Eros, Interest, and Partiality: on Agnes Callard's *Aspiration*

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April 23, 2024

οἱ [φιλοσοφοῦντες] μεταξὺ τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, ὧν ἂν εἴη καὶ ὁ Ἔρως.
They [lovers of wisdom] are in the middle of the two, and Eros too is one of them.
(Symposium 204b1)

Contents

1 A broad overview

Agnes Callard begins her conclusion to *Aspiration* by asserting that "the posture of this book is a defensive one" (257).[1] She asks, "does any philosopher deny the existence of the phenomenon this book champions?" Yes: because "they are moved to describe the relevant set of cases in distorting ways, under the pressure of a theory that has foreclosed the possibility of the distinctively practical form of learning—value-learning—that constitutes the agency of the aspirant" (*ibid.*). A fair amount of the book is prosecuted by way of the philosophical example, or case study, and much of this text will be as well. Therefore it is worth getting clear on the charge of distortion.

How can one tell if a case has been described in a "distorting" way? What is the point of a philosophical case-description? The description of a case is not a neutral affair, which can be determined to be distorted or not from outside the view of a given theory, whether it's drawn from life or invented. It is not as if Callard's opponents, apprised of the possibility of something their descriptions omitted, would change their tune, as having not noticed it. It isn't in their descriptions because they think it isn't there at all. *They* think that *Callard* is mischaracterizing her own cases.

This is not to say that two disputants couldn't agree on a description of what they each acknowledge to be "the same thing", a highly stripped-down version compatible with the story each wants to tell: they are after all disputing over something.

A philosophical example is a seduction and an argument in one. To those who already subscribe to whatever view the example subserves, the description is a reminder and a reinforcement, in which they see clearly: *this* is the phenomenon we're interested in. For opponents, the description is a challenge: I have described

[1] All not otherwise described citations are to the paperback edition of *Aspiration*.

this case so compellingly that even you *can't* deny that I've got a hold on something, which you can't account for; at a minimum, you must diagnose why my way of looking at it seems compelling—and good luck with that. To the person who has as yet no strong position, it says: look at this thing, this scenario, this way. Don't you recognize this? You've seen something like this before, maybe without noticing it as such, but isn't it *like this*? You know what I'm talking about, roughly—you see (now) that there's something here—and isn't that thing *this* thing, the thing *I* think it is? This isn't simply an irrational appeal, though it does seem hard to characterize what *is* going on, nor is it only effective on who anyway believe the theory.[2] In a way, being swayed by a compelling case description is a bit like aspiring: the full meaning of the phenomenon still escapes one—and it may yet turn out to be illusory, or to come to *seem* illusory, if a competing, more compelling story comes along—but one has been awakened to something new, on which one has (or turned out already to have) a partial grasp. To turn this trick, the description, if it is to have any grip outside the circle of the already enlightened, must be something that can tempt and beckon the uninitiated, too, who must be able read and recognize something in it, even if the whole as yet eludes them. Callard, though she does think that she is introducing a novel paradigm into a hostile philosophical outlook from which she herself has not yet fully broken free (261), must also believe that the we *do* have some kind of pre-theoretical grasp of the phenomenon, not simply because her method is so case-driven but also because she believes that we believe that aspirants constitute a "distinctive ethical category of agents" about whom we have "an especially stringent set of ethical intuitions", and that *this* explains, at least in part, "our profound shock and anger in the face of cases of child abuse" (262);[3] thus, we, both the sophisticated philosophers and the naïve laity, should

[2]Compare Nelson (2005), or the description of Davidson's methodology in describing physical objects in Ramberg (1999, p. 611).

[3]Whether this passage is the most offensive in the book is a neat question that need not be pursued here. The other main contender is her jaw-droppingly ignorant and thoughtless account of how attitudes toward homosexuality changed in the US (229–30). It is anyway questionable to what extent children should be understood as aspirants at all. Let us note here, too, that this distinctive ethical class of agents includes those learning to appreciate music in a new way, those who have

be able to discern its outlines and the unity of the category in cases compellingly described.

For the one whom the descriptions do not grip, however, it is always possible to say: no, you've gotten your own example wrong: it's really like *this*, the way *I* think it is. It does the party of the first part no good simply to call that redescription a distorting misdescription.

I intend precisely to offer competing descriptions of Callard's cases, in particular two redescriptions of one of her leading examples, in §2.1.1 and §2.1.2. The first attempts to take the skeleton of the case and flesh it out in a way that captures something that seems to be worth calling "aspiration", though of course it will not correspond precisely to Callard's theorization; the second attempts to take on more of Callard's own description and give it a debunking interpretation. The motivation for this double procedure is itself twofold: it seems to me that Callard does have an inkling of a real phenomenon, but her own attempts to eke it out result in descriptions, and correspondingly a theory, that strike me as utterly foreign. The attempt to produce a satisfying alternative is not a distortion.

—But perhaps before getting into the details it is fitting to describe what the book is even supposed to be about, and the general shape of my complaints. Very briefly, Callard is interested in the process by which a person comes to value, and to *inhabit* the valuing of, something new. That is, it's not merely an intellectual appreciation that such and such is valuable, but the habits of valuation—of life—that accompany recognizing and responding to the value of whatever it may be. One now really does value whatever it is, and therefore responds to it, and lives, in a way that could not have been fully characterized before, when one knew at best that some other people value the same thing, but did not appreciate it, perhaps even found it foreign, oneself.

In particular, she is interested in this phenomenon when it doesn't just *happen* to a person, in the course of their upbringing (say), or when they find, as it

been awakened to the delights of beer (or wine (5)) and are learning to like it, and, to use another of Callard's own examples, those who are learning Attic Greek.

were all of a sudden, that they *do* care about such and such, but rather when someone sets *themselves* the project of deepening their nascent valuation, and especially when the phenomenon concerns something "large-scale", though she refers to smaller-scale examples fairly regularly and the structure would appear to be scale-insensitive.

This person she dubs the aspirant; the process, aspiration. As she notes, this happens when the agent already has a—how to put it? A dim grasp, a sort-of appreciation, a sense of the importance of the thing, without *fully* appreciating it: hence "nascent". (How to characterize this nascency, and what engenders it, will be important in what follows.) This process, to count as aspiration proper, cannot subserve an end the agent can already articulate with perfect adequacy to herself: thus, attending medical school to set oneself on a stable career path doesn't qualify (7), even though in fact the one who does so may end up with a new set of values, and neither does joining a gym in the hopes of inculcating in oneself a love of physical culture if the *initial* motive is simply to safeguard one's health, a value one already had (48). That is to say, the aspirant's end is *pursued* for its own sake, even though what *appreciating* it for its own sake might be is unclear to her, and there is at least a sense in which what the end even *is* is unclear to her: she can give it a name ("the value of music, in itself"), but as for what the name names, that she doesn't know, not *really*. But we ought to bear in mind that while the aspirant doesn't know the end the way she will at the end, she does *sort of* know what's in question: she's got that partial grasp, that nascent appreciation. Like Eros and the other φιλοσοφοῦντες, she lies between ignorance and wisdom. Callard makes much of the agent's ignorance, little of her wisdom.

So far so good; this is an interesting topic, probably an important one. In view of the last condition, it may be relatively uncommon—I'm not sure how many many instances of value-acquisition, even intentional value-acquisition, are really sufficiently independent of already-held values *and* pursued self-consciously as such—but that's no knock on the project.

Callard is at pains to characterize this process of intentional value-acquisition

as a rational one; it is something I as a rational agent am doing as a part of rational self-formation and exhibits its own distinctive form of rationality (the idea that the agent is characteristically and interestingly ignorant is important to its distinctiveness). She is a little less thoroughgoing when it comes to fleshing out how, precisely, it is rational, though this is ostensibly one of the major tasks of the book.

Now, changes in values, and the rationality or irrationality thereof, and a "practical form of learning" associated therewith, is also a topic that anyone with Callard's training ought to be able to recognize as firmly in the territory of Burnyeat (1980), a paper with which she engages, bafflingly, not at all:

> It turns out that Aristotle is not simply giving us a bland reminder that virtue takes practice. Rather, practice has cognitive powers, in that it is the way we learn [in a deep way] what is noble or just. (73)
>
> There is such a thing as learning to enjoy something . . . and it is not sharply distinct from learning that the thing in question is enjoyable . . . In the strong sense I learn that skiing is enjoyable only by trying it myself and coming to enjoy it. (76)
>
> The fundamental insight here is Plato's. . . . Aristotle owes to Plato, as he himself acknowledges in 2.3, the idea that these motivating evaluative responses are unreasoned . . . and because they are unreasoned, other kinds of training must be devised to direct them onto the right kinds of object. (79)

Callard's engagement with Aristotle in general, in fact, is nearly nil; part of the book's project seems to be pretending that "one becomes a kithara player by playing the kithara" is a new insight in the history of philosophy (cf 208). This is unfortunate, because Burnyeat gives stark expression to the intertwinedness of engagement *with the thing* and understanding *the value of the thing*, something that Callard tries to keep apart, emphasizing the latter to the exclusion of the former,[4] and emphasizing the intellectual over the pleasurable, to the exclusion of the latter, while Aristotle and, as Burnyeat notes, Plato both reserve a place for pleasure and

[4]She does occasionally acknowledge that often it's at least difficult to separate them in practice (eg, p 5; p 75), but it's clear where her theoretical priorities lie.

the erotic. Isn't the aspirant somewhat like the lover, and like Love, as Socrates relates Diotima's view?

> "He is in between wisdom and ignorance as well. In fact, you see, none of the gods loves wisdom or wants to become wise—for they are wise—and no one else who is wise already loves wisdom; on the other hand, no one who is ignorant will love wisdom either and want to become wise . . . "
>
> "In that case, Diotima, who *are* the people who love wisdom, if they are neither wise nor ignorant?"
>
> "That's obvious", she said. "A child could tell you. Those who love wisdom fall in between those two extremes. And Love is one of them . . . " (*Symposium*, 204a–b)

Love, in Diotima's telling, is practically the god of the in-between, and is apparently the occasion of Socrates's introduction to the very concept of being in between two states; English affords a nice paronomastic summary, Love as the god of partiality, being both partly and partial to what it wants. Love is neither wise nor ignorant, neither beautiful nor ugly, but *wants* wisdom and beauty, having encountered but not fully grasped them. Love, unsurprisingly, desires; the lover desires, at least at first, physical beauty (210a).

