The Intellectuals and the Virtues*

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A virtuous person has a distinctive grasp of what is important in the light of which she chooses what to do. In what does this grasp consist? According to the intellectual tradition, moral virtue requires you always to be able to have an explicit, conscious grasp of the reasons why your action is right. Recently, this view has been defended by Julia Annas. I do not think that her argument establishes her conclusion, and I provide further defense of intellectualism, finishing with some conclusions about the importance of moral philosophy.

I. INTRODUCTION

What you do is morally important. It matters whether you kill people or save their lives, tell the truth or lie, keep your promises or cheat. It also matters what kind of person you are. Do you give money to charity to reduce your tax bill or to help those in distress? Do you keep your promise only because you want a good reputation?

A virtuous person does the right thing from a settled disposition. She also has the right motivations and the right feelings. There is an important cognitive component to virtue too. The virtuous person has a distinctive grasp of what is important, in the light of which she chooses what to do. In what does this grasp consist?

According to the intellectualist tradition (“intellectualism”), it is characteristic of a fully morally virtuous person that she explicitly grasps

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why her action is right. When acting in character, she can always explain and defend what she does.

Intellectualism is a demanding theory. It requires that a fully virtuous person—someone with all the virtues, someone who is a moral ideal—is thoughtful, articulate, and has a lot of theoretical moral knowledge. This is a mistake, critics say. Theoretical moral expertise is good, but it is not essential to virtue. You can be fully virtuous without being an intellectual.

Recently, intellectualism has been defended by Julia Annas in her book *Intelligent Virtue*. Her main argument depends on an analogy between virtue and certain kinds of skill or practical expertise: she suggests that all of these require an articulate grasp of what you are doing and why. There are some well-known objections to regarding virtue as a kind of practical skill. I will not take these up here, because even if virtues are similar to skills, it is far from clear whether the analogy really supports intellectualism. Current understanding in psychology about practical expertise leaves the question open. However, there is a very different way that intellectualism can be defended, at which Annas hints and which I develop at length here. I finish by drawing some implications from intellectualism, both about the idea of “moral perception” and about the importance of moral philosophy, ending with the (perhaps surprising) conclusion that moral philosophy can help you to be virtuous.

II. TWO CONCEPTIONS OF VIRTUE

A. *Julia*

Julia is highly morally sensitive. You can depend on her to do the right thing. But she is also very skillful at explaining what she is doing and why. For instance: “I stopped to help a cyclist who had been knocked over on the street. That made me late for the meeting, which was unfortunate, but the cyclist was in a bad way and he really needed help.”

Julia is disposed to do the right thing and has the right sort of motivations. She also has an explicit and articulable grasp of what matters. According to the intellectualist account of moral virtue, these qualities are essential to moral virtue. Intellectualism has a long tradition, traceable at least to Aristotle. He describes the person with full moral virtue as being able to give the “because,” that is, she can and (in the right circumstances) will give an explanation of why her action is right.¹ According to intellectualism, this is characteristic of a fully virtuous person.

1. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. and trans. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1105 a 28–33; Myles Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to Be Good,” in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 69–92, esp. 73; and Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Several recent writers on virtue ethics have given a similar account. Hursthouse, for instance, requires that a virtuous person “knows what she is doing”: “The agent must know what she is doing, that she is helping, facing danger, telling the truth.”² In addition, “if we asked them why they helped or told the truth or whatever, they would, if articulate, be able to give us an honest answer which enables us to understand what it is about the situation and the action that made this action in this situation something that would seem to them an appropriate thing to do.” That is, Hursthouse says that a virtuous person must be aware of why her action is right, and she could give a good explanation of why it is right, were she sufficiently verbally skillful.

Julia Annas’s account of moral virtue is even more demanding, because (unlike Hursthouse) she insists that a virtuous person must actually be able to explain why her action is right. “Virtue shares the intellectual structure of a skill . . . hence the need to give an account, the need for articulate conveying of reasons why what is done is done.” She claims that you cannot be virtuous without understanding what you are doing and why, and you must be able to articulate the reasons to others. It is this more demanding thesis that I call “intellectualism”:³

INTELLECTUALISM: It is characteristic of a fully morally virtuous person that she explicitly grasps why her action is right and she can always explain the reasons why it is right.

What if you have done the right action with the right kind of motivation, but you are not aware of why your action is right and you cannot explain it to others? Do you entirely lack moral virtue? Perhaps some defenders of intellectualism would say so, but they need not. After all, you have many of the qualities needed for moral virtue. If, as seems plausible, moral virtue comes in degrees, then you might be morally virtuous to some degree though less than fully virtuous: “there are very different ways of being virtuous, ranging from the beginner to the truly virtuous, analogously to development in a practical skill.”⁴

What exactly is it to “give an account” of why your action is right? More or less demanding versions of intellectualism can be distinguished by their response to a number of questions, including (but not restricted to): Can the appropriate explanation use moral terms (“it was kind,” “she had a right to privacy,” “I owed it to her,” etc.)? Is there exactly one

2. Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 124.

3. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 20. I have argued elsewhere that virtue requires moral understanding, where this involves an articulate grasp of the reasons why your action is right (Alison Hills, “Moral Testimony and Moral Epistemology,” *Ethics* 120 [2009]: 94–127). The defense of intellectualism here supports the claims of that essay.

4. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 65.

good explanation of why an action is right or wrong, or could there be more than one (nonequivalent) explanation? Does a virtuous agent have to be able to give a full and complete explanation of why a particular action is right or wrong, or could a partial and limited explanation be sufficient? If a full explanation is required, will that have the form of showing how the action contributes to a "Grand End," an explicit, comprehensive, substantial vision of the good which guides the agent in all her actions?⁵ Does moral virtue require that an agent always have conscious thoughts about why her action is right when she acts, or is it sufficient that she could think about why, if it were appropriate?⁶

A very demanding intellectual account would require that a virtuous agent have conscious thoughts whenever she acts, whose content comprised a full explanation of why her action is right, where those explanations all refer to a Grand End. A more plausible version would say that there can be more than one adequate explanation of why an action is right, that the appropriate explanations can but need not use a moral vocabulary and that a full and complete explanation of each action is not required. What exactly is needed is a very good question, but one that I cannot settle fully here (though I will return to it briefly later).

A final preliminary point: the requirement that a virtuous agent be consciously aware of her reasons for action at all times is very demanding. A more plausible version of intellectualism would weaken this requirement in two ways. First we should allow that a virtuous agent need not actually be aware of her reasons for action at all times provided that she can become aware of them when called upon to do so. Second, this weaker requirement need only be true of her when she is acting in character (this leaves open the possibility that even a fully virtuous agent may act out of character occasionally). In the rest of the essay, I will discuss the conception of intellectual virtue that I take to be the most plausible and will not discuss more demanding versions of intellectualism further.

B. *Nomy*

Nomy always does the right thing. She just recognizes what the situation calls for and acts accordingly. Yet if you ask her why she did what she did, she just shrugs. "It seemed like the thing to do," is all she can say. She genuinely has no idea why her actions are right.

5. The Grand End view is associated with certain interpretations of Aristotle's ethics; for discussion, see Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Richard Kraut, "In Defense of the Grand End," *Ethics* 103 (1993): 361–74.

6. Does the virtuous person need to know why her action is right? I have argued elsewhere (Hills, "Moral Testimony") that this knowledge is neither necessary nor sufficient for virtue.

Is Nomy fully morally virtuous? She certainly has some of the key requirements of virtue. She is disposed to do the right action. And she is well motivated: she cares deeply about the things that matter. Just as someone can be aesthetically sensitive—"the picture should hang just here, above the sofa"—without being able to articulate or even necessarily being aware of the reasons why this is "aesthetically right," it seems that a person can be unsophisticated, inarticulate, yet morally sensitive. Let us call her a naive moral agent.

There is a tradition according to which Nomy has all the qualities needed for full virtue. According to this tradition ("naivety"), a virtuous person can act having "just seen" what to do, that is, she characteristically recognizes what the situation demands of her and acts well on that basis, but without theoretical moral expertise:

NAIVETY: It is not characteristic of a fully morally virtuous person that she grasps explicitly why her action is right and can explain the reasons why it is right.

