professor,

or the proof of this theorem, whatever is making this news story smell fishy. Of course it would be possible to grasp each of these concepts non-proleptically, simply on its face—to illustrate with just the third case, a non-journalist who heard the same news story might not see the relevant details *as* the tip of a scandalous iceberg.

These are examples of purely cognitive cases of reaching beyond what one can grasp; in aspirational cases, the reach will be conative and affective as well as cognitive, but the principle is the same. It is possible to have an inkling that there is more out there than what one has yet encountered, and reach after what's missing. These forms of looking are less subject to algorithmic systematization than those in which one acts from a precise knowledge of what one wants; or draws deductive conclusions from first principles; or updates one's knowledge, in a Bayesian vein, on the basis of new information. Hunting for an elusive memory, a mathematical proof, or an investigative lead will involve missteps and guesswork, but when someone succeeds, we do not think she necessarily arrived at her target by accident or through outside intervention. Given that trying to remember, to prove, or to uncover are activities a person can engage in, and that the person engaged in them can attain her goal by way of the activity, it seems appropriate to speak of some kind of rational guidance.

My response to Paul, then, is to insist that rational guidance can take a non-standard form, in which a person acts not in accordance with her current values, but rather in accordance with (the project of acquiring) her future ones.

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Kraut quotes the ending of my book, in which I make the following admission:

> "Like everyone else, I have trouble getting aspiration into view. ... I find it natural to conceive of rational agents as reasoning from value rather than toward it. In writing this book, I embarked on a project that entailed fighting against these tendencies in myself; the completion of the project is something that will, I believe, call for fellow soldiers"

Kraut comments, "I must apologize for not volunteering to fight on her side." Of all the claims made by my four interlocutors, this is the one with which I most strenuously disagree. I believe he has fought on my side, as have the other three. Objections that fault me for failing to establish the existence of a paradox and objections that fault me for failing to solve it have in one thing in common, which is that they are made by people who are fighting on my side.

Of course it is always true that philosophers are benefitted by criticism—o ne of the virtues of philosophy is that people don't need to agree with you in order to be on your side. Those fighting "against you" are still on your side, because, as Socrates says to Callicles in the Gorgias, refutation is the greatest favor that one human being does another. But I have a more specific point to make which is that, in addition

to running the usual risk of being wrong, I have not only run the risk but in fact definitively succumbed to the pitfall of being unclear. Neither my presentation of the paradox nor my solution to it was fully articulate, even when I was being as clear as I could. Careful, insightful criticisms, such as those made by Katsafanas, Sauvé Meyer, Kraut and Paul, have a kind of magic power to draw out of you somewhat more than you thought you had in you. This is an instance of yet another phenomenon my book fails to sufficiently theorize: the social structure of aspiration. The way we lean against others for guidance in grasping new values extends well beyond mentorship to include cases of being questioned, contradicted, and challenged to, in the words of my most beloved teacher, "say another sentence." My omission of any discussion of this form of aspirational assistance is but one of the many ways in which the ideas in my book have not yet fully succeeded in coming into being. I can only hope that future iterations of this battle will feature more soldiers like these.

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