This, then, is the first broad complaint about Callard's treatment of aspiration, and the reason that her examples fall so flat: the aspirant, in her telling, never seems to actually *want* to do the thing associated with their valuational project. The actual impetus aspirants have to get started is a mystery. One of her leading examples is a student in a music appreciation class, and, as we will see in §2.1.2, her relationship to music seems primarily to be intellectual respect: she has learned, to paraphrase Burnyeat, that music is pleasurable, but takes no pleasure in it. Callard thereby perverts the phenomenon nearly from soup to nuts: overly intellectualized and overly self-centered, with no reference to the thing one is supposedly coming to value. One sees this already in her analysis of the case of Alcibiades, in the introduction, where the lack of any room for eros is all the more striking when one considers that his outburst takes place in the *Symposium*, following a round of

speeches about Love and immediately following Socrates's description of what he learned from Diotima.

In a neat confirmation of Diotima's description of love, Callard's blindness to eros finds its match in a blindness to partiality: she simply cannot accommodate the aspirant's in-betweenness. While she finds occasion to mention the aspirant's "partial grasp" in what amount to *obiter dicta*, when she gets down to do real philosophical work that grasp melts into nothingness. It is telling that her attempt to flesh out "partial" turns it into "proleptic", which means a present placeholder for an absent, future full grasp. Like Socrates before Diotima instructed him, she can imagine being ignorant and being wise, but not being a lover of wisdom. This is the second broad complaint, which goes along with the first: that the strange machinery of "proleptic reasons", the assertion of the aspirant's ignorance, and even the agent's lack of desire are predicated on denying the very thing, a partial understanding, that is supposed to characterize aspiration specifically. The novelty of her account derives from these contortions, but the novelty is factitious: things appear much less dazzling when we allow that someone may have some acquaintance with that which they pursue, and that that acquaintance drives them on. (This is the thrust of the first of the two redescriptions of her music-student case.)

The theoretical flaws of the book largely stem from these two factors. But there's a third broad complaint to register as well, one relating to Callard's characterization of the book as "defensive". It is really only in the conclusion, when she starts saying that other philosophers have distorted the cases, that she begins to be defensive. In the book proper she is, on the contrary, on the offense; she subjects the views she regards as her opponents to a great deal of scrutiny to show that they cannot handle the problems she believes she's identified. Her approach to describing how the recognition of aspiration *solves* the problems, however, is much less thorough. Aspiration in her telling is a sort of moral-psychological patent medicine, a nostrum whose method of action remains sketchy. Details about the characteristics of a "partial grasp" of a value, or what a "proleptic reason" comes to, get filled in almost throughout the book, making them hard to, well, fully grasp;

indeed, prolepsis is still getting filled in in the conclusion (258), and how the new tidbit there is meant to comport with the initial descriptions (72ff) is not terribly clear. The drawbacks of this being on the offense comes out especially clearly in the more "applied" chapters of parts II and III, where, while she may well convince reader that there really is a problem that other theories can't account for, she is likely to fail to convince the reader that her own theory can.[5]

Callard does acknowledge that she has at times been less than fully clear later in her conclusion, writing in part of a catalogue of lapses that, for instance, "in relation to part II, I have not explained how we arrive at an orientation in our intrinsic conflict" (260). I, too, noted that lack of explanation in part II, but I noticed, as Callard seems not to have, that the absence of such an explanation leaves the advertised goal of part II unaccomplished, and constitutes a far more serious flaw than she seems to realize, for she gives us no confidence that the explanation can be provided at all. She says she has "made room for aspiration by undermining certain settled dichotomies and assumptions" (260), but the advertised point of part II was not to show merely that no hitherto described account solves the problem but that aspiration *does*: "an agent resolves her intrinsic conflicts by aspiring" (143), *Punkt.* There is nothing wrong with making room for new positions by undermining the old. But it must be remembered that one can never make room specifically for one's own new position that way; undermining the old makes room for new positions of all sorts, including the denial of a solution to the problem, and the assertion that the problem is ill posed. Negation has no favorites.

In the end, Callard's confessed failure to get her own theory into clear enough view to explain how it actually works, in a book whose business is the presentation of that theory, suggests that she herself has been something of an aspirant, one who falls prey to a danger she notes: that at the end of the process, there actually *isn't* any there there. For all that she accuses other philosophers of seeing the phenomena with distorting lenses, of misdescribing the cases so as to stay within their familiar conceptions of (say) rationality, it is also possible that she comes up

[5]Since the present text is already fairly long, I won't address these parts.

short at the critical moments because she has been working towards an illusion. It's amusing, in this regard, that her first major example of an aspirant is someone who does *not* succeed in the aim she ascribes to him: Alcibiades, in the *Symposium*. "An author who has taken some care to present the details of an aspirant's psychology in a realistic way affords the theorist of aspiration an opportunity to showcase the interpretative power of her innovations in the theory of rationality, psychology, and ethics" (15); such an author is Plato and such an aspirant Alcibiades. Alcibiades not only fails to achieve his putative end (becoming a lover of wisdom), he is also behaving *irrationally*, which is important for Callard because it "reveals to us that the distinction between rationality and irrationality does indeed have application" (29). Now, one might expect that to a novel form of rationality there would correspond novel forms of irrationality, whereas Callard seems to be diagnosing Alcibiades of the garden-variety failing of pursuing incompossible ends: perhaps Alcibiades is not an irrational aspirant so much as a confused young man. But we will consider him now in more detail, since he is indeed a good case study.

1.1 Alcibiades: Shame and Desire

A refresher: the symposiasts of the dialogue, deferring to Phaedrus's apparently unquenchable appetite for the topic, have decided to make a round of speeches about love. Socrates is the last to speak, relating what Diotima taught him, culminating in the ascent of the *erastēs* from loving the beauty of a single boy, "go[ing] aright, or be[ing] led by another, into the mystery of Love", to the love of Beauty itself. Just then Alcibiades, quite drunk, bursts in, looking for Agathon, and spots Socrates. He gives a speech himself, in praise not of love but of Socrates. Socrates is like the satyr Marsyas or like a statue of Silenus: like Marsyas in that his speeches—the analogue of Marsyas's fluteplaying—are intoxicating, and so powerful that when Alcibiades hears them he becomes ashamed of his way of life: "my very own soul started protesting that my life—*my* life!—was no better than the most miserable slave's" (215e); "Socrates is the only man in the world who has made

me feel shame . . . I know perfectly well that I can't prove he's wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet, the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways" (216b). Like Silenus since, while Socrates was famously ugly, Alcibiades sees "the figures he keeps hidden within: they were so godlike—so bright and beautiful, so utterly amazing—that I no longer had a choice—I just had to do whatever he told me" (216e–217a). Of course, although he may "have already agreed with him" (216c) that he should abandon the life of honor, he doesn't; whatever conviction Socrates produces in Alcibiades dissipates swiftly when they're apart.

It is in this that Callard reads Alcibiades's "aspirational condition" (16). She asserts that "Alcibiades has some grip on the kinds of things Socrates will say to him and the ways that his own actions, choices, and desires will look and feel to him when he's talking to Socrates"—specifically, they will seem shameful. Alcibiades does not, however, give much evidence that he sees the *good* in the way of life Socrates models, nor does Callard present much evidence that he does. She refers to his "pursuit of philosophy" (25), but what *he* describes is his pursuit of Socrates. Against the suggestion that he is not really trying to change, she presents the story of the night they spent together, in a chastity that wounds Alcibiades's sense of his own beauty:

> Here's how I look at it. It would be really stupid not to give you anything you want: you can have me, my belongings, anything my friends might have. Nothing is more important to me than becoming the best man I can be, and no one can help me more than you to reach that aim. With a man like you, in fact, I'd be much more ashamed of what wise people would say if I did *not* take you as my lover, than I would of what all the others, in their foolishness, would say if I did. (218d)

Socrates rejects this offer and makes a counterproposition: "in the future, let's consider things together. We'll always do what seems the best to the two of us" (219b).

Is this statement of Alcibiades's a sign that he's really trying to change? He asserts that nothing is more important than becoming the best man he can be, after

all. But this plan of trading sex for wisdom seems to be little more than a shortcut for Alcibiades: "all I had to do was let him have his way with me, and he would teach me everything he knew" (217a). Alcibiades is not exactly trying hard! And *does* he let Socrates have "his way" with him? Apparently not—after learning that the Socratic way is dialectical, not sexual, he relates his frustration that they still didn't have sex and moves on to another topic. Socrates invited him to pursue philosophy together with him, and all he can do is stew.

Callard seems to be correct when diagnosing Alcibiades's "whole problem" as his belief that "his deepest, most fundamental desires, values, and concerns are misdirected" (25). Thus his shame. But that's *all* he has—this punitive attitude seems to be the whole of it. Socrates has produced in him an intellectual conviction that his way of life is bad, and he correspondingly feels shame, at least when he thinks about it, but Socrates does not seem to have produced in him any feel for the life of philosophy. Why doesn't Alcibiades pursue philosopy? He doesn't really want to. When Alcibiades says that Socrates's arguments are of the greatest importance for anyone who wants to become a truly good man (222a), he's like the Aristotelian akratic who can recite the proof but doesn't understand it, or like the person in Burnyeat who has learned that skiing is enjoyable in that he has "simply . . . acquired the information, regardless of personal experience" (Burnyeat 1980, p. 76).

One might think that Alcibiades really does want to pursue philosophy, which he says has bitten him like a snake in his soul (218a), but his very methods are so unphilosophical because he's so permanently mired in another view. In another context, Callard is ready to "concede . . . that without some grip on the value, aspiration threatens to devolve into what we might call flailing" (91); Sidney Carton *A Tale of Two Cities* is her example of someone who "cannot, as it were, envision himself becoming different with any concreteness" and who correspondingly "doesn't aspire" (92). Perhaps we ought to say the same thing about Alcibiades: his relationship is simply too punitive, on the one side, about his present desires, and too abstractly intellectual, on the other, about what he might come to desire.

But this is the state of affairs that obtains quite *generally* with Callard's aspirants, who tend to be ashamed that they aren't "getting it right" yet, while exhibiting no particular desires directed toward the objects the values they might come to have are concerned with: their characteristic relationship to the objects is a "struggle[] to sustain interest" (180). In a nutshell, it doesn't seem as if Alcibiades even has a partial grasp of the value of philosophy, just as it doesn't seem that Callard's prospective music lover has even a partial grasp of the value of music—no partial grasp, that is, in the way that someone coming to learn the pleasures of skiing by skiing partially gets the pleasures thereof as they actually ski. They have a fine grasp of the values as a matter of argument.