At first, the naive view can seem ridiculous. A naive agent apparently never has any idea what she is doing and why. Is that even possible? Certainly any normal person can usually describe her action and her reasons perfectly well. And that is also true of moral action: normal people know when they are telling the truth, keeping their promises, helping others and so on, and they also know why this is a good idea. But of course naivety about moral virtue does not say that a virtuous person will never be able to explain why her action is right. Nomy, like the rest of us, can very often explain what she is doing and why. But naivety says that that ability is not part of moral virtue, not even full moral virtue: Nomy can perfectly well act in character and not be able to explain why her action is right. Indeed she could be like that all the time and still have all the virtues and be a moral ideal. Moral virtue is about right action and right motivation; an intellectual grasp of morality is entirely separate from it. And that view, while contentious, is certainly not absurd.

Julia Driver is one of the most forceful defenders of naivety. She claims without any qualification that the morally virtuous need not be an intellectual: "the morally good person is one kind of moral expert, an expert practitioner . . . the expert practitioner acts 'automatically.'"⁷ Automatic behavior is not deliberative. It is responsive to norms, but not ones that the agent is aware of or which she can articulate. Driver compares moral virtue with speaking a language: "Just as a person can be a fully competent speaker of English without being able to articulate En-

7. Julia Driver, "Moral Expertise: Judgement, Practice and Analysis," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 30 (2013): 280–96, quote at 289.

glish rules of grammar, a person can be a fully competent moral judger without being able to articulate the moral rules or norms that guide the judgement to which the agent is actually responsive in action.”⁸ This again emphasizes the separation between being able to act appropriately and being able to explain why your action is appropriate. Speaking a language and moral virtue require the former but not the latter. Or so says naivety.

A number of other philosophers have defended claims similar to or connected to naivety, though not naivety itself. Aristotle, for instance, distinguishes two ways in which one can have virtue: full moral virtue and natural virtue. Someone with natural virtue does not have *phronesis*, which means that though she may do the right thing and have the right emotions and desires, she does not have the *logos*, the explanation of why the action is right.⁹ A naive agent can have natural virtue but not full moral virtue.

Some of John McDowell’s descriptions of a morally virtuous person seem to be of a naïf: “a kind person need not himself classify the behaviour he sees to be called for, on one of the relevant occasions, as kind. He need not be articulate enough to possess concepts of the particular virtues; and even if he does, the concepts need not enter his reasons for the actions which manifest those particular virtues. It is enough if he thinks of what he does, when—as we put it—he shows himself to be kind, under some such description as ‘the thing to do.’”¹⁰ In the last sentence quoted, McDowell says that a virtuous person need only think of her action as “the thing to do.” This implies that she may not be aware why her action is the thing to do: because it is kind, or presumably, for any other reason. In addition, McDowell says that a virtuous person is sensitive to what the situation requires in a way that is like a “perceptual capacity,” which he contrasts with someone who is “theoretically oriented.”¹¹ We regularly perceive facts without being aware of the reasons why those facts obtain. I see that the cat is on the mat, but not why it is. Maybe sometimes it is possible to “see” explanations or reasons as well as facts themselves, but that is certainly not typical of perception. If the fully virtuous person’s grasp of a situation is similar to perception, then a virtuous person may “see” that the situation requires a certain action without having any idea why. This too supports naivety about moral virtue.¹²

8. *Ibid.*, 286.

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1144b2–1145a11. Aristotle believes that natural virtue, lacking *phronesis*, is not as reliable as full virtue (he actually says that it is harmful). I address the reliability of naive moral agents later.

10. John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” *Monist* (1979): 331–50, quote at 332.

11. *Ibid.*

12. McDowell’s final view on virtue is hard to interpret. Prior to this quote, he says “that the situation requires a certain sort of behaviour is (one way of formulating) his reason for behaving. . . . So it must be something of which, in each of the relevant occasions, he is aware” (“Virtue and Reason,” 331). This makes it sound as if the virtuous person

Nomy Arpaly defends a claim related to naivety, what we might call “naivety about morally worthy action.” Morally worthy action is right actions for the right reasons. This is an essential part of moral virtue but perhaps not the whole of it. Arpaly thinks that if you judge an action wrong but do it anyway, acting akratically, and your choice was made on the basis of your deep concern for the things that in fact matter morally, your action can be morally worthy. Her example is Huck Finn, who helps the runaway slave Jim escape despite judging that doing so is wrong. Huck, who grew up among people who accepted slavery, never questions its legitimacy. Arpaly says that, nevertheless, Huck does the right thing for the right reasons. “To the extent that Huckleberry is reluctant to turn Jim in because of Jim’s personhood, he is acting for morally significant reasons. This is so even though Huckleberry knows neither that these are the right reasons nor that he is acting from them.”¹³

If this is right, acting on the basis of a belief that your action is right, or any beliefs about why it is right, is not necessary for your action to be morally worthy. It follows that a naive moral agent, who has no such beliefs, can do the right thing for the right reasons, which is one of the core requirements of virtue. Of course it does not follow that such a person is fully morally virtuous, for there may additional requirements for full moral virtue (a question to which I will return later).¹⁴

Let us examine this tradition further, according to which a virtuous person need not be able to say why her action is right, or even have the conceptual resources to describe an action as “kind.” Nevertheless, clearly there is something distinctive about her cognition. A virtuous person has a grasp of “the thing to do” that is not the same as that of the nonvirtuous.

It may be helpful here to think of the morally virtuous as having know-how. Many practical experts make good judgments about what to do without being particularly articulate or conceptually sophisticated. One of the traditional reasons for distinguishing know-how from propositional knowledge is that having know-how enables someone to act

is aware of her reasons for action. But if all McDowell means by this is that she thinks: “in this situation, this action is the thing to do,” she is not actually aware of the reasons why her action is right, and so his view is consistent with naivety. In other passages, he talks about reasons for action being “apprehended” and agents being “sensitive” to them: it is not clear to me to whether this means that agents must be consciously aware of these reasons rather than merely acting appropriately in response to them (the latter is consistent with naivety; the former is not). I therefore class him as a supporter of naivety, but rather tentatively.

13. Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230.

14. Arpaly appears open to the possibility that more is required for moral virtue. She comments that Huck “would be better if some of his moral convictions were changed” (ibid., 77–78). But at the same time, she insists he does do the right thing for the right reasons, and that he is essentially a good person, and she does not elaborate on what more might be required for more perfect or complete moral virtue. It is somewhat (though not completely) unfair to call the naive moral agent “Nomy.”

intelligently without being at all intellectual. That is, someone with know-how can act in a way that is responsive to reason without consciously or explicitly conceiving of them as reasons. There is now a lively debate about whether know-how is a form of propositional knowledge.¹⁵ If know-how were just propositional knowledge, it might seem that there would be no problem in principle with an agent articulating this knowledge, and so naivety about moral virtue must be wrong. But this is a mistake. Even those who argue that know-how is propositional knowledge, insist that it is of a special kind “under a practical mode of presentation.”¹⁶ This precisely means that you can act on this knowledge without necessarily being able to articulate it, except perhaps in a demonstrative way: “*that* was the right action to do.” It follows that you can have moral know-how without being conceptually sophisticated in a “theoretical” way and certainly without being articulate about your reasons for action.

So far, I have described two theories of the cognitive aspect of moral virtue:

INTELLECTUALISM: It is characteristic of a fully morally virtuous person that she explicitly grasps why her action is right and she can always explain the reasons why it is right.

NAIVETY: It is not characteristic of a fully morally virtuous person that she grasps explicitly why her action is right and can explain the reasons why it is right.

Each of these has powerful defenders: Aristotle and Annas on behalf of intellectualism; Driver, McDowell and Arpaly—the latter two in a qualified way—on behalf of naivety. But obviously these are not the only two possibilities. There is space between them for a rather appealing class of intermediate theories:

INTERMEDIATE: It is characteristic of a morally virtuous person that she explicitly grasps why her action is right and can explain the reasons some of the time, in some circumstances, but not in others.

According to intermediate theories, fully morally virtuous agents characteristically do have a good explicit grasp of morality on some occasions (thus naivety is false). But nonetheless it is not characteristic for them always to be able to explain their actions. There are times when it is perfectly fine for them to act “automatically” without being able to say or even

15. Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson, “Knowing How,” *Journal of Philosophy* 98 (2001): 411–44; Jason Stanley, *Know How* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); David Wiggins, “Practical Knowledge: Knowing How To and Knowing That,” *Mind* 121 (2012): 97–130.

