

The Virtue of Humanity

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Chapter 1

The Good Life

I have found it difficult to explain to a seven year old why he shouldn't kill mobs in minecraft. Although this particular seven year-old will refrain from killing mobs in minecraft because he trusts my judgement, and so that when I say "don't kill mobs", he will generally say "okay, I won't, but why?"

This is where I find it difficult to come up with a reason that seems satisfying.

Consider deontology: do not kill mobs in minecraft because doing so will be treating them as an object. Well, they are objects aren't they? Consequentialists might point out that we are not hurting anyone. A natural law theorist? Is there a law giver, evolution, natural selection or God that would care?

Would God care? Why?

We might initially think that there is no correlation between a person's character and their treatment of virtual objects. However, the point is not the connection as such, but rather

the reason for their treatment of such objects. We will consider these to be ‘*circumstantial contexts*’

This paper argues that the reason has to do with the individual and how they respond given environmental constraints, and not the circumstantial contexts. The former has more bearing on the kind of character the individual possesses. As such, this paper presents a counter-cultural case for valorizing Christian Hip-Hop over and above commercial hip-hop as normatively ethnographic.

Therefore,

Another question: emotion, stereotypes, narratives, and reason.

Emotion and Reason:

the emotion instantiates an appraisal of the value (to oneself or what one cares about) of that object.¹

The appraisal of objects defines a person’s character.

What emotions are warranted and when?

1.1 Country Music

As noted in emerging work on country music, there is a reason to think that a web of societal, historical, and temporal factors constructs social identity (McLean and Syed 2018).

Authors have argued that the narrative implicit in country music’s aesthetic constructs the

¹Jonathan Gilmore, *Apt Imaginings: Feelings for Fictions and Other Creatures of the Mind*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2020), 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190096342.001.0001>.

identity of the modern American Anglo-Saxon man (Mann 2008; Shusterman 1999; Meissner and Huebner 2022; Grossman 2002; Hayes 2010; Hollowell and Miller 2019; Hughes 2015; Watson 2020). But it is not clear who is the agent in such constructions. Critical race theorists also ask related questions regarding the social construction of the identities of racial minorities. As noted in the narrative literature, agency is a central concern on both accounts. Agency is rooted in one’s emotional experiences upon a retelling of their life story (Altshuler 2021; Velleman 2005a; Korsgaard 1996). More specifically, there are important relationships between narratives and an agent’s feelings, for instance of regret (Goldberg 2009), or pride, towards actions that one did or did not do. Using Mark Alfano, Cheong, and Curry (2022)’s *Morality as Cooperation* dictionary, I machine code an ethnographic account of agency by scoring the expressed relational virtues in popular song lyrics.

Consider expressions of materiality and sufficiency conditions for well-being:

- Post Malone’s *Rich and Sad*: “All this stuntin’ couldn’t satisfy my soul (–oul), Got a hundred big places, but I’m still alone (–one)”. Contrast: [money] “couldn’t satisfy my soul” with [money] “could satisfy my soul”
- Especially as in Ty Dolla’s *by Yourself*: “Stacked your bread and bought your own Mercedes (Vroom, vroom). You your own boss, do it your way (Way)”

1.2 Emotional Disposition

Here, expressed emotional dispositions can effectively portray the endorsement or rejection of a given emotion state regarding how things went in a relationship, and subsequently

represents a proposed inter-relational value. What emotional value (e.g., -0.531?) is the author ascribing to solitude in Rich and Sad versus the emotional value (e.g., 0.215?) is the author prescribing solitude in By Yourself. For my purposes here, there are three kinds of narratives that complicate a narrative account of agency and personhood.

- They include autobiographical narratives (McAdams and McLean 2013; McAdams 2014; Pasupathi 2016).
 - These narratives are internalized reconstructions of events.
 - They include an emotional evaluation of such events and taken as a whole; are central to a personal understanding of one is.
- Biographical narratives are externalized reconstructions of events.
 - They are culturally specific stories that are often.
 - accepted by the members of that society to either internalize or to resist (McLean and Syed 2015a).

1.3 Extracting Sentiment

In this project, I consider extracted sentiment from the third type of narrative, what I refer to as literary narratives, to understand represented relational term objects in popular art (Mohammad 2021) as a type of biographical narrative.