There's an interesting moment at the end of Alcibiades's speech. The *Complete Plato* renders it thus: "he has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you're in love with him yourself" (222b). This rendering obscures something in the line that picks up something Alcibiades had said earlier, that in his attempt to seduce Socrates he was acting as if *he* were the *erastēs* and Socrates the young boy. What he says is "οὗτος ἐξαπατῶν ὡς ἐραστὴς παιδικὰ μᾶλλον αὐτὸς καθίσταται ἀντ᾽ ἐραστοῦ", that is, he deceives them (Alcibiades and the other young men who crowd Socrates), acting as if he were lover, but makes himself the young boy instead of a lover—which they implicitly become. I remarked before that in Diotima's lesson to Socrates it's the *erastēs* who comes to see Beauty in itself; perhaps Socrates engages in this role-reversal intentionally, to lead his hangers-on down the path to wisdom, a seduction that appeals to eros on the road to philosophy. But it seems not to have taken with Alcibiades, whose love is doubtful at best: Socrates ribs him at the end, saying that (despite Alcibiades's attempts at seduction) he wants to be the *eroumenos* to Socrates and *erastēs* to Agathon.

Callard, as I mentioned, deems Alcibiades an irrational aspirant, because he supposedly pursues both philosophy and honor. I have attempted to register my doubts that he really is pursuing philosophy, that the esteem he feels for Socrates and the all too dismissable conviction he has that the life of honor is unworthy do

not combine to lead him to philosophy. Perhaps he is defective not as an aspirant but as a lover. Staying with Plato a little longer, let's consider how the lover in the *Phaedrus*, in Socrates's speech in praise of the lover there, gets onto the path that culminates in "the assigned regimen of philosophy" (*Phaedrus*, 256b). We have the Socratic metaphor of the charioteer and two horses, the nobler of whom is "a lover of honor with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip", the baser of whom is "companion to wild boasts and indecency . . . and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined" (253d–e). The great Socratic joke is that it's *this* horse, not so much "erotic" as downright lustful, that's necessary for the lover and beloved to begin their philosophical journey (254a–b). Of course the lover and beloved oughtn't ultimately indulge in its desired carnality, for the first-best outcome, but even if they do, "the prize they have won from the madness of love is considerable" (256d). Without that erotic element, though, "a non-lover's companionship . . . is diluted by human self-control; all it pays are cheap, human dividends" (256e). Alcibiades admittedly does not seem to be overmastered by the honor-loving horse, except insofar as shame, which Socrates does arouse in him, is an affect connected to honor (here perhaps distinct from the "honor" active in the concept of the "life of honor"). But he is at least as distant from the eroticism of the Socratic lover in the *Phaedrus*.

Alcibiades differs indeed from the aspirants Callard goes on to consider, simply because they succeed (or are on the road to succeeding) in achieving their professed aspirational goals, and he does not. But *structurally* they are the same. I'll close the consideration of Alcibiades with two diagnostic remarks that Callard makes, one pointing backwards toward eros, and one forward to her argument that being concerned with *oneself* is the fitting attitude for an aspirant to have. The first is this: "Alcibiades's practical irrationality consists in his culpable failure to aspire sufficiently" (31). Implicit in this remark, and more explicit in later pages, is the presumption that one's aspiration is to some extent under one's control—not merely the thoroughness with one pursues the aspiration, but the aspiration itself. (The failure she noted in part two, which I mentioned above, is intimately related

to this presumption.) As she goes on to say, "the reason Socrates didn't 'make' Alcibiades virtuous is that this is not something one person can do to another" (31). Neither can one person make another experience an erotic charge—though perhaps, as Alcibiades suggests, Socrates did also attempt such a seduction.

More to the point, neither can one person make *himself* have such an experience. The impetus comes from without. It is no coincidence that in all her narratives of aspiration, the beginnings of the process are always murky and underexplored. If she attended more to them, she would inevitably have to abandon the ideas that "aspiration" is a thing that an agent does under her own steam, and that the process of value-acquisition or (better) value-deepening is nearly as novel as she makes it out to be.

The second diagnostic remark is somewhat longer and will take us in something of a new direction.

1.2 Aspiration as self- or object-regarding

> Alcibiades' goals of self-improvement require that he fix his attention on the value of wisdom, on seeing *its* beauty. He is surprised to find that his attention is on Socrates, when *Alcibiades* should be the beloved. The aspiring parent is thinking about her (potential) children, the aspiring music-lover is thinking about the value of music, the aspiring doctor is thinking about the practice of medicine and her future patients, etc. These people are trying to acquire a desire not because something about them demands that they acquire it, but because they see (that they don't fully see) that there is something of value out there. (25–6)

Now—that second sentence is from Alcibiades's (unenlightened) perspective: it catches him off guard that he's focusing on Socrates, because he isn't used to that, in his self-centeredness. And what follows seems (mostly) commonsensical. Observe however this inconsistency in the list: the music-lover *in spe* is thinking about the *value* of music and not about music, but the almost-doctor and almost-parent are thinking about *patients* and *children*, directly, and not about the value of

treating or raising them. The joke here is, though, that by Callard's *own* lights, Alcibiades's perspective is the correct one: he ought to be focused on himself, not on Socrates or wisdom (cf. 212)! He ought to be focused, as he is, on reviling himself as he is and hoping to become a better person insofar as he comes to appreciate the good. Thus:

> [One] might think that aspiration ought to be directed, first and foremost, not at the fact that I will have a certain value but rather at the valuable object itself. Let me return to the case of the aspiring doctor. The objector I am imagining would insist that the aspiring doctor is directed at helping people with their medical problems rather than at discovering the value of helping people with their medical problems . . . what she is really "all about" is helping people, not changing herself. (35)

Callard will seek to refute this position (the one that, ten pages prior, she herself expressed, precisely with regard to the doctor): one really ought to be "all about" changing oneself and discovering for one's own benefit some value, which may as it happens involve external entities such as patients, children, friends, symphonies, an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife. Thus Alcibiades's focus on himself, which in his case is unaccompanied by earnest interest in the work of philosophy, as shown by his reaction to Socrates's invitation to symphilosophize, to speak anachronistically, is actually quite in order. He is the model for the canonical, successful aspirant, except that he lacks sticktoitiveness.

The argument against the idea that what the aspirant is "all about" is the *thing which the value they're acquiring concerns* is worth attending to for a few reasons. First, if it fails we can dispense with the idea that aspirants must be self-conscious about their aspiration as such. If it succeeds then aspiration has essential reference to the concept of "value", be it the value of music or the value of providing medical care or the value of friendship. If it fails then aspirants simply require, in each case, a relation to whatever the aspirant is interested in—this particular other person; perhaps even the concept of friendship may be dispensible. Second, the idea that aspirants *are* first and foremost "all about" changing themselves and acquiring

an intellectually construed value seems to license Callard's habit of minimizing or mystifying the question of how one actually gets started in an aspirational project. Finally, the actual argument Callard gives against the idea that an aspirant is concerned with the object of the value in question also seems to apply just as well to the idea that an aspirant is concerned with acquiring the value. (I suspect that *any* argument would have this wider applicability, not just the one she happens to give.) Consequently it either *must* fail or Callard's own position is endangered in turn.

Callard begins the argument by observing that the domain in question contains far more than the aspiring doctor can possibly have "hands-on experience" in: "preventative care, bedside manner, surgical precision" (*ibid.*), consulting, etc. The hopeful doctor is ignorant of the details of many, and may even be ignorant of the existence of some. Consequently, "the medical student cannot simply aim to realize the value of helping people, or some more specific value such as that of helping people make good medical decisions, because she does not have a firm grip on what she would be realizing" (36), which here seems to mean a firm grip either on what she would be *doing* to realize the value, or the specific ways the general value of being helpful in a health-related way manifests in a specifically modern-medical context. Thus, while she "does not want to deny that the aspiring doctor aims at the goal of helping people", she concludes that "aiming at this goal when one's knowledge of it is limited just is a matter of trying to learn what that goal amounts to . . . the only shape that her contact with the value can take is an educational one" (*ibid.*).

First, I'll focus on why this stretch of argument is unconvincing on its own; second, I'll argue that if it did succeed it would succeed too well.

Now, it's notable that the specific examples Callard gives seem perfectly comprehensible from the outside.[6] Wishing to guide, but not compel, a person who

[6]As they would have to be: since neither Callard nor her presumptive reader is a doctor, she must by her own lights be ignorant both of the characteristic activities of the doctor and of the characteristic values of doctoring, and be able to provide only relatively legible examples on pain of talking nonsense.

lacks specialist knowledge toward a good choice, with respect for their autonomy and sensitivity to their condition, is not something that arises solely in medicine. Certainly some practices do, though; surgical precision is found in surgery, and only in medicine are fine-needle aspirations performed. But is "you can't possibly be aiming at helping others medically—you don't even know what a fine-needle aspiration is, much less how to perform one" remotely cogent? As far as values go, doctors are far from having a monopoly on compassion.[7] And many young adults have had experiences of both giving and receiving medical care: applying a band-aid to a sibling, or helping care for a sick friend, or receiving such care oneself. The fact that the would-be doctor does not already know the ins and outs of doctoring does not mean that she's unfamiliar with caring for others.

As hinted at in note 6, this comprehensibility from outside the fully-fledged practice, in a narrative about coming into the practice, is not accidental.[8]. Since we are dealing with an intentionally undertaken transformation, it has to be something we can make sense of at least partially from outside. Even if the agent has a "proleptic reason", *we*, the onlookers, do not, and Callard is attempting to display *to us*. With more radical changes, as when one gradually goes from someone who does *not* want to be (as one conceives it) "boring", to someone satisfied with a

[7]Frankly I am skeptical that there are nearly as many unique values as Callard's account seems to imply. Just as one might doubt that there are new sins, only new technologies of sinning, one may doubt that new fields of endeavor give rise to anything beyond new areas in which the same old values may be exhibited. It seems to be true that only real gymnastics practitioners and aficionados can detect what's so thrilling about an excellent pommel horse routine. But grace, strength, dexterity and precision were not invented for the pommel horse; they're simply exhibited on it in fairly hermetic ways. One must be inducted into gymnastics appreciation to appreciate the way they're exhibited, but are those new *values*?