16. See Stanley and Williamson, “Knowing How.”

consciously think about why their action is right (thus intellectualism is not true either). A defense of intellectualism will have to reject all intermediate theories as well as naivety.

III. THE CASE FOR NAIVETY

There are two arguments that Nomy is morally virtuous, that Julia's additional skills are at not needed for virtue. The first argument is that it is not appropriate for a virtuous person to deliberate about certain options as if they are genuinely open. When a virtuous person finds a cyclist in distress, she does not deliberate about whether to steal his wallet. Anyone who even considered that as an option would be less than fully virtuous. Intellectuals think too much and this detracts from their virtue.¹⁷

It may be true that fully virtuous people do not deliberate before every action, but it is a mistake to assume that intellectualism implies that they do. Deliberation is a particular kind of activity which involves uncovering your options and evaluating them. Julia is already aware of the reasons for helping the cyclist rather than stealing from him. So according to intellectualism, she has no need to deliberate.

The second and much better argument in favor of naivety is very simple: naivety is all you need. Recall the examples I used earlier to illustrate the difference between someone who is virtuous and someone who merely does the right thing: "Do you give money to charity to reduce your tax bill or to help those in distress? Do you keep your promise only because you want a good reputation?" Plainly the questions are: What are your reasons for action? Are you acting from self-interest? Or are you responding to the morally relevant features of your situation—the factors that make your action right? You can do all that and still be naive: just look at Nomy. She is disposed to do the right thing for the right reasons. Nothing more is required, even for full virtue.

To put it another way: think of the most virtuous person that you know. Are you conjuring up an image of an intellectual, someone with a really firm theoretical grasp of morality? Not necessarily. Perhaps you are picturing someone who is not outstandingly articulate or theoretically sophisticated, but nevertheless is kind, honest, just, and courageous. Why should full moral virtue need more than that?

This would be a very good question, if we were sure that naivety about moral virtue was a coherent theory. But it is not obvious that it is. Is it really possible to respond to moral reasons without being aware of them as reasons? If the answer is no, the case for naivety collapses. You

17. This is related to (but I think not precisely the same as) Bernard Williams's "one thought too many" argument ("Persons, Character, and Morality," in *Moral Luck* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], 1–19).

cannot be virtuous if you are not doing the right thing for the right reasons. And you cannot do that if you cannot act for reasons at all.

However, it seems to me that at least in principle you can act for reasons without being aware of them as such. Recall Arpaly's examples of agents who have false moral beliefs but who act akratically, against their better judgment, like Huckleberry Finn. According to Arpaly, Huck is not aware of his reasons for action (that Jim is a person just like him and is his friend) either as good reasons for action or even as reasons at all. But that does not stop him doing the right thing for the right reasons.

Consider other examples. A naive moral agent might recognize that she should keep to herself certain kinds of medical information about a patient. She might not be able to articulate or even be consciously aware of explanations like: patients have a right to confidentiality. Or consider a woman who complained about certain kinds of behavior before the concept of sexual harassment was widely recognized. She might well say that the way that men were treating women was wrong and be quite unable to explain properly why (and so unable to explain why her complaint was justified). This would be a significant barrier to getting adequate legal redress but not, surely, in responding to the relevant reasons herself. If she ever did acquire the concept of sexual harassment, she would be able to explain why. But maybe she never will. She still can respond to them.¹⁸

It is sometimes said that acting for reasons in this way is not "really" acting for reasons at all, perhaps not even intentional action. This seems to me quite wrong. Having know-how precisely enables you to perform intentional actions, for reasons, without necessarily having the resources to describe what you are doing.

Sometimes acting for reasons in this minimal way is contrasted with "autonomous action," according to which you are (or can be) aware of your reasons for action when you act. Compared with an autonomous agent, someone who acts for reasons in a minimal way lacks self-awareness. You are rather like Freud, in an example discussed by Velleman. Freud's sister tells him that his ink pot is ugly. A little while later he sits down at his desk to write, and in a "remarkably clumsy" way knocks the ink pot onto the floor where it smashes into pieces. This is genuinely purposive action, but (at the time of action at least) Freud is not aware of his reasons for action. Perhaps most of us would like to be aware of our own reasons for action, or at least be able to be aware of them; perhaps that is even a good thing. But it is not (yet) obvious why that should be a condition of moral virtue.¹⁹

18. It might be hard to be sure what her reasons for action are. But that is a separate matter from whether she can act for those reasons.

19. David Velleman, *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

Later I will describe some ways in which a naive agent falls short of a full appreciation of moral reasons. But I will continue to assume that she can both act for reasons and do the right action for the right reasons. Of course, these claims ultimately deserve a much greater discussion than I can give them here. But for the overall argument I am making here, it doesn't really matter. As I said before, if a naive agent cannot act for reasons, then intellectualism wins by default (even the intermediate theory cannot be right, because it implies that naive action on the basis of reasons is possible). But the converse does not hold: even if I am right that a naive agent can act for the right reasons, it does not follow that we have to accept naivety about moral virtue. In the rest of this essay, I will argue that we should not.

IV. ANNAS'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST NAIVETY

If Nomy can do the right thing for the right reasons, does it not follow that naivety is sufficient for moral virtue? Why think that virtue requires an intellectual grasp of morality too? In *Intelligent Virtue*, Julia Annas's key idea is that virtue is a kind of practical skill, similar to playing the piano (like Alfred Brendel), being a skilled electrician or plumber, skating, dancing, or speaking Italian. Annas says that all skills—or at the least, all skills characterized by “the need to learn and the drive to aspire”—require that the expert be able to give an account of what she is doing.²⁰ Since virtue is a skill, virtue too requires an account. Hence a virtuous person needs not just an explicit, conscious awareness of the reasons why her action is right. She must also be sufficiently articulate to explain them to others.

We are not born virtuous, Annas argues, but we need to learn virtue. And we cannot do so by mindlessly copying (even if we found the right teacher). We need to come to understand what is important about the way our teacher is acting. Otherwise we will find ourselves imitating style rather than substance. Indeed, Annas says that the learner needs to “become able to acquire for herself the skill that the teacher has, rather than acquiring it as a matter of routine.”²¹ This requires the giving of reasons, so that the learner can go ahead in different situations and contexts, rather than simply repeat the exact same thing that was done before.²²

Second, while it is perfectly acceptable to reach and maintain a minimal level of expertise in many skills, moral virtue is different. There is nothing wrong with playing the piano badly or being a mediocre golfer and not trying to improve. But it is not acceptable to reach a certain level of moral attainment and then slack off, even if by then you are as good as everyone around you. You must always aspire to do better, which means

20. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 16.

21. *Ibid.*, 17.

22. *Ibid.*, 19.

reflecting on and criticizing your own performance. And that requires an explicit grasp of morality.²³

Annas's account of how we acquire virtue is very similar to K. Anders Ericsson's theory of how we can achieve practical expertise in a range of skills, including sport, music, chess, and science.²⁴ He argues that to become expert in these skills, you need to practice many years. And this practice must be "deliberate," that is, it must be guided by your teacher through instructions linked to specific goals, evaluated by explicit feedback. To practice these skills in the right way, they need to be under your conscious control, not merely automatic. In the end, you will be able to evaluate your performance by yourself, and therefore become an expert yourself, independent from your teacher.

Annas draws a distinction (following the Greeks) between a skill (*technē*) and a mere "knack" (*empeiria*). Skillful action is intelligent, in the sense that you can respond appropriately even in new and unforeseen circumstances, whereas someone with a "subrational" knack will fall short. She thinks that in someone who can no longer explain what they do, their actions are merely routine. They have formed habits, but these habits are rigid dispositions that cannot be flexible in dealing with new and unforeseen circumstances. Of course, it is true that as we gain in expertise, we seem to spend less time consciously thinking about what we are doing. But Annas claims that the conscious thoughts have not disappeared but "effaced" themselves. They can be brought back to awareness where necessary, for instance, when the agent is asked to explain what she is doing or is asked to teach others.²⁵

23. Does a fully virtuous agent need to have a desire to improve? After all, she is already perfect. However she may need this desire to develop virtue, in which case she would have had an intellectual grasp of morality at that point (according to Annas) which presumably she could retain once she reached full virtue.