- This will enable us to visualize emotionally relational content.
- By analyzing the sentimental content of music lyrics, I attempt to extract those phrases that artists attach the most sentiment to.

- These include both negatively and positively valanced cultural ascriptions of social values among members of various populations. I ask what contributions these make in the construction of social identities.

1.4 Method

My proposed research revolves around the fundamental question of whether there exists a relationship between moral knowledge and popular narratives, particularly those embedded within music. I argue this question is related to ones about moral testimony in literature on epistemology. Drawing inspiration from notable thinkers like Robert Hopkins, Nomy Arpaly, David Enoc, Laura Callahan, Jesse Prinz, and Michael Slote, who have championed ethical theories and those centered in moral psychology, such as emotionism and sentimentalism, I delve into the multifaceted claims surrounding the idea that these theories connect our emotions with our moral judgments.

In the rich landscape of psychological literature on narratives and narrative meaning, Jerome Bruner (1991), E.H. Erikson (1968), sees narratives as pivotal tools that inform our self-identity, and infuse our lives with meaning, a vital component of psychological development. But there are other philosophers who have also contributed significantly to literature on narrative. I follow individuals such as Eleonore Stump (2020) and Martha Nussbaum and anchor my research in the context of human well-being related to this body of literature. This work also draws upon psychological studies which emphasize the role of narratives in community-building, the formation of pro-social attitudes, and the enhancement of emotional bonds among a society's members.

This work notes where other ethical theories like critical theory may overlook the significance of various sources of social identity, for instance popular music. In the pursuit of social equality, these views often fail to acknowledge contemporary methods of the construction of various identities. In my proposal, I consider the music genre as a form of literary narrative. I argue that the music genre, as a kind of literary narrative, can be useful in helping to form conceptions of narrative identity and therefore, there needs to be more work done on how such popular sources ground social identity. Following notable work on country music, I contrast country music with both commercial and Christian hip-hop to explore their representations of moral norms and social values. I contend that music genres can have potential value in helping to shape a community's inter-personal values. I argue that this can have implications for the well-being of a given community as noted most often in work on Country music. Drawing on moral epistemology, particularly moral testimony, and moral feeling, I argue that narratives in music constitute a form of moral knowledge by constructing social identities and linking emotions with moral objects. Thus, music plays a leading role in shaping social identities and can thus contribute to a community's well-being.

1.5 Research Proposal

My proposal addresses two key inquiries in moral epistemology and cognitivism. First, it questions the tenability of moral testimony. Scholars like Alison Hills (2009, 2013) and Sarah McGrath (2018) express concerns about the justification of moral actions based on testimony, as they may lack moral worth. I table this question to focus specifically on narrative well-being. This leads to the second question regarding emotions. While emotions towards fiction

are common, their appropriateness varies depending on context, challenging the notion of apt emotional expression. In response to the challenge of apt emotional expression directed at art, I consider an ethic of care. Rosalind Hursthouse has noted once that virtue ethics enables us to perceive the complexity in moral decisions (1971). That it is not always the right apprehension of facts that counts, but rather sometimes it is the right attitude, facts about our emotions, that can be more relevant than the other relevant facts. I explore the relationship between fiction and moral understanding, contrasting standard epistemological cases with moral epistemological ones. I then delve into philosophical accounts of narrative, resting on the established proposal (E.g., Catherine-Harris 2018) that narratives offer avenues for affective moral understanding.

This involves appropriate feelings in response to moral situations as depicted in fiction. This project examines psychological perspectives on narrative, particularly those linking narrative understanding to human flourishing, whether narrative gets an account of human flourishing correct. Does a given narrative represent the emotions in each context in a way that would accurately represent a flourishing life? Does a given fiction represent sorrow in response to the loss of a close friend or apathy? Finally, it considers whether popular music, as a form of non-classical narrative, contributes to human flourishing and moral enhancement, by providing a comprehensive model that aligns with philosophical and psychological perspectives on narrative and well-being as apt expressions of care.