[8]In fact, Callard relies not quite explicitly on the idea that *what the values even are* are transparently legible from the outside when she later comes to deny that anyone seeking to become a mobster could be an aspirant, since (as anyone can tell!) there is *no* value such a person realizes (236ff). Why she feels the need to advance such a moralistic argument in the first place is unclear. It would seem that the only conception of value that she needs is the formalistic one concerned with what a person values and how that structures their world, on which there is no obvious problem with saying that *omertà* is a "value". In discussing the mafiosi, and for that matter the apparently objective, intrinsic value of music, she clearly has in mind "values" as those things which *actually are valuable*.

staid parental life (43f), it is not clear that it *is* rationally undertaken, or at least, "aspirational", inasmuch as the change does appear to happen to one.[9]

In any case. Callard has values so much on the mind that she in framing her response illicitly slips in the very first step into values-talk: the hopeful doctor "cannot simply aim to *realize the value of helping people*". That wasn't the opponent's charge, which was that she wishes to realize, quite simply, the helping of people. The diversion via value with which Callard begins her counterargument is thus question-begging. Now it is perfectly true, as even a minorly thoughtful premed would be aware, that one cannot *simply* practice medicine; one must learn a few things, first. This is a question of taking the necessary means to an end, and doesn't mean that what the student is primarily oriented toward, either in her self-conception or in any other way—what she's "all about", as Callard imagines her opponent putting it—is the education, rather than the helping which the education subserves. (It is in any case a question of education in medicine, not values.) And it may well be true, without any similar change in all-aboutness following from it, that as she is educated she *will* in fact gain new values which orient her. But that still does not mean that she is oriented *to the values*.

When Callard somewhat confusingly says that "aiming at [the goal of helping people] when one's knowledge of it is limited *just is* a matter of trying to learn what that goal amounts to" (*ibid.*, emphasis added), she is not entirely wrong—although the student is apt to have some idea what the goal is, she does not know what its realization actually involves—but she does not carry the day: that "just is" is in order if it means that that's all one's *immediate* task can be, but far too strong if it means anything more. (The same thing can be said about just about anything. You've had a *daube Provençal* at a restaurant and set yourself the goal of making it for yourself: well, what does *that* amount to? Hadn't you better learn that, first?)

[9] The potential change that *actually* seems relevant, and more related to the kind of change that Paul and Ullman-Margalit are concerned with, is that the person who studies medicine to help people medically will, through exposure to medical wealth, become a specialist more concerned with her income than with helping others. One may well *not* know what one is getting into, putting oneself into the path of money.

The learning is a necessary part of aiming at the goal. But it doesn't exhaust aiming at the goal. Callard presumably means that because the student has as yet no fully filled in understanding of what will lie beyond the education, she cannot be aiming for that at all and can *only* be aiming, so far, at the education, even though she educates herself with a view to what lies beyond; it is a curious presupposition of hers that one cannot aim for some end in any currently understood sense if one does not understand the end pretty exhaustively, and she does claim that the aspirant "*must* act in ignorance of what she is doing, since it is by such action that she comes to learn both the value and the nature of her activity" (219; cf 71). For now, suffice it to say about these arguments that even if the student's further end is formulable purely *de dicto* she at least *has* one: she wants to help others in some as yet unspecified yet still medical way.

In the end, the argument closing the introduction gives us no reason to believe that having only a partial grasp of the practice of medicine, or any other pursuit, means that the object of interest cannot be what one is, in the objector's terms, "all about", that one's conception of what one is doing cannot be "helping others" or "learning how to help others in order to help them" or "pursuing music" or "getting to know this person" or whatever. The concept of value may well simply be absent from the aspirant's practical thought.

What if it did, though? Well—the aspirant is *also* ignorant of the *values* of these things. This is a core claim of Callard's! If being ignorant of *the actual practice of medicine* meant that the aspirant couldn't be pursuing *the practice of medicine*, it is entirely unclear why her equal ignorance of *the value of medical practice* wouldn't mean that she couldn't be concerned with *coming to have that value*.[10] The argument would prove too much, if it proved anything at all.

Although she dispenses with this concern in a scant two pages, it is, I believe, quite important for what follows. For, as I have mentioned, the idea that the aspirant is focused primarily on herself, on self-consciously creating herself

[10] "She is in no better position to assess the value of having the preference for X than the value of X itself" (66).

in some new way, comports better with the curiously anhedonic, unerotic life of her aspirants than it would with one in which they were engaged in something outside themselves. And here already we see her customary emphasis on the aspirant's ignorance and downplaying of the aspirant's knowledge; since the knowledge is not complete it counts for nothing. This is that which renders them so often so alien. The intellectuality, however, also renders them more independent, more self-sufficient as neophyte aspirants; they seem freer to simply appreciate for themselves that there is a value which they do not yet fully inhabit or appreciate and set themselves the goal of coming to inhabit it. Callard will make much of the aspirant's supposed characteristic dependency on others in the process of aspiration, but the independence I mean here comes in earlier: they are not dependent on something's having happened to bring them awareness of some new value, which would be the true thing of interest—making "aspiration" either chimerical or philosophically uninteresting. It is the person with the belief that there's a value hereabouts but no particular desiderative grasp on the value, who pursues it despite their lack of interest, but *not* for extrinsic reasons, that sets a puzzle, and it is for this person's sake that "proleptic reasons" are introduced, lest *this* strange character be held irrational. But perhaps that would be no great loss.

2 Rationality, "partial grasp", "proleptic reasons"

In the first two proper chapters, Callard addresses the putatively puzzling rationality of the aspirant's behavior. I'll mostly be concerned with her arguments surrounding one example, but I think it's worth acknowledging explicitly something that has already been in the background a bit: the great diversity of examples of which Callard avails herself. They are all indeed supposed to have something in common, the agent's coming to appreciate a value which, at the outset of the process, they did not fully grasp. We have learning a language, learning to appreciate music, becoming an oenophile, becoming a doctor, making a friend, falling in love, learning Greek, becoming a parent. Are these really all the same phe-

nomenon? Some of them one can back out of much more easily. When discussing Ullman-Margalit and Paul, Callard focuses, as they do, on cases where one cannot really go back to the way one was. Having had a child, one *can* rid oneself of it, but . . . (Let us not forget too that *having a child* and *having the values characteristic of a parent* are quite different.) Parenthood isn't for you? Too bad: you're still a parent. Music class isn't for you? Dropping out may be a stain on your transcript, and you'll forever be someone who took the first few weeks of it the course, but it's not in the same league as having had a child. Too, these cases differ in how much experience, and hence how much of a "partial grasp", is available to the agent ahead of time. Sticking with the same contrast, Callard is completely correct to note that many trial experiences are available to the person considering a child (58–60). But those are experiences (babysitting, reading, talking to recent parents, to one's own parents, whatever they may be) which one can leave. Having a child isn't like babysitting, but moreso. One takes a qualitative leap, a new plunge, as Austin put it, and may well drown. (The suddenness of "plunge" is not misplaced: many attest to the first actual encounter with their newborn child being an *instantaneously* transformative experience. It's hard to make *this* out as a rational process!) On the other hand, while the fledgling music appreciator may end up liking music that she would never have imagined having the time of day for, and discarding music that she started off liking, and maybe even devoting much more of her time to music than she used to or ever thought she would, it seems much more plausible here that her state at the end *is* like her state at the beginning, at least if we allow that she starts off with a partial grasp of the interest of music, that she *has* had some initial experience that started her onto the path—except moreso. (This isn't to say that a musical experience couldn't *radically* change someone's life, and set them off on an entirely new path, and somewhat suddenly: consider Paul Pena, the blind blues singer and guitarist whose encounter with Tuvan music led him to teach himself throat singing and Tuvan and to eventually visit Tuva.[11] It

[11] Pena's truly remarkable feats of self-instruction, incidentally, challenge Callard's assertions of the radical dependence of aspirants, specifically, on others.

is only to say that it needn't do that; certainly, it needn't be the further instruction that does that: whatever moved the student to take the class may have done so. Again, this is presuming that she doesn't take the class purely out of an intellectual appreciation for music.)

I won't thematize this variety of phenomena in what follows all that much, though I will have recourse occasionally to her other examples. (I'll return to it a bit in §3.1.) But I think it is worth bearing in mind, as different examples are used to illustrate or motivate different claims, whether the illustration or the claim really applies to *all* the cases Callard compasses under the banner "aspiration".

2.1 Partiality *versus* prolepsis

I already noted, at the close of §1.1, that the beginnings of an aspirational course of action are troublesome for Callard. There it was because the motive for the agent's pursuit of some particular new thing seemed to come from without, and Callard's agents are too self-enclosed for that. There's another dimension in which beginnings seem to spell trouble for her, having to do with the rationality she desires for the process.

One can't of course *decide* to aspire in such-and-such a direction, in the conventional understanding of making a decision—or else it will seem as if the whole thing is governed by a familiar rationality, while she wishes it to be novel. But neither can one merely *recognize in oneself* an already underway inchoate process and go along with it—or else it will seem as if the whole thing is less rational than desired. Callard is alive to this and embraces the paradox:

> Before we ever have to make a choice such as whether to get married, attend college or graduate school, emigrate from our country, or have children, we undergo extensive education on the value of these activities [from others][12] . . . Aspiration begins before the aspirant is in a position to exercise agential control over her relation to the value:

[12] Ask yourself if this is true of *all* aspirants, and all the things they aspire about!

> it gets started, but the aspirant herself isn't the one starts it.[13] This is not only because she may be too young to do so, but also because . . . a person would not have any reason to bring herself into contact with something for which she had *no* preference, appreciation, value, etc. (64)

For example, before someone actually does decide to become a mother "the preferences that [she] is poised to acquire are not yet fully her own; nor are they totally alien to her" (65). She has a partial grasp, or since the talk here concerns preferences (rather than a grasp of values, or an appreciation of whatever the values or preferences would concern) perhaps one should say that she somewhat prefers.