24. K. Anders Ericsson, Ralf T. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Römer, "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance," *Psychological Review* 100 (1993): 363–406; K. Anders Ericsson, "The Influence of Experience and Deliberate Practice on the Development of Superior Expert Performance," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, ed. K. Anders Ericsson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 685–706. There is a well-known problem in identifying virtues with skills. In particular, you can be skillful while choosing not to exercise the skill even when doing so would be appropriate; but the same is not true of the moral virtues. If a situation calls for you to exercise the virtues, you are not virtuous if you do not do so. But for two reasons, I do not think that this is a problem for Annas. First, even if it is a mistake to identify the virtues with skills, they still may involve skills which must be learnt in a particular way. If that is correct, Annas's argument would still work. Second, many of the psychologists discussed here are interested in kinds of practical expertise that are similar to moral virtue. To be classed as an expert nurse or firefighter by your peers (as in Gary Klein, *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998]), for instance, not only do you need to have the right skills but you must exercise them in the appropriate circumstances.

25. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 29.

What about a naive moral agent? Someone who could not give an account of herself would not be fully virtuous. But then, none of us is truly fully virtuous. It may even be acceptable to call a naive agent brave, just, honest, and so on, because she has some though not all of the qualities needed for these character traits.

To sum up: virtues are skills that combine the need to learn with the drive to aspire, and as such require an intellectual understanding of morality. It is not part of Annas's view, and is probably not the case, that it is impossible to conceive of an agent who could develop moral virtue without learning it explicitly. Annas cannot therefore conclude that moral virtue is intellectual in any conceivable agent; rather it must be intellectual in anyone who, like us, has to learn virtue.

It may be appealing to think of virtue as a kind of practical expertise. But, as we shall see, while Ericsson's model of practical expertise supports intellectualism, there is no agreement among psychologists that it, or any rival theory of practical expertise, is correct. The evidence is complicated and does not support any of the three theories of moral virtue—intellectualism, naivety or intermediate theories—conclusively.²⁶

For instance, according to Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus, we begin to acquire a skill by learning some explicit rules which we use to make decisions. But this intellectual skill is the skill of a beginner. An expert is quite different: "the beginner develops into an expert who sees intuitively what to do without applying rules and making judgements at all."²⁷ They characterize the expert as making immediate, intuitive responses, of whose grounds she is not aware and cannot articulate. For instance, chess grandmasters are able to identify the best moves rapidly, by means of an "intuitive" judgment of whose basis the agent is not necessarily aware; beginners are more likely to deliberate and use explicit rules to decide how to move.²⁸

This account of practical expertise is very similar to the way that Julia Driver characterized moral virtue. If moral virtue is a practical skill of this kind, naivety about moral virtue must be right. Moreover, there are still more accounts of practical expertise in the literature. Klein de-

26. Ericsson, "Influence of Experience," 12. See also Matt Stichter, "Ethical Expertise: The Skill Model of Virtue," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 10 (2007): 183–94, for explicit reference to Annas's earlier work; Paul Bloomfield, "Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (2000): 23–43; Darcia Narvaez and Daniel Lapsley, "The Psychological Foundations of Everyday Morality and Moral Expertise," in *Character Psychology and Character Education*, ed. Daniel Lapsley and F. Clark Power (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 140–65; and Driver, "Moral Expertise."

27. Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus, "Towards a Phenomenology of Ethical Expertise," *Human Studies* 14 (1991): 229–50, quote at 235.

28. Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

veloped a conception of practical skill by studying firefighters and intensive-care nurses identified by their peers as experts.²⁹ Their skills appear to have important qualities in common with moral virtue, including the two emphasized by Annas: they need to be learnt and they include a drive to aspire to do the job better.

Nurses and firefighters learn their skills first by increasing their explicit knowledge. As they become more expert, they have a better grasp of what they are doing and why, and they can explain some of their decisions well.

However, the full picture is more complicated. Klein found that some of the key decisions made by expert nurses and firefighters are “intuitive,” that is, the agents themselves cannot explain why they chose to act and they appear unaware of the reasons for their decisions.

For instance, experienced nurses in a neonatal intensive care unit were able to tell when babies should be given antibiotics, even before tests for infection showed positive results. They attributed these good decisions to intuition and could not explain their basis.³⁰ It does not follow that they were not following any rules at all: sometimes the researchers could discover the rules that the expert nurses seem to be following (e.g., a set of features that identify babies with an infection). But the nurses apparently could not do so by themselves.

Firefighters characteristically face complex decisions. In part, this is because of uncertainty about the situation itself: how far has the fire spread? Is it safe for firefighters to go into the building to evacuate it? But there is also a problem of weighing different values: the lives of ordinary people who may be trapped by the fire, the lives of the firefighters, the value of the property they are trying to save. A plan that is too risky can lead to injuries or even deaths among the firefighters; a plan that is too conservative can allow the fire to spread and cause excessive damage to property. Their actions have very high stakes and are made under extreme time pressure.

How do they make good decisions under these circumstances? It appears that they frequently decide on the basis of cues, which include tacit knowledge that they themselves cannot articulate. Some, for instance, attribute their good decisions to a “sixth sense,” whose grounds they could not explain.³¹

Several philosophers and psychologists have thought that moral decisions have important similarities to the decisions made by this kind of

29. Gary Klein, *Sources of Power*, and *Streetlights and Shadows* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

30. Klein, *Sources of Power*, 39; Daniel Kahneman and Gary Klein, “Conditions for Intuitive Expertise: A Failure to Disagree,” *American Psychologist* 64 (2009): 515–26.

31. Klein, *Sources of Power*, 33.

practical expert.³² For instance, Narvaez and Lapsley have a similar model of moral character, according to which both explicit knowledge and implicit understanding are important. If this is right, and the expert firefighters and nurses are a good model for moral virtue, then moral virtue requires an explicit grasp of moral reasons, but not all the time. In other words, this favors an intermediate theory, rather than naivety or intellectualism about moral virtue.

Is there a reply to be made on behalf of intellectualism? Actually there are several possible responses, though some are more convincing than others.

First of all, we might question the significance of the results. Most nurses and firefighters most of the time can explain perfectly well why they are doing what they are doing. Why pay so much attention to the few rare cases in which they cannot? Surely these are just anomalies, and intellectualism about these skills is for the most part correct?

But though nurses and firefighters may well be able to explain their actions most of the time, the decisions that they could not explain were not trivial ones that can be easily dismissed. In some cases these decisions put lives at risk or saved them. Moreover, even if nurses and firefighters typically spend most of their time on routine matters whose justification is obvious, the experts stood out from their peers precisely because they made better decisions in these difficult situations. It was in making these decisions that they exercised their superior practical expertise.

Or so it seems. Yet if they cannot explain their decisions satisfactorily, they are not, according to Annas at least, exercising a proper practical skill (*technē*) but merely using a “knack” (*empeiria*). Perhaps the so-called “experts” are merely lucky that the habits they have developed are successful in these sorts of situation, even though they are not really responsive to reason. Is it at all plausible that the nurses are deciding which babies to send for antibiotics and the firefighters deciding on their strategy on the basis of an unintelligent habit?

It seems to me theoretically possible that they are, but at the same time wildly implausible. “Knacks,” I take it, tend to be simple (since these are easier to learn) and tend to be inflexible, since they are not really responsive to reason, even though they seem to be. But firefighters, for instance, do not regularly face the same situation where they can learn a simple knack or develop a useful habit that happens to get good results. Rather, they face complex, uncertain, and changeable situations that are not exactly like any they have seen before. At the same time they have to deal with competing values that are difficult to weigh against one another. Their decision-making has to be flexible. A good track record in

32. Bloomfield, “Virtue Epistemology”; Narvaez and Lapsley, “Psychological Foundations,” 154–60; Stichter, “Ethical Expertise”; and Driver, “Moral Expertise.”

circumstances like these is surely best explained by their being responsive to reason.