Chapter 2

Definition of stereotypes:

Defining behavior:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/behavior-neuroscience>

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/childhood/child-development/effects-stereotypes-personal-development/definition-stereotypes>

Behavior and autism treatment:

https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4614-4788-7_137

Maladaptive behaviors

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/stereotyped-behavior#:~:text=Stereotyped%20behaviors%20are%20well%2Ddefined,clearly%20fulfil%20an%20adaptive%20>

Stereotypes and Judgment:

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_do_stereotypes_shape_your_judgment

nt

Stereotypes and Abortion:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/who-gets-an-abortion-in-the-u-s-perceptions-dont-match-reality/>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9704102/>

Three quantitative studies found that women of colour had different experiences of abortion stigma compared to White women. Non-peer-reviewed studies of qualitative PhD-level dissertation research found that race, culture, religion and immigration had unique and complex effects on abortion stigma experienced by Latinx women. While abortion stigma is common, we found that there is a lack of research contextualising the racialisation of the United States. Quantitative studies found that women of colour experience abortion stigma at lower levels compared to White women. However, qualitative analyses of experiences suggest that quantitative measures of abortion stigma may not capture unique aspects of abortion stigma as experienced by women of colour. Understanding the role of race in abortion stigma in the United States: A systematic scoping review

Question:

Situating stigma in stratified reproduction: Abortion stigma and miscarriage stigma as barriers to reproductive healthcare

[Are] race and reported history of abortion are associated with abortion stigma and miscarriage stigma, both independently and comparatively[?]

Relevant Results:

Among those who did report an abortion, white women perceived more stigma from abortion than miscarriage, while Black and Latina women perceived more stigma from miscarriage than abortion.

2.0.1 Situation defining justification for anti-social behavior**2.0.2 Therefore, conversations about representation in country music should be questions about Robust rather than Generic Representation**

Chapter 3

Black male studies and the bigger picture

3.1 Adaptive Relationships:

3.1.1 Tommy Curry

Black Humanities:

Interview on Black Humanities

It doesn't disown that there are different kinds of experiences, but when you talk about Blackness in America, you're talking about how groups of people who are descendants of slaves and colonialism whose existence within the empire is conditioned by death. That's a very different thing. And yet, there's something in Black people that says resist.

But there is something in Christian blacks “And yet, there’s something in [Christian] Black people that says ‘love’ ”.

We can’t both hold that the discipline is false because it’s based on the illusions or perceptions of mythologies from the white mind, and say that our notions of Blackness should have equal weight today. Why should we be equal to the illusion? We know that’s false; we have to start intervening

- We have to start reimagining

We have not yet even begun, even though we’re in the twentyfirst century, we have not reached a point where Black people could identify humanity studies as just the study of Black people.

- We should understand it as the study of relationship as a core-component of who we are.

But there are two ways:

- as a nation
- as a people within a nation

I suggest how but first:

Inventing Failure:

Inventing Failure

Chapter 4

Nussbaum on Interrational virtue as a human excellence

1. The first concerns the role in the human good life of activities and relationships that are, in their nature, especially vulnerable to reversal.

- friendship
- love
- political activity
- attachments to property or possessions

What is the role of these items in a good life, if one can easily loose these because of chance?

2. The relationship among these external goods

- Do they exist harmoniously?
- Can they impair goodness of an agent's life?

- Can they generate conflicting requirements?
 - E.g., can love cause someone to betray a friendship?
- 3. Self-sufficiency, what is the ethical value of our appetites, feelings, and emotions, passions and sexuality?
- Does the value of Self-sufficiency outweigh the value of these other *irrational attachments*?
- Do they have value even though they can disrupt our own Self-sufficiency? E.g., in rational planning?

4.1 Examples of Fragility and Ambition

4.1.1 Aeschylus and practical conflict

- What can we learn from tragic poetry and literature?

But the tragedies also show us, and dwell upon, another more intractable sort of case — one which has come to be called, as a result, the situation of ‘tragic conflict’. In such cases we see a wrong action committed without any direct physical compulsion and in full knowledge of its nature, by a person whose ethical character or commitments would otherwise dispose him to reject the act.

4.1.2 Sophocles’ *Antigon*: conflict, vision, and simplification

- In response to what is learned from tragedy, we can simplify our value commitments.

For the claim is that the human being’s relation to value in the world is not,

or should not be, profoundly tragic: that it is, or should be, possible without culpable neglect or serious loss to cut off the risk of the typical tragic occurrence. Tragedy would then represent a primitive or benighted stage of ethical life and thought. [51]

4.1.3 Conclusion to Part I

What have we learned?