The difficulty here is that the partial grasp cannot be so strong that she can hoist herself up with it just as if she had a full grasp. But neither can it be so weak that she has no grip at all. Callard thinks the partiality is reflected in a special kind of agential fact:

> In order for this decision to be rational, it must take in not only the preferences she currently has, but those she seeks to acquire. . . . These are genuinely different categories: facts about where you are headed are not expressible as facts about where you currently are. The fact that she is reaching for a new preference cannot be recast as a current preference . . .
>
> [The aspirant] does her best to make the decision in the way that she would make it if it were feasible to postpone it until she were fully acquainted with the value in question . . . This kind of reasoning will be imperfect, since the person engaging in it is doing her best to adopt a point of view that is not (yet) her own . . . the imperfection . . . is not a matter of irrationality, but rather of a distinctive kind of rationality that I call "proleptic" (66-7)

The difficulty Callard has capturing "facts about where you are headed" can be seen from an odd slippage in that first paragraph: does the rationality depend on the fact that the agent *is reaching for a preference*, something that she is doing

[13] One should bear this section in mind when reading the account of intrinsic conflict in chapter 3.

now? Or does it depend on *the preferences she seeks*—not the seeking thereof but the preferences themselves, which she simply does not have yet? Are "facts about where you are headed" concerned with your heading there, your motion and in-betweennness, or are they concerned with the location that lies in wait, just as static as the facts about where you are, but elsewhere situated? Both possibilities are mentioned, and encapsulate the distinction between partiality and the concept of prolepsis, which, though it's introduced to explain partiality, is really something quite different. A partial grasp, however else one characterizes it, is something I have now; prolepsis, an empty placeholder waiting to be filled in by a future full grasp.

Although Callard does pay lip service to the possibility of acting on presently articulable if not quite fully correct reasons (72), her preference is for prolepsis in place of partiality. She refers to the agent's reason as having "two faces" (73), proximal and distal. The proximal face is a set of reasons anyone might have, which fit in fine with the agent's existing valuational schema: in the case of the aspirational student in a music appreciation class, who needs a reason to do her assigned listening, this might be her desire for a good grade. (What about her reasons for being in the class at all? Hold that thought!) The distal reasons are those that the aspirant *will* have when she fully inhabits that values she is as yet still seeking. (Stemming from the actual value of music, in the student's case.) One may fairly describe the proximal and distal faces—really proximal and distal *reasons*; these aren't two faces of the same singular reason—as the reason the agent has and the reason the agent does not have. At *no* point does Callard explain the "incomplete and anticipatory" (87–8) partial grasp characteristic of an aspirant as anything other than an oscillation between or mysterious conjunction of a full grasp of a reason had in the present (of the wrong kind to do aspirational work: this fully-grasped reason is one that comes from her presently fully held values and serves mostly as a motivational crutch when, inevitably, the reason she does not have seems uncompelling) and no grasp of a reason that one might have in the future. It is not too out of line to say that Callard actually has no vocabulary

for discussing facts about *heading somewhere*: she can only discuss facts about where you are now, and facts about where you will be; she understands stasis but not motion.[14] Light does not dawn gradually over Callard's world, which grows to full illumination instead by an electric light rapidly switched between on and off.

This characterization of "partial grasp" as oscillating between no current grasp and a full future grasp may seem tendentious, but as mentioned it fits well with the explication of partiality by prolepsis, and with her emphasis on the aspirant's supposed ignorance: she "*must* act in ignorance of what she is doing" (219); "those seeking to acquire the knowledge [of value] cannot take themselves to know why they are doing so" (71) and will not be able to answer the Anscombean question "why?" (70). Cf 217: "If the agent's reason is to be the object of her practical knowledge . . . she must fully grasp it in advance of the action's coming to an end. And this is just what the aspirant cannot do. She does not know, or even take herself to know, what she is doing. She is dissatisfied by her own answer to the 'why?' question." First of all—it is not the agent's reason that an Ascombean takes to be the object of practical knowledge. *Practical* knowledge concerns what the agent is *doing*, not her reason for doing it.[15] Regardless of this terminological failing, though, this would only make sense if the reason for which the agent *is now acting* could *only* be a reason that reflected a full grasp of whatever end she is in fact still merely *coming* to grasp. Callard would count as providing an adequate answer to the question "why are you doing taking this music appreciation class?" nothing less than "I am taking this class because the value of music is such-and-such". I

[14] It may be a bit of a reach to connect her resolute devotion to the static to her seeming failure to make room for desire and eros, the motive/motile attitudes *par excellence*, but let's at least suggest it.

A similar difficulty with the mixed or impure mars her presentation of the "bitter wife" in chapter four. Despite her warning that we mustn't conceive of her conflict as one of "diachronic vacillation" (123), and her (surely accurate!) assertion that her affects are "love marred by spite, or spite inflected by love" (124), she cannot really conceive of these phenomena as *sui generis*; instead, it is something like "nine units of pure love for every one of pure spite", the two not otherwise interacting to produce a single affect, spiteful love. Her further discussions of the bitter wife thus unsurprisingly seem to describe vacillation.

[15] For all that, the agent's self-knowledge of her reason is not straightforwardly theoretical knowledge if the model for that is a reality that exists independently of her knowledge, either.

can't know why I'm taking the music appreciation class because the correct (?) answer to that question essentially involves reference to the actual value of music, which I still only coming to appreciate. There is actually no role for partiality here. The agent is seemingly barred from conceiving of her action as, precisely, learning, or satisfying an interest, or anything else that isn't the reiteration of something she has already thoroughly mastered.

Callard does wish to say that "you can act rationally even if your antecedent conception of the good for the sake of which you act is not quite on target—and you know that . . . you do not demand that the end result of your agency match a preconceived schema, for you hope, eventually, to get more out of what you are doing than you can yet conceive of" (72), but she thinks that this rationality waits on the sort of account she is providing. But isn't this hope simply part of the reason for which you act, of which you are aware? Isn't this antecedent conception *enough* for her to explain to herself what she's doing, and "I hope to get more out of what I'm doing than I'm presently aware of" quite in order as a reason for taking (say) taking a class, or spending time with someone, absent the machinery of Callardian aspiration? Callard seems to think she has stumbled on something paradoxical here, but it's hard to figure how.

As will have been noted from the bifurcated sources of citations, this topic is of interest to Callard twice over. In the later sections, embedded in a discussion of moral responsibility, she is concerned to demonstrate that the agency of the aspirant conforms to no hitherto existing model contemplated by action theorists, and the ignorance and as it were self-estrangement of the aspirant is meant to show this, in a none too successful flirtation with the idea of action explanation. In the earlier sections, she is introducing the idea of proleptic reasons, and the idea that the agent doesn't know what she's doing or why she's doing it is meant to indicate the necessity of a specifically *proleptic*, not partial, grasp, an empty spot that will be filled in later with a reason that will retroactively make the whole affair have been rational all along. Concomitant with the agent's ignorance is a curious lack of natively felt motivation, which forms part of her brief against internalism (about

which more in §4): "in the case of the good [music] student . . . *all* of these desires bottom out in a valuation of music that is quite weak"; too weak, in fact, to get any internalistically respectable process up and running (99; emphasis in the original). But why, really, should we think that the good music student knows so little about her interest in music, or has only tepid desires about it?

2.1.1 Why might the music student take her class?

As mentioned, Callard has recourse at several points to a student in a music appreciation class, who is taking it in order to—well, how precisely to characterize her is somewhat in question; on Callard's view, the student doesn't quite know why she's taking it, and in Callard's description it is fairly unclear why she either began to take it or remains in it. This unclarity is, admittedly, somewhat fitting if Callard is right about the student herself, since then her actions *should* be rationally (as opposed to diagnostically) mysterious to us. But let us consider a stripped-down version of the case: a woman possessed of a nascent interest in music is taking a music appreciation class. Her interest occasionally flags, but she remains in the course and does the work. The class doesn't serve some further goal of hers and she isn't doing the work simply to get a good grade. Why is she taking the class in the first place? It's natural to suppose that she "[has] an inkling of interest [and is] moved to look further" (221). She "sense[s] that [her] preconceptions and assumptions may not be right", but also that "there are others who have a better grasp" (*ibid.*), and what's more, they can impart it. If we find that talking of "eros" induces squirms in this context, we may speak more Aristotelianly than Platonically of the student's partial grasp as a matter of her having (some of) "the that" but not yet (any of) "the because" (though we should let Burnyeat remind us here too that the having of "the that" is connected to a capacity for pleasure Burnyeat 1980, p 78).

How might she have gotten this inkling? Obviously there are many possibilities: perhaps she has seen admired peers or respected others absorbed attentively in listening, and gotten the idea "there's something there that *they* get that *I* don't",

and been moved to investigate. Perhaps music is of middling importance to her when this happens, but she doesn't want to let this thing, seemingly so valuable to these others, entirely pass her by. Of course there's innumerable things from which some group of others derive meaning that she *doesn't* pursue, so presumably there's some further reason why *this* one actually does get its hooks in her—why she's *moved*. (Recall from the encounter with eros, Socratic and otherwise, that the lover is affected from without, and does not love *sua sponte*.) But this being-moved need not be anything she can name or trace to its source for it to actually motivate her.

She may have had an experience of listening and feeling absorbed, or moved, or satisfied as the piece progressed, and realized on the basis of this experience that there was more than she'd previously been aware of. She may have had an experience of listening and being baffled, put off, and intrigued all at once—this in fact corresponds pretty well to my first introduction of modern free improvisation. Perhaps she reads some criticism afterwards and notices that critic seems to have *heard more* than she heard—not heard something else, but to have something to say that captures her experience and more. Perhaps she could learn to articulate her experiences like that, and thereby *have deeper experiences*, too.

Why is she taking the class? Well—haven't we answered that question already? To deepen her understanding, to learn what's going on here, to see if she can't experience what it seems these others experience or there is to be experienced. To broaden her vocabulary for what she *does* like about music, or what did move her in that one experience. What's dissatisfying about these answers? Callard asserts that such an agent as we've imagined *must* find her answers to the "why?" question unsatisfying, must be a puzzle, somewhat, to herself, because—because she's somehow acting on a reason she *doesn't* have, but which her future self would have, if it were her future self acting now. But we could also simply say that she anticipates having an ability in the future that she doesn't yet have, one she can sort of limn but (obviously) doesn't fully know yet, and she's acting *to get it*, just as one might observe that skiing seems to be fun, and that doing juvenile pre-skiing

activities *is* fun, and decide to enroll in ski classes. She is, in a word, interested in music. "You don't really know what you hope to get out of this class"—that may be more or less true *de re*; one doesn't *fully* know the identity of the thing. But one has more than a merely verbal fancy to go by, if we give the idea of a partial grasp any credence at all, and this state of affairs anyway need not be unsatisfying, or leave the agent puzzled.

What does she do when she can't quite summon enthusiasm for her homework? One possibility, which I think does not prejudice her status as an "aspirant", is that she decides that actually this *isn't* for her, that she gave it a good try and learned that she's actually *not* that interested in music, valuable though she may continue to believe, in some abstract way, it is. If that isn't the outcome, though, to me the most plausible course of action is for her to cast herself back into the frame of mind that made her want to take the course: to remind herself why she's there . Other adjuncts may be called in in some cases (I just have to do this once more tonight; I'll do it then I'll reward myself, etc), but there's no reason to resort to such aids if she cannot recall the point of her presence at all anymore. Inklings must be rekindled. And they must be supported: one doesn't love the form of the good right away, but climbs a ladder, and a teacher who was more supportive than the disciplinarian Callard imagines would try to provide steps of increasing comprehension along the way.