If their actions are intelligent, as they certainly seem to be, could it be that the nurses and firefighters do have a conscious grasp of the reasons for their actions? A defender of intellectualism might say that their thoughts are “effaced” to allow them to act more quickly, but are nevertheless conscious.³³ It is not completely clear what it is to have a conscious but effaced thought. However, if it is to have one that you are not aware of at the time of action but that you can articulate at a later time, the nurses and firefighters do not seem to have them. They do not appear to be aware of the reasons for their decisions at the time, nor can they articulate them later.³⁴

Another possible response is that these practical skills are not after all a good model for moral virtue. First, to make reliable “intuitive” judgment, you need to be in situations that are “valid,” that is, that have predictable regularities that can be cues for you, and you need good, immediate feedback on whether they made good or poor decisions in order to learn those cues. Without these conditions, explicitly using simple algorithms rather than making intuitive judgments gives better results.³⁵ Good feedback for the nurses and firefighters is accessible, immediate and relatively unambiguous: the baby is infected or not; the fire is successfully doused or not. Good feedback about moral decisions is less accessible and more open to debate, since it will essentially involve moral judgments (“you did the right thing”) and so it will almost certainly have to come from another person who is already morally virtuous. This raises at least two problems: of identifying the right person, and having them on hand to provide timely feedback. The “validity” of moral situations is also harder to assess. Are there moral properties accessible to us that we can use as cues to make moral judgments? This takes us straight into questions of metaphysics and epistemology that I cannot deal with properly here. All I will say is that if moral virtue is possible for us, surely we must be able to respond to moral reasons. And if that is the case, it is hard to deny that we could be in the right circumstances to develop skillful but intuitive moral judgment, that is, moral judgment that we ourselves could not properly explain.

33. See Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 29. In fact, it has been suggested that these judgments are conscious though they are not articulate or even articulable (e.g., Ben R. Newell and David R. Shanks, “Unconscious Influences on Decision Making: A Critical Review,” *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 37 [2014]: 1–19). But since there is really no question that they are not articulate, they do not meet the criteria for intellectualism.

34. Together with researchers, they can sometimes reconstruct the cues that led them to make their judgments, but not independently of the carefully devised questioning of the researchers. The reasons for their decisions are not available to the agents by themselves; see Klein, *Sources of Power*; Kahneman and Klein, “Conditions for Intuitive Expertise.”

35. Kahneman and Klein, “Conditions for Intuitive Expertise,” 523.

A second difference is that the firefighters and nurses in the examples are not practical experts in the way that a fully morally virtuous person is an expert. The nurses and firefighters in the studies are people with a good track record, picked out by their peers as better than the rest: they are comparative experts. They are characterized by making decisions that are “good enough” (in itself quite an achievement given their difficult circumstances) and it is consistent with their kind of expertise that they regularly make bad decisions too (just not as often or as badly as novices do). Full moral virtue is rather different because it is an ideal: “good enough” is not good enough.

Can we draw any conclusions about an ideal practical expert by looking at actual comparative experts? As their expertise developed, they gained more explicit knowledge, but they remain unaware of the basis of some of their decisions. Should we expect that an ideal expert will be more naive? Or will there be a limit to how well decisions can be made without deliberation and explicit understanding, so that ideal practical experts will become more intellectual? Or will they have additional explicit knowledge and also make better intuitive judgments?

An ideally virtuous agent will reliably do the right action. There are a few reasons for thinking that intellectual Julia will be better at that than naive Nomy.

A. *Good Decisions*

The first is that we sometimes encounter complex situations in which there are many interests at stake and different kinds of moral considerations are relevant. For instance:

Nomy is the executor of a will of a small business owner. Family members, employees, a co-owner and other businesses all have claims on the estate. Their claims are of different kinds: some are contractual and legally binding; others are based on what seems fair. Unfortunately there is no agreement about what would be a fair distribution.

There are at least two potential problems here. One is that Nomy simply will not be able to make an “intuitive” judgment about what to do, and thus will need to think explicitly about the situation.³⁶ The second is that she will be able to make an intuitive judgment, but not a good one. There is very good evidence that sometimes when we are not aware of the reasons for our judgments, our judgments are influenced by unconscious mental processes that are not responsive to reasons, including im-

36. This is typically conceded by supporters of this kind of view; see Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue*, 63–65.

plicit biases and inappropriate responses to risk and uncertainty.³⁷ If we act on the basis of these improperly formed judgments, we do not act well.

Making explicit your reasons for action allows you to correct an intuitive judgment that was made on the basis of a bias or unreliable heuristic rather than your own expertise. For instance, explicit deliberation may make it clear where you had significantly under or overestimated the likelihood of a given outcome, where you were influenced by racist or sexist or other inappropriate stereotypes and may allow you to find a way to make decisions that avoid these biases.

B. Doing the Right Thing in Difficult Circumstances

In some circumstances, doing the right thing is hard. Sometimes there are apparently forceful arguments and sometimes strong motivations for doing something else. For instance, suppose that you “just see” that a doctor should not divulge certain information about her patients, and you are completely correct. But others give very convincing arguments about the benefits of making the information known. There will be substantial benefits to the government in making policy that is based on accurate data, for instance. You have nothing to say in response, and find yourself (perhaps, as they say, “against your better judgment”) acquiescing. You withdraw your objection.

Of course, a naive agent in this situation might refuse to give way. Anyone can be stubborn. But I think that this response would go beyond mere stubbornness. Nomy is presented with a forceful argument: this in-

37. Many examples of poor reasoning about risk and problematic use of stereotypes are given in Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2011). Implicit bias is widely accepted in the psychological literature, many references are collected in Brian A. Nosek, Carlee Beth Hawkins, and Rebecca S. Frazier, “Implicit Social Cognition,” in *The Sage Handbook of Social Cognition*, ed. Susan Fiske and C. Neil Macrae (New York: Sage, 2012), 31–53; see also Anthony G. Greenwald and Mahzarin R. Banaji, “Implicit Social Cognition: Attitudes, Self-Esteem and Stereotypes,” *Psychological Review* 102 (1995): 4–27. Very helpful discussion of the epistemic costs of implicit bias are Tamar Gendler, “On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias,” *Philosophical Studies* 156 (2011): 33–63, and “I—the Third Horse: On Unendorsed Association and Human Behaviour,” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 88 (2014): 185–218. See also Jerad H. Moxley, K. Anders Ericsson, Neil Charness, and Ralf T. Krampe, “The Role of Intuition and Deliberative Thinking in Experts’ Superior Tactical Decision-Making,” *Cognition* 124 (2012): 72–78; and Koen A. Dijkstra, Joop van der Pligt, and Gerben A. van Kleef, “Deliberation versus Intuition: Decomposing the Role of Expertise in Judgment and Decision Making,” *Journal of Behavioural Decision Making* 26 (2013): 285–94, which present evidence that additional explicit knowledge and additional deliberation can make decision making better. Jason D. Swartwood (“Wisdom as an Expert Skill,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16 [2013]: 511–28) argues that wisdom includes intuitive judgment but also explicit knowledge and deliberation. Narvaez and Lapsley (“Psychological Foundations”) also claim that moral experts have more explicit knowledge than novices, as well as making automatic, intuitive judgments.

formation would be of substantial benefit to the government and ultimately to the public if it were widely known. Nomy accepts this argument: she thinks it is right about what will happen if the information is made available, and about the benefits it would bring. She has no response to the argument: nothing that she could say, even to herself, as a reply to it. So she has reasons that she acknowledges as forceful, to make the information available, and no reason that she can identify against doing so. Nomy could of course decide to keep the information private, anyway, and act on that decision. But doing so will look straightforwardly irrational from her point of view, and this surely makes it less likely that she will do it. This is not to say that it would necessarily be irrational to act against her better judgment, just that it is less likely that people will do what appears irrational to them. Naïve virtue is likely to be less robust than intellectual virtue in these circumstances.³⁸

Another threat is motivational. Suppose that you “just see” that lying is typically wrong, but are strongly tempted to lie to avoid a highly embarrassing revelation becoming public. Or you “just see” that the inheritance you had wished for your children will have to go to someone else who will squander it. Very strong motivations may lead you to revise your judgment about what it is right to do through a kind of wishful thinking. Or they may lead you simply to act akratically, to do what you yourself judge to be wrong.³⁹ Again, this is not of course to say that Nomy cannot be strong-willed and determined. Of course she can. Just that there is a particular danger when there is no further support for a judgment about what to do, and a very forceful counter-motivation. Being able to rehearse to yourself the reasons why you should not lie or you should do what is just make it more likely that you will stand firm.

C. *Manipulating Situations*

Suppose that, once again, you are in a difficult situation. It appears that you cannot achieve your aim without doing something wrong. Imagine once again that you are the doctor and you are sympathetic to the government wanting information about your patient. But you simply recognize that it would be wrong to make this information public without any clear idea why.

Had you an explicit grasp of the factors that make actions right and wrong, you might be able to manipulate those factors directly and so achieve your aims while acting morally permissibly. For instance, you see

38. This is similar, I think, to Williamson’s well-known argument that knowledge is more robust than (justified) true belief and so more likely to result in successful action (Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 62ff.).