- Values taken in the singular are vulnerable
- *Irrational attachments* can disrupt.
- *Irrational attachments* can become grounds of conflict.

But this was an over-ambitious attempt to eliminate luck from human life.

- This shows the importance of human value, *rational choice*. [*tuché]

4.2 Plato: Goodness without fragility

Two problems:

1. Dialogue
2. Development

Some approaches

- lack of response to positive role of vulnerable values in the goodlife
- Plato's insufficient critique of tragic literature

4.2.1 The *Protagoras*: a science of practical reasoning

How to develop a *tuche*

- social political techne → technai.
- Important: defeated threats from physical environment, but what about the social environment?

How does science save and transform us?

- how do we rank activity independent of the feelings they produce?
- how do we deal with the vulnerability and instability of individual human pursuits?

4.2.2 Interlude I: Plato's anti-tragic theater

Two ways of dealing with the question about mitigating luck in the social environment:

- Tragic theater: but irrational attachments can disrupt rational choice
- techne (science): but lack of response to positive role of vulnerability in human values

E.g.,

Here, as in the *Protagoras*, Plato very deliberately creates a speech that will give the impression of not having been deliberately formed. It is not artless; but its art is one that claims to go straight to the truth-telling part of the soul. It is simple rather than flowery, flat rather than emotive or persuasive. [132]

4.3 The *Republic*: true value and the standpoint of perfection

Defends a life of goodness without vulnerability.

Q: What is valuable about a human life? A: Being invulnerable to luck by quarantining ourselves from irrational attachments.

4.4 The Speech of Alcibiades: a reading of the symposium

I believe that a deep understanding of the *Symposium* will be one that regards it not as a work that ignores the pre-philosophical understanding of *eros*, but as one that is all about that understanding, and also about why it must be purged and transcended, why Diotima has to come once again to save Athens from a plague.¹

How?

Eros is the desire to be a being without any contingent occurrent desires. It is a second-order desire that all desires should be cancelled. This need that makes us pathetically vulnerable to chance is a need whose ideal outcome is the existence of a metal status, an artifact.

To be whole means not having any desires. Yet, we want to be whole, but also to have

¹Martha C. Nussbaum, "Symposium on Amartya Sen's Philosophy: 5 Adaptive Preferences and Women's Options," *Economics and Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2001): 167.

desires. This conflict however, can only be expressed through experience, *pathonta gnonai*, *understanding through experience*.

Which is:

- the cognitive activity of imagination
- emotion
- appetitive feelings

But the *Symposium* shows us that desire does have an important function, which is to not only move us towards the good, but guide us as well. (As defended in *The Phaedrus*)

. . . in people of good nature and training, the sensual and appetitive response is linked with, and arouses, complicated emotions of fear, awe, and respect, which themselves develop and educate the personality as a whole, making it both more discriminating and more receptive.²

To be moved towards beauty:

- open and receptive
- towards truth
- engrossed in a respect for the other person's choices

²Ibid., 215.

Chapter 5

Representation

Question:

What is the importance of representation? Perhaps it has to do with how someone identifies, what a good life is for that person:

Consider someone say J, who was raised in the circus. Perhaps J's parents were trapeze artists. Although this is not true of many, J wants to be just like her parents, more importantly, J sees her parents as someone she is supposed to be. She thinks about nothing else being a great trapeze artist and works very hard at honing her craft. In J's eyes, no other trapeze artist could ever hope to be as good. Further, in J's estimation, though she is not nearly as great of a trapeze artist as her parents, she is better than any other trapeze artist.

J identifies as a trapeze artist.

J identifies as a great trapeze artist.

Under a robust sense of representation, J experiences regret when failing to perform as she

believes she ought to do given who she is.

As such, if someone were to attempt to represent the kind of person J is, they would want to show J as endeavoring to be a great trapeze artist, and experiencing regret when she fails to do so.

Analogously, if someone perceives a family member, or teacher as a great moral exemplar, and to the extent that they identify with that individual (perhaps it is a member of the community which they belong to, they share the same language, practice the same customs, have had the same immigration experiences, lived in the same community, etc.), then they would likely see themselves as a moral exemplar (vulnerable and reliant on other humans for their well-being), perhaps not at the same level, but better than others. They too would experience regret when performing a given behavior, they feel is not conducive of the kind of person they are. When one represents them then, they would want to show similar regrets.

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