Now, I think this is a plausible picture of someone who has what could fairly be called a "partial grasp" of the value of music, and who is engaged in a project of strengthening that grasp, in a way that doesn't subserve an end that preëxisted her awakening to music. I do not, however, think this person's actions at any stage must be mysterious to her, nor do I think that in explaining the partiality of her grasp, or her self-understanding, we need have recourse to a notion of prolepsis. True, she wants to be somewhere she isn't yet, and she doesn't have a fully filled-in notion of what being there will be like. When she gets there, she may look back on her early efforts, and her early imagination of where she was going, with bemusement. But it is precisely because she *does* have a partial grasp that she can orient herself in

her project at each point in its pursuit, with reference to what she grasps *then*.

We can imagine that at any given moment the student could explain herself in something like one of following ways:

1. Music interests me—I'm still new but there's *something* appealing to me

2. I want to learn more about this topic; ever since hearing [whatever] I've been curious about it.

3. Such and such group of people seem to be getting way more from music than I do: I like it fine, but I can tell there's something more to like about it than I do.

These are reasons of education and development, which is entirely appropriate for someone who is cognizant of herself as needing an education. Thus they are *not* approximations of "the reason that she will act on once her pursuit is successful" (88), one of the ways Callard describes proleptic reasons, nor should they be: they are reasons of someone who is going somewhere, not someone who has arrived. When the student is simply listening to music and is called on to justify *that*, her reason—recall, she is already interested in, and takes some kind of pleasure in, music—perhaps is a version of what her reason for listening to music will be later. But what's proleptic about this? There need be nothing "inadequate" (88) about it; it fully suffices to move her and to explain her action to her. It just isn't the reason of a past master of music-listening. To be sure, the student may well also be cognizant that the reason she can produce *now* for this bout of listening could and hopefully will be replaced by a fuller reason, and she is moved to get herself to a position where she can be moved by and articulate that fuller reason. But that doesn't impugn the reason she's acting on now. Callard introduces as an expression of the paradox that "transformative pursuits . . . require us to act on reasons that reflect a grasp of the value we are working so hard and so long to come into contact with" (76). But we *are* in contact with it. What else could a partial *grasp* be?

2.1.2 Why does the music student take her class, according to Callard?

The preceding section described a non-textual version of the music student, one who actually is interested in music and feels a pull to learn more. And we even had a little quotation from Callard that seems to support such a description, making her out to be an aspirant. However, despite that quotation, that description does *not* correspond to Callard's actual discussion of the student. Simply put, despite her gestures toward the idea that an aspirant is interested in the thing their aspiration deals with, Callard's paradigmatic aspirant is—as we might have guessed from §1.2—purely intellectual, someone who "believes music is valuable but doesn't enjoy music, or doesn't enjoy it very much" (100). Thence derives the peculiar psychology of Callard's music student.

She isn't so much interested in music as in reproaching herself for not appreciating it aright, and resorts to various tricks and inducements to get herself to sit through the performances in which she takes no pleasure.[16] Even the teacher, as Callard imagines her, is more a metastasis of the student's judgmental superego than someone attempting to help along her class, and the student seems to have *no* inkling of interest and isn't moved to look further *by music* but by her perception of herself as flawed. Just as Alcibiades, on my reading, merely has an intellectual conviction that philosophy is good, but feels no erotic pull to it, Callard's student believes that music is good, and feels guilty about her "defective appreciation of its value, since full appreciation would presuppose enjoyment" (101), but doesn't actually have any interest in music itself. She simply feels bad about not appreciating some value that she believes is out there—but for all she cares, it could just as well be philately or snail-racing.[17]

[16] She promises herself chocolate, she imagines herself "making a dramatic entrance in a concert hall" (98), or she gives herself some other treat, etc. "Since [she] find[s] no enjoyment in [music], the only way to get [her] to behave properly is through fear of punishment" or another external inducement (Burnyeat 1980, p 79).

[17] Manne 2023 noted on her substack that Callard's examples are all fairly tony. Perhaps this is the explanation: since Callard's aspirants are essentially motivated by *amour-propre* or vanity, they *would* tend to pursue things esteemed by society. In this light it's amusing that the term she opposes to aspiration is "ambition".

I have no interest in denying that people *do* pursue projects on the basis of this sort of consideration. I am quite certain that this happens, and I myself have done it, though at least some the time when I've done it I have, at some point in the process, had a realization that called the whole thing off: "wait a minute—I don't care about any of this!". Perhaps others have had more luck. I cannot, however, convince myself that this sort of thing is characteristic of "a large swath of human agency" (73) and I would not be overly fussed if it proved impossible to make it out as rational. Surely one can Munchhausen oneself from an irrational beginning to a point at which persistence has become rational, because one actually has engendered in oneself a desire that wasn't there at first—but that can't be what Callard is after. And perhaps sometimes a dramatic arational experience, or long-running arational process, lands one in a state in which pursuing some end or making some resolution is rational—but that too (though it is suspiciously similar to her "solution" to the problem posed by intrinsic conflict) can't really be what she's after.

The fact that Callard's musical aspirant *doesn't* really want to listen to music explains the fact that she can't motivate herself to do so by reminding herself of her interest in music. It explains, also, why her version of the aspiring music student, when faced by a hurdle, can't even articulate she wants to clear it (231), if in fact she does. And it explains why Callard writes as if the student doesn't already grasp *even partially* the value of music—because her version of the student *doesn't*. It explains why the aspirant for Callard finds the reason that she actually has inadequate, and why the "double face" of a proleptic reason seems only to be capable of explication as an oscillation between a reason that the agent can appreciate in terms of antecedent desires (to get a good grade) and a reason that seems to herself and others (97) to float entirely outside of her psychology.[18]

[18]Now, Callard is no internalist, so she may laugh this off. But her theorization of aspiration is supposed to be a mark against internalism, ie to provide a basis for rejecting it, not, as far as I can tell, to depend on not being an internalist already. With respect to internalism generally, she seems to endorse an argument from Julia Markovits against the idea that even for the internalist to be a reason for an agent requires being able to motivate the agent; unfortunately, the argument (as she summarizes it, at least) turns on a risible non sequitur.

Nevertheless, we can find a fairly straightforward reason for why *this* version of the student is taking the class. And it, too, seems not to require prolepsis, or to trouble the internalist. She's taking the class because she feels guilty that she doesn't appreciate music. She wants to want to like music more because she believes—here and now, not in the future—there's something good there which she *ought* to appreciate, despite having no particular interest in it. Callard says that "the rational ground of her higher-order desires—the reason she has them—is once again the intrinsic value of music" (99), but this is a somewhat mystical rational ground, since (as Callard would acknowledge) the student has no inkling of the intrinsic value of music. We are free to disregard such time-traveling obfuscation and deny that "*all* these desires bottom out in a valuation of music that is quite weak" (*ibid.*, emphasis in original), since on Callard's own telling there is a felt dissatisfaction with oneself that is strong. Callard here also elides the distinction between the strength of the student's valuation of music, or her desire to learn more about it, and the student's being well or "ill placed to appreciate" (*ibid.*) the value of music. "Appreciation" has an unfortunately ambiguous status in which it both can denote a state of feeling appreciative of something, and also can be a success term in which it stands for the *proper* appreciation of something. The student of §2.1.1 may not *properly* appreciate music yet (though this also strikes me as debatable), but that doesn't mean she can't be, let us say, quite enthusiastic about it. She also simply does not consider that the ground of "a desire to see what all the fuss is about, music-wise" (*ibid.*) could be the pleasure one has already experienced, music-wise, albeit through a glass darkly. Because—to reiterate—her version of the music student has no stake in music, only in herself.

(To Callard having a stake only in oneself is appropriate:

> Aspirants *are* more self-oriented than they should be!
> Because an aspirant always has an eye on her own progress—she is engaged with trying to become someone—she cannot be fully, prop-

In any case, the arguments in these pages concern the agent's own self-understanding, so the facts of her psychology and the ability of the considerations adduced to affect them seem unavoidable relevant, regardless of one's feelings about internalism generally.

> erly responsive to, e.g., music or the feelings of others. The would-be music-lover's attention must be divided: some of it can be directed at the music, but some of it must be set aside for considering the question of how much attention she is paying to the music ("Am I letting myself get distracted?"). (212)

About this I can only say two things. The first is that for Callard *befriending someone* is a case of aspiration (74). Does she really wish to say that when making friends, one cannot, and indeed should not, be responsive to the feelings of others? To the person one is becoming friends with? The second is simply that this is a case where Callard's description of how things are rings completely false. I do not think that's how it is when one is deepening one's engagement with something in which one's interest is aroused and I cannot imagine why Callard thinks it is.)

Even when Callard seems to be on the verge of talking about an aspirant like the one described in §2.1.1, she pulls back and transforms her into the person of the present section. She describes someone who is "suddenly, experientially confronted with a value [his] prior valuations did not . . . anticipate" (208), for instance a musical performance or the gastronomic experiences available in Osaka, which gives him "an inkling of a value he does not fully grasp . . . How could he, if the value corresponds to the intrinsic pleasures of the fine discriminations he is not yet capable of making?" (209). He "partly appreciate[s]" (*ibid.*) this value. But rather than seeking to *deepen his appreciation*, he seeks to *become someone who has a deeper appreciation*, a typically self-involved twist. And although she just said that such a person has a partial, inchoate grasp of the value, her description of their behavior indicates that they . . . don't:

> The aspirant, by contrast, is moved by the value of classical music to seek the approval of her music teacher, to commit to meeting a friend at the symphony so that she will not back out and see a movie instead, to pinch herself to stay awake throughout the piece, etc. If we want to characterize the aspirant as guided by the value of classical music, we will have to allow that she is guided in a non-paradigmatic way. (210)

Perhaps the aspirant does appreciate non-paradigmatically. (On the one hand, she cannot yet make those fine discriminations. On the other, many a past master has described their ongoing relationship to their field of pursuit as one of continual deepening. The aspirant may well practice their art *paradigmatically* but not particularly *well*.) But here, where Callard seems to be evincing her partial grasp of the idea that one becomes a good kithara player by playing the kithara well, the aspirant appears not to appreciate at all. It isn't a matter of not making the fine discriminations or having a developed critical vocabulary, it's a matter of having to tempt oneself by externalities. Seeking the approval of one's music-appreciation teacher is not a mode of appreciating music, not even a non-paradigmatic one.