39. Burnyeat argues that, according to Aristotle, akrasia is a particular danger for these sorts of agent (Burnyeat “Aristotle on Learning,” 79ff.), though I cannot do full justice to Burnyeat’s interpretation of Aristotle here.

that there is a problem because the patient is entitled to keep certain medical information private and to choose not to disclose it to others. But if the patient gave consent, that would be fine. Perhaps the patient would give consent if the important use to which the information would be put were explained properly to her. Certainly it is worth a try. Perhaps the patient would not want the information disclosed if she could be identified by it, but she might consent to anonymized data being used. Can the data be sufficiently well anonymized to satisfy the patient, in such a way that it is still useful? Again, it is worth a try. Through your grasp of the underlying reasons, you may be able to find a way around your problem.⁴⁰

These arguments are plausible but once again, the issue is complicated. As we know from Huck Finn, conscious and explicit moral reasoning can go completely awry. You can end up finding a plausible-sounding rationalization for a wrong action. And while I have suggested that it might be better to make more complex decisions consciously, there is some evidence that when there are more factors to be taken into account, it is better to make decisions with unconscious rather than conscious reasoning. Our capacity for conscious thought is constrained in various ways: typically we can only consciously do one thing at a time; we can only consciously store seven items at once. It follows, so it is claimed, that when a decision problem is sufficiently complex, "conscious thought only takes into account a subset of the information it should do," whereas unconscious thought which is not constrained in the same way can do better.⁴¹ In addition, conscious thought may prioritize features of the situation that are easier to verbalize, even if they are not the most important.⁴²

It is an open question, then, whether the arguments sketched above in favor of intellectualism are successful. But even if they are, at most they show that it is unlikely, not impossible, for a naive agent reliably to do the right thing. A naive agent could make intuitive moral judgments that are never influenced by bias and stick to them even when there are

40. This is quite similar to the way that Klein (*Sources of Power; Streetlights and Shadows*) suggests that experts make decisions: they think up a possible plan and then mentally test it by simulating what might happen if they carry it out. If they find a problem, they think up a new plan and do the same again. It is not clear, however, that agents need a conscious and articulate grasp of the reasons for and against an option to carry out this mental simulation. So this kind of simulation might be consistent with naivety (or at least an intermediate theory).

41. See Ap Dijksterhuis and Loran F. Nordgren, "A Theory of Unconscious Thought," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1 (2006): 95–109, quote at 96; and also Ap Dijksterhuis, Maarten W. Bos, Loran F. Nordgren, and Rick B. van Baaren, "On Making the Right Choice: The Deliberation-without-Attention Effect," *Science* 311 (2006): 1005–7. This view is criticized in Newell and Shanks, "Unconscious Influences," 8–10.

42. Klein, *Streetlights and Shadows*, 77.

competing arguments and motivations: she would always do the right action.

A defender of intellectual virtue might well say: but what we want is a realistic account of how moral virtue is constituted in us, and intellectualism gives us exactly that, because most, if not all humans are not like that: we need an explicit grasp of what matters in order to reliably do the right thing.

Perhaps, but all that these arguments can show is that we need explicit understanding when intuitive judgments tend to go wrong: that is, in situations that are difficult for various reasons (with competing reasons or competing motivations, for instance). When situations are not difficult, they have nothing to say. At best, they rule out naivety about moral virtue. They are consistent with intellectualism but do not support it over an intermediate theory, one which requires the virtuous to be aware of their reasons for action in difficult situations only.

For now, all we can say is that current research on practical expertise does not conclusively support any of the three accounts of moral virtue. Some models (e.g., Dreyfus and Dreyfus) tend to support naivety; others (e.g., Klein), an intermediate theory; while others (e.g., Ericsson) favor intellectualism. However, at this stage, we certainly do not have a conclusive argument in favor of intellectualism.

V. JUSTIFICATION, EXPLANATION, AND ADVICE

There are other, better arguments in support of intellectualism. I will give two here. The first is inspired by a remark from Annas.⁴³ I argue that an intellectual grasp of morality is needed for justice, the virtue of giving people what we owe to them, and beneficence, the virtue of helping people in need. Second, I argue that all virtues should be understood as requiring an explicit understanding of morality.

A. *The Virtues of Justice and Beneficence*

A naive moral agent is no good at justifying her actions. Nomy is still trying to sort out the competing demands made on an estate. Some of them are family members who are grieving for their relative. Some are creditors to the small business that he owned. I said earlier that it would be difficult for a naive agent to make a good judgment in such a case. But suppose that she did correctly “see” what to do and acted accordingly. One of the relatives cannot understand why some of the creditors have been paid off ahead of the family and demands an explanation. It seems

43. Annas recognizes that a naive agent will not be a good advisor (*Intelligent Virtue*, 26), but she does not develop this remark further and this is not the aspect of moral virtue that she emphasizes in her argument for intellectualism.

that all Nomy can say is: “that didn’t seem like the thing to do.” There is nothing more she can say as a justification or explanation of her action.

Naive moral agents are also not very good at giving advice. Suppose that Nomy has a nephew who is considering cheating in his final university exams. She can say: “don’t do it” and she will be right. And he could put his trust in her and do the right thing. But suppose instead he says: “don’t worry, Aunt Nomy, I won’t get caught!” What can she say to change his mind? Nothing, except “but don’t you see!?”⁴⁴ Since he clearly doesn’t, this is not much help. A good advisor of course can’t expect to convince everyone to do the right thing. But at the same time, she would be able to say more, to offer an argument that might get some purchase.

But so what? Isn’t it natural to distinguish between different kinds of practical expert? In many areas of practical expertise, there is a reasonably clear distinction between a coach and a practitioner. Before the match, on the practice area, the coach gives advice. On the pitch, the team plays. Now the coach may be one of the team, but nonetheless there is—or at the very least there can be—a clear divide between the time he is playing and the time he is coaching. He can play well without coaching well (or at all) or coach well without playing well.

This is not just true of physical skills either. There is a division between when a theoretical physicist is doing cutting-edge research and when she is teaching others about physics. There may be separate spaces in which they occur: teaching in a classroom, research in an office or lab. Once again, someone can be a good practitioner without being an able teacher and vice versa. Some people will be both. But even if they are, these are clearly distinct kinds of practical expertise, two different kinds of skill.

So one compromise position would be to say that a virtuous person is someone who does the right action for the right reasons, for which naivety is sufficient, in principle at least. And a good moral teacher is a good advisor and is good at justifying her actions, for which intellectual sophistication is required. This implies that naivety is true for moral virtue, and intellectualism true for moral teaching, but that moral virtue and moral teaching are separate skills. Indeed, this is exactly what is argued by Driver, who distinguishes “three distinct forms” that moral expertise can take—the expert judger, the expert practitioner, and the expert in moral analysis—and by Anne Baril in a review of Annas’s book: “being able to do something is another matter from being able to explain to others how one does it.”⁴⁵ Of course it is true of most kinds of practical expertise that doing it is one thing and explaining it another.

44. As in McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” 340.

45. See Driver, “Moral Expertise”; Anne Baril, “Review of *Intelligent Virtue*, by Julia Annas,” *Mind* 122 (2013): 241–45, quote at 244.

Take, for instance, Annas's list of practical skills that she compares with virtue: to playing the piano (like Alfred Brendel), being a skilled electrician or plumber, skating, dancing, or speaking Italian. The expert practitioner of these skills and the expert teacher of them—the one who can explain and justify what the practitioner is doing—are not necessarily the same. These are two separate skills or forms of expertise. But the same is not true of moral virtue.

The first point is both simple and obvious, but I think is often overlooked: giving advice and offering justifications and explanations are actions. And more: they are actions of moral significance.⁴⁶ Consider the family that Nomy neglected in favor of the creditors of the deceased. Nomy owes them an explanation of why she acted as she did. They deserve it. It is a mark of respect to offer a justification of your actions to someone. The exchange of justifications (offering and accepting or rejecting them) is a way of relating to one another of fundamental moral importance. It is essential to people's interests as rational agents with moral standing. Recognizing and responding to this is part of having the right moral attitudes toward other people; giving people what you owe to them, giving them what they deserve, is part of the virtue of justice.⁴⁷ Justice requires that Nomy be able to explain her decision.