2.2 A diagnosis of the preceding

For what *structural* reason might Callard so often find herself in the position of characterizing the very person she credits with an "inkling" or "partial grasp" of (the value of) some activity or practice as having, in fact, a merely intellectual relationship to it, and of being primarily concerned with his or her own situation with respect to it? I mentioned before (at the close of §1.1) that her narratives tend to elide the beginnings of the aspirational process, and these facts are not unrelated. For the beginning is something of an embarrassment to her more developed narratives and her theorizations thereof, and while she has the honesty to acknowledge that one may be led on by interest (231; cf 208f), that in many cases the process of aspiration is explicitly educational (eg, 198),[19] and perhaps most remarkably that her analysis of aspiration as a rational process directed by the agent really always comes too late ("aspiration begins before the aspirant is in a position to exercise agential control over her relation to the value" (64)), she says same context that the aspirant's "decision" must be "rational" and that this rationality is what her account seeks to redeem (66), and, in general, these allowances are surrounded by a context which immediately downplays or negates them in favor of the agent's

[19]Perhaps when one is making a friend one is learning about the other person. But the other person isn't *teaching* one.

ignorance and mere ability to name a value they have had no contact with.

It is *only thus* that the air of paradox develops which motivates the idea that an entirely novel phenomenon lurks hereabouts. Should one focus on the early experiential encounter, the thing that really gets the process going, and what might be downstream of it, then many of the apparent puzzles apparently dissolve. Why is the aspirant's psychology too weak to suffice for an internalist account? Because she has been rendered too intellectual, too radically independent of her life in a world in which she occasionally does encounter things that affect her despite her not having antecedently had a yen for them. What does it mean to be open to new experiences, susceptible to new pleasures? For when one focuses on the chancy dependency of our agential and desiderative lives on what we happen to come into contact with, *this* seems to be the phenomenon of interest, and the question of whether there is rationality at work in our receptivity to novelty—like the question of the rationality at work in our education as children—to be one worth pursuing. Callard, however, needs to suppress this question in order to ask her own, resulting in the curious bifurcation of her text between the short episodes in which she acknowledges that an aspirant, even in her sense, must be starting from *some* grasp of whatever has captured them, which lull us into the sense that she is describing a recognizable phenomenon which we ought to call rational, and her analyses in which that grasp has no role to play whatsoever, which, when examined in themselves, are so puzzling one is tempted to diagnose the agents as really up to something else entirely.

Callard occasionally contrasts the aspirant with the merely "ambitious" person, whose large-scale project fits comfortably within their existing values. One of her themes is that aspirants exhibit a characteristic dependency on others, which ambitious people need not display:

> While the ambitious person may receive assistance from others in achieving his goal, the aspirant needs others to help her with the project of grasping her goal. The ambitious person may, of course, also be ignorant: she may not know how to acquire some particular means to her end or how to jump over some hurdle standing between

> herself and success. The ambitious person's ignorance is, however, circumscribed by her knowledge: she knows why she wants to get past that hurdle, even if she can't figure out how to clear it. The aspirant's ignorance, by contrast, runs all the way down. (231)

The ambitious person may need help accomplishing their goal (becoming a successful academic (228), talking plausibly about wine); the aspirational person is said to need help "grasping her goal" (231). The ambitious person may encounter hurdles but at least knows why she wants to clear them; the aspirational person doesn't even know that (*ibid.*). Each of these points requires scrutiny.

About the second, the reader can presumably predict what I will say at this point: this *absolute* ignorance makes sense only if the aspirant's "partial grasp" is no grasp. The aspirant may well not be able to justify their efforts *in terms of* the reason they might be able to offer when they have fully grasped the thing they're trying to learn; she may not, for instance, be able to refer to the wonderful world of fine discriminations between vintages she will only later be able to make and the delights such discrimination affords. It will be clear from my reconstruction of the music student that I see no problem for her in explaining why she wishes to overcome setbacks.[20] What's remarkable is that in the very same paragraph that Callard says the aspirant is completely ignorant of why she should persist after a setback, she also describes the aspirant as "being moved to look further" (*ibid.*).

About the first, this may well be a difference between ambition and aspiration properly understood. Does the merely ambitious oenologist or grad student have to submit themselves to the assessment of others? Surely yes. Must they in this process be getting clearer about what's so interesting about wine, or wisdom; is their interest in these topics necessarily deepening? (The involvement of others, here, is quite inessential.) Maybe so, maybe not; the mark of the ambitious person is that they don't really *care* about the thing they're pursuing. They may come to be better acquainted with it willy-nilly, but the *point* is to achieve some other, already

[20]This is not to suggest that she should never have moments of doubt, to be clear, and to wonder things like "why am I even doing this?". But I also don't see any reason to think the ambitious person would be impervious to such doubts.

understood, goal.[21] This is, at least, a difference between the ambitious person and the reconstructed aspirant from §2.1.1, who does care about music, and, as I've said, should be able to answer the question why she is doing what she's doing just fine.[22] (Recall that aspiration is supposed to make trouble for the Anscombean picture of action-explanation.) But the mark of Callard's aspirant is that she *also* doesn't care particularly much about the practice or activity characteristic of her aspiration, nor is she particularly "moved" by it (this is how she intends to make trouble for the internalist, 99–100); she cares about perfecting her capacity for valuation, which she feels to be defective in some way. Now, doing this will require learning about music (or whatever). But music doesn't really interest her nearly as much as she herself does.

Can *this* person answer the "why?" question satisfactorily? I think she still can, actually, if she's clear about her motivations—why is she taking this class? Something about *amour-propre*, perhaps, or dissatisfaction with her own failure to appreciate something she's convinced is worth appreciating. (Such an answer may well be disenchanting.) Since her basic orientation is to herself, the right answers to the question make reference to herself, not to music, toward which she is indifferent. She is just as much a striver as the ambitious person, but she's a moral striver. "The young person there spoken of [in NE §10.9] as a true lover of what is noble is not simply someone with a generalized desire to do whatever should turn out to be noble" (Burnyeat 1980, p 78), but *this* person *does* have that generalized desire, or so it seems.

If she cannot face up to this not very flattering motivation, though, *then* she will likely have trouble getting her accounts in order. But precisely to this extent

[21] Actually, it seems conceptually possible to be ambitious with respect to one thing in pursuit of something *not* still fully understood, ambition subserving aspiration.

[22] In the interest of exactitude: sometimes one does practice exercises whose point is not clear. The protagonist of *The Karate Kid* (Avildsen, 1984) could not give himself a very satisfying answer to the question "why am I waxing Mr Miyagi's car?", certainly not one that related it to martial arts. He did simply have to accept that his teacher knew something and that it hung together somehow. There's nothing essential to aspiration here, as far as I can tell, though, and I take it that Callard means the question to pertain to something more like "why am I learning karate?" than "why am I doing this thing whose contribution to learning karate is mysterious?".

we may wonder if she's acting fully rationally.

3 Two brief notes on ignorance

3.1 On respecting the problem

I've taken the phrase "respecting the problem" from the economist and writer on cybernetics Dan Davies, who's used it to warn about the dangers of abstracting from business case studies (perhaps a more scholarly exemplar would have been Jonathan Z. Smith, who emphasized difference over similarity): in each case one should begin by looking not at what makes this problem seem like another problem one knows about, but at the instant problem in its specificity: what makes it *unlike* the other ones? Perhaps nothing much! But one should look and see. One of Callard's examples of the paradox of pursuing an end one won't appreciate until it has been achieved illustrates the dangers of not looking rather drastically:

> Everyone goes to college "to become educated," but until I am educated I do not really know what an education is or why it is important. I may say I am studying chemistry in order to understand the "structure of matter," but only a scientist understands what it means for matter to have structure (or, indeed, what matter really is). For the rest of us, that phrase is likely to be backed by little more than an image of a tinker-toy "structure" to which a mental label such as "molecule" is affixed. (75)

(Cf: "We go to college for the education college will itself teach us to appreciate", 209.)

Let us set aside as perhaps intended excusable ignorance on the part of the student the fact that they ought, if they want to learn about the structure of matter, study physics, not chemistry.[23] Consider instead the fact that even the most

[23]On the other hand, when I brought this up on Facebook, I received this note in reply from a physicist: "I remember when I took quantum field theory, wondering when we were going to get away from the simplified toy models of how things worked and talk about the real meat, and

advanced scholars employ naïve tactics of the sort Callard pooh-poohs, as is illustrated in figure 1, a slide from a course taught by Geoff Hinton.

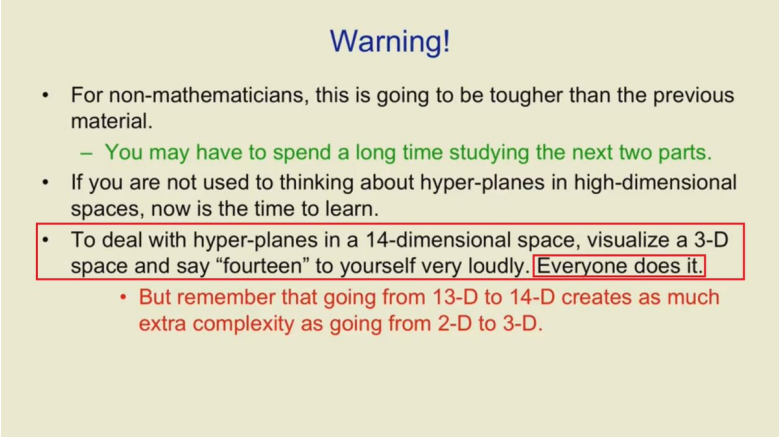

Figure 1: Everyone does it.

Hinton is not a chemist and is not discussing chemistry, but the point stands that one should not be overhasty to dismiss either the prevalence or the suitability of such makeshifts. And indeed the ball-and-stick model is perfectly chemically respectable and rather strikingly similar to tinker-toys. By failing to consider what she is actually talking about, Callard has produced an example which is supposed to illustrate her aspirant's necessary ignorance but which in fact portrays them as pretty much right on target and well prepared. This may seem like a silly little gotcha, but I think it's indicative of a tendency to be fast and loose with the variety of examples employed to at different times to make different points.