Justifying yourself to others is important in a number of different ways. In the first place, it can help them to understand what you were doing and why it was the right thing to do. For instance, if Nomy described herself as fulfilling a legal rule (to pay the creditors first) that she was required to carry out in her role as executor, that is very different from describing herself as paying the most needy first (where she takes those to be the creditors), or withholding the inheritance of the family, because of their treatment of the deceased when he was alive. Without an explanation, the family may be at a loss to understand what is going on or may reach for an incorrect explanation. If someone feels badly done by (or even just confused), taking the time and making the effort to help them understand is a way of acknowledging them and recognizing that their interests matter. The family may be offended by Nomy's withholding their inheritance, and their relationship may be restored by learning why she acted as she did.⁴⁸

46. I make this point in Hills, "Moral Testimony."

47. This is very similar to some of Scanlon's claims about the importance of the exchange of justifications, but he makes a much stronger claim, that morality and moral motivation can be explained in terms of justifiability to others (Thomas M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1998]). My claim here is consistent with many noncontractualist moral theories.

48. This is a theme of Thomas M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), esp. 37–88.

Finally, explaining why your action is right will also help these others understand better what is right and wrong and why. If they accept the justification, they could gain moral knowledge that may lead them to make good moral decisions in the future.

Would such a justification be unnecessary if the family were themselves virtuous: wouldn't they know why Nomy had withheld their inheritance? Not necessarily, for there may be more than one adequate explanation for doing so, and it may be important for them to understand the reasons for which she acted. But in any case, morally virtuous people spend a lot of time with people who are not fully virtuous, who can reasonably demand to hear a justification.

Another way of spreading moral understanding and encouraging good action is through moral advice. Advice might prevent others from doing an action that is morally wrong. If accompanied by reasons that they understand and accept, it can help them grasp better what is morally important and make better decisions in the future.

Giving advice and exchanging justifications are part of the virtue of beneficence. We normally think of beneficence as primarily about material aid: giving money, food, medicine and so on to those who urgently need it. Of course this is very important. But people have other needs too, needs in virtue of being rational creatures who have the potential to be morally good. A truly beneficent agent will recognize those interests too and help others develop them.⁴⁹

It is perhaps not completely impossible, though very unlikely, that a virtuous person might never be asked for advice or called upon to justify herself. But that doesn't matter. She still needs to be disposed to do so well, if it would be reasonable for her to be asked and reasonable for her to respond. And that is always possible.⁵⁰ The division between

49. Beneficence is sometimes thought to be a virtue with latitude, that is, you are required to help people sometimes, but on any given occasion it is permissible not to help them. Does that mean that you might be beneficent by, for example, meeting people's material needs without helping them develop as a moral agent? My own view is that the latitude of beneficence is limited: it does sometimes require you to perform particular actions. These may include actions that benefit people as moral agents, as well as those that benefit them as physical agents. So it is not possible to be fully beneficent without being able to justify yourself to others.

50. If this is right, naivety about moral virtue must be false. But is intellectualism true? Perhaps a fully virtuous agent needs to be able to explain herself when required to do so by justice or by beneficence, but not otherwise. Surely that supports an intermediate theory, not intellectualism? But this objection presupposes a clear divide between situations in which justice or beneficence call for the agent to explain herself and those which do not. But there is no clear divide. Concerning any action, you might reasonably be asked for advice or justification and reasonably have to respond, either at the time of action or later

a teacher and a practitioner that can be relatively clearly drawn with regard to most practical skills does not exist with regard to ethics. Moral teaching (in the broad sense, encompassing giving advice, justifying and explaining oneself to others) is part of good moral practice: it includes actions that a virtuous person is morally required to perform. If she cannot, she does not have all the virtues, she is not a moral ideal: she is not fully morally virtuous.

B. The Nature of Moral Virtue

So far I have argued that at least the virtues of beneficence and justice require an intellectual grasp of morality. But actually, I think that this grasp is an essential part of every moral virtue. Virtue has been described as: a disposition reliably to do the right action, to make the right choices and to have the right feelings. All of these are certainly important. But I suggest that this conception misses something important about moral virtue, which is not a loose collection of otherwise unconnected dispositions.

Rather, moral virtue is the orientation of the whole person toward moral value and moral reasons. It is: “the wholehearted acceptance of a certain range of considerations as reasons for action.”⁵¹ Of course that includes action, desire and emotion. But it also includes acknowledging moral considerations as reasons. How could conscious beliefs about what matters morally and why it matters, fail to be an appropriate response to moral value? They could not. As such, how could they fail to be an essential part of moral virtue? Again, they could not.

Courage is a moral virtue concerned with the causes that are worth fighting for and the way that that fighting should be conducted. A courageous person responds to these reasons by supporting just wars and by refusing to support unjust ones even at a personal cost. But she can also respond to those reasons—the very same reasons—by explaining and justifying her decision when to fight and when not. And further she can respond to them—the very same reasons—in the advice that she offers about when and how to conduct a war.

Bertrand Russell, for instance, recognized both the huge suffering caused by the First World War and the lack of good reasons for fighting it. He opposed it courageously, in the end being imprisoned for conscientious objection. But he also wrote against the war, explaining the reasons why it was unjust: “When this great tragedy has worked itself out to its disastrous conclusion, when the passions of hate and self-assertion

on. In order to act appropriately, you must be able to explain your reasons. So intellectualism must be correct.

51. Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Ethics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

have given place to compassion with the universal misery, the nations will perhaps realize that they have fought in blindness and delusion, and that the way of mercy is the way of happiness for all."⁵²

Someone who participates in war if and only if it is just, and only does so in ways that are just, is doing some things right even if she cannot offer any explanation or justification of her actions. But she is not fully responsive to morality; her whole self is not oriented in the right way. So she is not fully morally virtuous. To respond to moral reasons appropriately in every respect requires an intellectual grasp of morality. It follows that even if, as we have assumed, a naive agent can do the right thing for the right reasons, she cannot respond to moral reasons in all the ways that virtue requires. Perhaps we can call people who have some aspects of the virtues brave and honest and so on, and if so she can be brave and honest. But she is not fully morally virtuous.

Is there any possible response to these two arguments on behalf of naivety? It is surely not plausible to deny that a virtuous person really must give advice or explain and justify her actions. But perhaps the following might be said: there are often morally relevant actions that it would be good to perform, yet we cannot expect a virtuous agent (as such) to be able to carry them out. For instance, suppose that you are on a trek on holiday far from a proper hospital and one of your companions falls ill. It would certainly be good if you had the medical knowledge and surgical skills to save her. But it is not reasonable to expect a virtuous person, as such, to have those skills. Nor must she be able to pilot a plane, or swim miles in rough seas, or climb down a cliff face even though there certainly are situations in which these skills save lives. So there must be skills through which you could perform morally relevant actions, in response to moral reasons, yet these skills are not part of moral virtue. Perhaps "teaching" skills are like that: necessary for performing morally relevant actions, but not properly part of moral virtue.⁵³

Yet this analogy does not seem right to me. Skills at rock climbing, piloting aircraft, swimming, and advanced medicine are nonmoral, specialist, and are needed rarely. They take years to master and most of us reasonably expect not to be called on to use them. The skills of intellectualism are quite different. The abilities to give advice or to justify why your action is right do not take years of specialist training. Virtuous peo-

52. Bertrand Russell, "The Ethics of War," *International Journal of Ethics* 25 (1915): 127–42. Russell's argument against the First World War is clear and convincing; unfortunately, he also gives much less appealing reasons for thinking that war against "uncivilized" nations is justifiable.

53. Olivia Bailey, "What Knowledge Is Necessary for Virtue?," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 4 (2010): 1–17, discusses a similar argument.

ple do not need to be spell-binding orators or masters of rhetoric; they merely need the ordinary, everyday ability to articulate their thoughts. Of course, to give good justifications and good moral advice, they will need an exceptional sensitivity to moral reasons and moral value. But surely, this kind of sensitivity is exactly what we should expect of someone with moral virtue. And moreover, situations in which you can give advice, or are called on to justify or explain yourself, occur frequently. In other words, these skills are responsive to morality, nonspecialist and are needed frequently. They are an essential part of treating people (i.e., other rational, moral agents) properly, a core competency of virtue.