Something specific to aspiration is supposed to be in view here. But acting according to an "antecedent conception" which you know is "not quite on target" (72), is hardly limited to aspirational, chemical, or educational contexts. I wish to try liver and onions, but I haven't ever had liver before, so I don't know, by Callard's standards, what I *really* want. This is true even if I'm acting for the sake of my firmly established yen for culinary novelty, and has other structural similarities

eventually realizing that all anyone really had were the toy approximations and nobody in the world knew what the real meat was" (Matt McIrvin, personal communication).

with the ignorance Callard describes: for instance, that it is by eating liver and onions, and learning from those who know about liver and onions, that I will learn to appreciate, and discriminate among different versions of, liver and onions. I eat liver for the experiences eating liver will itself teach me to appreciate. (The ghost of Aristotle floats before my eyes.) Again, this is true even if my broader motivation is entirely attributable to a stable set of exploratory culinary values.

Someone who wishes to learn something, or to do something new, of course does not yet have the knowledge, or has not yet had the experience, they wish to have. In some cases—as Callard herself is at pains to point out, when discussing having a child—they can nevertheless point to some familiarity with allied realms. Thus in §1.2 I observed that many of those not trained in medicine nevertheless have some experience with being cared for or caring for others; many people who go to college in order to get an education have already had some education, even if they cannot yet fully articulate the role a liberal education is to play in the life of an ἄνθρωπος καί πολίτης. No doubt the young student *could* come to learn through their education what the good of an education *really* is. (Like life, education is only understood backwards.) But Callard's correct insistence that one can aim at an end despite having only an acknowledgedly partly right idea of what it is neither requires a battery of new philosophical concepts, nor licenses her oft repeated insistence that the agent's ignorance is complete. Do I know what my friendship with my new friend, my relationship with my new lover, will be like, what I will come to value in them, how it will change me? Perhaps not. But do friends and lovers in the making take themselves to be as bewildered about themselves as Callard's aspirants do? In the first bloom of love, do lovers, like Callard's music student, force themselves to ignore their yawns and to pay attention to their beloveds? In *this* case the suggestion is absurd.

On the other hand, one wishing to respect the diversity of cases wishes to say, *aren't* there cases where one has a desire despite apparently near-total ignorance of what one is thinking of, where to call the antecedent conception merely "not quite on target" is to pay it a compliment? I'm tired of my urban life and think to myself

that I'd like to give it all up and start a farm: I most likely have *no idea* what I would actually be getting myself into. I have a penumbra of romantic associations with farms and farming but zero real knowledge or experience of it. (Fantasies of being famous strike me similarly.) In such cases it is questionable, to me, whether I even *do* want to run a farm, so deep is my ignorance, even if I'm taking active steps to bring it about—but is it clear that "aspiration" enters the picture? Have I got even a partial grasp? Am I not acting more fantastically than rationally?

3.2 On the dependency on others

One of the specific differences of aspiration from other sorts of agential life is supposed to lie in its peculiar dependency on others, because, again, of a peculiar form of ignorance:

> One place to see the difference from aspiration is in each agent's self-understanding as regards the assessment of her action. Aspirants can't confidently and authoritatively assess their own actions. They cannot tell whether they are doing what they are doing well; submit themselves to the assessment of others. Agents with a schematic grasp of their end do not betray a similar reliance on the assessments of others. (219)

The reference to a "schematic grasp" here is present because Callard is here considering the difference between an aspirant's relationship to her end and that of a *specificationist*, that is, someone who wants to have a pleasant evening (say), and is working toward some way of filling that in. Let us, however, make a different contrast, with the merely ambitious person, and ask again whether this submission to the assessment of others is specifically characteristic of the aspirant.

Perhaps I am learning about wine tasting because I believe that being able to competently talk about wine at a reasonably high level is important to my broader, already existing project of social climbing. If I'm actually learning, and not just learning to fake it—and even, really, if I'm just learning to fake it!—then here too I submit myself to the assessment of others. (If I'm learning to fake it, I need

to know if my fakery passes muster.) *Does* this wine have notes of epazote, blue plums, and carob? The intersubjective validity of this claim is not for me to decide; I must be inducted into the practice, even if only to ape it superficially, by others who will correct and lead me. On the other hand, someone who is acquiring a taste for wine, or beer, or whatever, who isn't concerned about whether the discriminations they make comport with those others make and is happy to be idiosyncratic about these things may well be able to get along by themselves. The student of ancient Greek who is learning composition will have a hard time of it without a tutor to mark their efforts, regardless of the aspirationality of their studies. On the other hand, the student of ancient Greek who cares only about translation into their own language can be *entirely* self-taught, even if *this* learning *is* aspirational (whatever that would mean, but this is a possibility Callard endorses).[24] Friends in the making obviously are not doing something each can do in isolation, but whether they submit themselves to each others', or anyone else's, *assessment* seems distinctly less clear. The role of assessment and dependency is not worked through in the context of any specific case, nor articulated sufficiently to clarify how it's supposed to apply across the variety of types of cases Callard mentions. In the end, it seems to apply much more directly to types of activity, no matter how engaged in.

When Callard does contrast the ambitious with the aspirational person with regard to their relations to others, it is with regard to "clearing hurdles", and the distinction between succeeding at a goal understood independently and getting clear about what the nature of a goal unclearly grasped even is.

4 One brief note on internalism

Callard's aspirants have two kinds of reasons, which I have called, somewhat pointedly, the reasons they have and the reasons they don't have. In the case of the music

[24] Obviously such a "self-taught" individual is dependent on educational material being available which would, and for that matter the reception and preservation of Greek antiquity in the first place. But this rapidly becomes simply the dependence on others we all have to do anything, and can't be what Callard is talking about.

student, the reasons she has (to do her homework, for instance) stem from the desire to get a good grade, for instance. These pose no problem for the internalist; not only are they eminently reachable from her motivational set, she is in fact motivated by them. She is *also* said to have a different kind of reason, an aspirational reason, which is *not* derivable from her motivational set in any way that the internalist can accommodate (the full discussion is fairly extended, and is found in §IV of chapter 2). The internalist is faced with a bit of a dilemma: either the aspirational reason simply is not derivable from the agent's motivational set at all, or it is, but if it is, Callard claims, it will not be *rationally* derivable (101). Even Williams's loosey-goosey concept of deliberation will not do:

> No matter how loosely we hold the reins, deliberation will not plot a course from the agent's present condition to what I have called the distal face of her proleptic reason. We cannot attribute to the aspiring *X*-er imaginative or heuristic resources that so far outstrip her current motivational condition that she is able to imagine her way into the intrinsic value of *X*. (104)

Recall Callard's curious insistence that pursuing *X* could only be rational, on non-aspirational accounts, if the pursuer already knows everything about *X*. (But the aspirant, you see, proleptically *does* grasp it in full, even though that grasp is actually simultaneously no grasp at all . . .) The fact that Callard is so focused on *getting to* an aspirational reason (the distal reason) which the aspirant also has in addition to the proximal reasons she has underscores the fact that for her the aspirant *isn't* motivated by anything but the proximal reasons, which in her telling are mostly instrumental and shared by the non-aspirant. It has to be gotten to *from* the motivational set; it isn't simply there, or if it is there it's too weak to do anything. (This is simply asserted.) Thus the problem about trying to derive it rationally rather than saying that sometimes one is struck, moved, by something as from without. And this weakness seems to be a persistent feature, for her. Once again, it's all or nothing:

> I grant that the early stages of value-acquisition may indeed be tenuous enough to be immune to rational critique. Aspiration begins

> as something like wish or hope, and we would tend not to tell someone she "shouldn't" have such-and-such long-term wish or that her cherished hopes for her future self are "irrational." Rational criticism does, however, eventually become appropriate. At some point on the way to her goal, the agent enters a space in which it becomes fitting for someone—though perhaps not just anyone—to say either "Try harder, you can do this" or "Give up, this isn't working for you." (104)

Why cannot the internalist reply to this: by the time *this* stage has been reached, the relevant desires will *not* be "weak" any longer? There's a period of tenuous futzing about during which both the desire and the engagement are *de minimis*, hence barely criticizable, but they grow together. But while Callard does have a place for the growth of desire and knowledge descriptively, here as elsewhere she has no place for it analytically.

The internalist may also reply to the whole argument: isn't this "aspirational reason" left suspiciously without a role to play, even philosophically? The aspirational reason is motivationally inert, incapable of explaining why she acts as she does. (Only the proximal reasons do that.) When an anti-internalist asserts that someone has an external, motivationally inert reason to do something which they did *not* do, we can see the point, even if it is apt to strike the internalistically inclined as a species of bluster: it enables a form of rebuke or blame. In this case, though, the agent *is* doing what they have aspirational reason to do, albeit apparently not *for* that reason. What do internalists lose by calling these distal aspirational reasons chimeras that add nothing? Do they lose the ability to differentiate the "good" student from the one who *merely* wants to get an A? Here again we must look to the wider context, not zoom in on an individual decision.

Consider "Satisfied Sue" and "Aspiring Anne":

> Anne and Sue both enjoy and appreciate music to precisely the same degree . . . The difference between them is that Sue is satisfied with the degree to which she desires to listen to music and does not aspire to appreciate it more than she does. Thus it is Anne, and not Sue, who has a reason to take a music appreciation class. (99-100)

Now what if we replace "and does not aspire to appreciate it more than she does" with "and Anne is not"? Sue is satisfied with the degree to which she desires to listen to music, and Anne is not. This will be true whenever the original sentence was true, and does not assume that Callard's characterization of what's going on is correct. We will have no trouble distinguishing the aspirant and the non-aspirant motivationally; Anne may have a "weak desire" to listen to music, but she *also* has a dissatisfaction, something that is straightforwardly a part of one's motivational set. What does this dissatisfaction come to? It isn't simply a velleity, some idle thought that sometimes possesses her only to pass easily, or else she wouldn't ever actually do anything. It may stem from the thought that not liking music more is a failing of hers, disconnected from any actual pleasure taken in music, which she seeks to dispel in order to live up to her own vaunted image of herself. This would be the striver model, and doesn't seem to challenge the internalist. It may stem from curiosity and interest in music—she enjoys it minimally now, but she's curious about it. This would be the erotic model, and also doesn't seem to challenge the internalist. It's only if we take everything of Callard's on board that we get a challenge: someone who isn't interested in music, but acts because of the value of music, without presently valuing music, and doesn't know why she's doing what she's doing, which makes some sense when you consider that she takes no pleasure in her pursuits, but . . . Well might internalism struggle to make sense of this person. But that is not to its demerit.

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