If the two arguments above are correct, it is characteristic of a fully virtuous person to be aware of her reasons for action and to articulate them where necessary. Naivety about moral virtue is false, and so is the intermediate theory between naivety and intellectualism. As I have emphasized, it does not follow from that that a naive agent is wholly without virtue. She may be honest and just and kind to some extent. But only an intellectual agent can be fully virtuous. It follows that intellectualism about moral virtue must be true. And true not just for humans, but for any conceivable agent.

At the beginning of the essay I outlined some alternative versions of intellectualism. For instance, some versions say that a virtuous agent must have conscious thoughts whenever she acts, whose content comprised a full explanation of why her action is right which refer to a Grand End, an explicit, comprehensive vision of the good which guides the agent in everything she does. Other versions of intellectualism are more modest. Do my arguments have any implications as to which version of intellectualism is correct?

Neither account has any implications about the structure of moral value and reasons, or the kinds of explanation that can be given of right action. It is consistent with everything that I have said here that there is a "Grand End," but also consistent with it that justification and deliberation can take many different forms. My own view is that many different kinds of explanation, deliberation and advice are perfectly legitimate. But I haven't argued for that conclusion here.

The two arguments have slightly different implications for how we should think of the kind of "account" that a virtuous agent should be able to give of her actions. The second argument simply requires that you accurately grasp what matters morally and why. The first argument by contrast, emphasizes the importance of giving the account to an audience, those to whom you owe an explanation, or those who would be helped by one. The explanation or advice that you give needs to be accurate, therefore, but it also needs as far as possible to be persuasive (as, unfortunately, Bertrand Russell's was not).

VI. CONCLUSION

This completes my arguments in favor of intellectualism. I have conceded that it is possible to do the right thing for the right reasons without an intellectual grasp of morality (and to that extent defenders of naivety like Driver and Arpaly are in the right) and that this might count as partial moral virtue. Perhaps it might even be acceptable to call such people honest, beneficent, kind, and courageous. But full moral virtue requires more. It requires a full responsiveness to moral reasons that goes beyond the sensitivity required to do the right action for the right reasons, and includes the ability to respond consciously, with awareness.

This conclusion is quite strong. It does not merely say that in practice, in humans, moral virtue is intellectual. Rather it says that in principle, full moral virtue necessarily is intellectual. And though I have not denied that moral virtue is a kind of practical expertise, I have emphasized an important difference: that “teaching” is essential to the practice of moral virtue, but is not part of many other forms of practical expertise.

Intellectualism has very significant implications. I want to close by considering two: one concerning the function and importance moral philosophy; but first, the implications for the familiar idea that the virtuous have a distinctive kind of “moral perception.”⁵⁴

It is very common to describe the cognitive grasp of a virtuous person as a special way of “seeing”: she “sees” why her action is needed. But in perception you frequently see that a fact obtains without having any idea why, and as we now know the cognitive grasp of a virtuous person precisely does include the reasons why her action is right. It follows that perception is a highly misleading model of virtuous “awareness.” Though talk of “moral vision” is very tempting, it would be better to avoid it altogether, or at the very least to use it only with a great deal of caution.

Finally I want to address the implications for moral philosophy. By moral philosophy I mean moral theory or applied ethics (rather than metaethics). What is moral philosophy for? Moral philosophers are often very cautious about claiming moral expertise for themselves.⁵⁵ But it is

54. A third implication is that full moral virtue requires explicit moral understanding (i.e., explicit understanding of why your action is the thing to do), and thus the arguments here support the claims I make in Hills, “Moral Testimony.”

55. Skeptics include Kieran Setiya, “Does Moral Theory Corrupt Youth?” *Philosophical Topics* 38 (2010): 205–22; David Archard, “Why Moral Philosophers Are Not and Should Not Be Moral Experts,” *Bioethics* 25 (2011): 119–27; Eric Schwitzgebel and Joshua Rust, “The Moral Behavior of Ethicists: Peer Opinion,” *Mind* 118 (2009): 1043–59, and “Do Ethicists and Political Philosophers Vote More Often than Other Professors?,” *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1 (2010): 189–99; and Eric Schwitzgebel and Fiery Cushman, “Expertise in Moral Reasoning? Order Effects on Moral Judgment in Professional Philosophers and Non-philosophers,” *Mind and Language* 27 (2012): 135–53. More optimistic is Peter Singer, “Moral Experts,” *Analysis* 32 (1972): 115–17.

not very controversial that moral philosophy involves what we might call expertise in moral theory, a grasp of ethical concepts and views, the relations between them and arguments in favor and against them.⁵⁶

Getting clear about moral concepts and about what each moral theory or moral principle implies is important and difficult work that should not be underestimated. But that does not exhaust the function of moral philosophy. It is also one of its goals to decide moral questions: to adjudicate between moral theories and moral principles and to come to ethical conclusions about what to do.

How do moral philosophers try to decide moral questions? Intuitive judgments, made about specific cases (violinists needing the use of your body, children drowning in ponds, trolleys) have an important role. Often we are not immediately aware of why these actions are right or wrong, even as we judge that they are. But moral philosophers typically attempt to uncover those reasons: making explicit the possible explanations, proposing and assessing moral principles that might support them, devising and discussing analogous cases, and so on. I suggest that one of the main purposes of moral philosophy to make explicit and articulate your grasp of what matters morally, to use that to decide what to do, and to share that understanding with others.⁵⁷

This idea that moral philosophy is concerned with making things explicit is not new. It is remarkably similar to what Aristotle took himself to be doing in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as Burnyeat makes clear: “He [Aristotle] is setting out ‘the because’ of virtuous actions.”⁵⁸ Aristotle’s lectures set out explanations of why you should act in some ways but not others, why courage is a virtue but cowardice and rashness are not, and so on. He is making explicit what a naive moral agent already grasps, but only implicitly.

Suppose that this characterization of moral philosophy is right: it is (in part) about making morality explicit. I have argued that an explicit grasp of morality is practically important: it is an essential component of moral virtue. And so it follows, perhaps surprisingly, that there is a necessary connection between moral philosophy and moral virtue.

Two important points deserve emphasis here. It remains possible that someone might be good at making explicit her implicit grasp of morality—she might be a good moral philosopher—without becoming any more virtuous than before, because she did not start with much (if any)

56. See, e.g., Hallvard Lillehammer, “Who Needs Bioethicists?,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C* 35 (2004): 131–44, esp. 133.

57. Another equally important purpose is in improving the moral judgments you make about which actions are right or wrong. It seems to me perfectly possible that the kind of reflection of morality characteristic of moral philosophy could improve these judgments, but I will not argue for that here.

58. Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning,” 81, 87; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095 b 2–13.

actual grasp of moral reasons. If her implicit judgments were all wrong, her explicit judgments may be no better. This supports the widely held view that you can be a good moral philosopher without having particularly good moral judgment. It is consistent with what I have argued here that no moral philosophers actually do grasp what matters morally; moral philosophy is not sufficient for you to appreciate moral reasons properly (I also think that even if you grasp them intellectually, you may fail to be motivated appropriately, and so fall short of moral virtue for other reasons).⁵⁹

But a second very important point is more positive: it is likely that a moral philosopher will have greater explicit grasp of morality than a nonphilosopher who began with the same implicit grasp, because she has developed a better awareness of these reasons and a greater ability to articulate them. In this respect, the moral philosopher will, other things being equal, be more virtuous.

Is moral philosophy necessary for an explicit understanding of what matters? Suppose that keeping a promise, helping your friends, making people happy are the kinds of features that make actions right. Surely we do not need moral philosophy to grasp that? The reasons why actions are right or wrong sometimes are relatively straightforward, and then explicit moral understanding may be quite easy to achieve. But they are not always straightforward. When they are not, we need to carry out the sort of reflection and argument characteristic of moral philosophy to come to the right view. Of course, it does not follow from this that you need to be an accredited moral philosopher employed by a university to have moral expertise, but the practice of moral philosophy is not restricted to these people either (in this sense it is not a specialist skill).

Moral philosophy is neither necessary nor sufficient for moral virtue, but it is a useful tool—perhaps an indispensable one for most of us—in coming to a full appreciation of moral value and moral reasons, which is the essence of virtue.

59. Of course I am not suggesting that moral philosophy is guaranteed to be of benefit: you can be misled by a philosophical argument or an appealing theory. Hopefully, expertise in moral theory reduces the chances of this. But in any case, that is why I say that moral philosophy is likely but not certain to increase your explicit moral understanding. In addition, full virtue of course requires good motivation too, which may or may not be helped by moral philosophy.