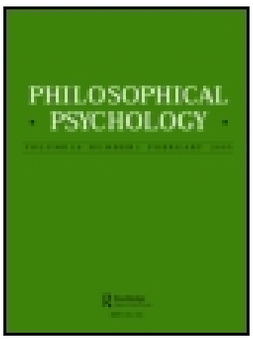

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ARTICLE

The focus of virtue: Attention broadening in empirically informed accounts of virtue cultivation

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ABSTRACT

Important empirically informed proposals of virtue cultivation invoke techniques of goal pursuit. This paper argues that these techniques are effective in changing behavior due to the attention narrowing they bring about, and further show that such attention narrowing can threaten the appropriate exercise of phronetic-related capacities. When these phronetic-related capacities are threatened, two derivative problems arise: (1) One can end up acting in morally inappropriate ways, and (2) Even in cases where one performs the morally appropriate action, one nonetheless can fail to notice and appreciate features of moral value. In light of these concerns, such techniques of goal pursuit – at least, by themselves – serve the most good for those who are merely trying to avoid vice, rather than cultivate virtue. And so, I suggest that such accounts of virtue cultivation are incomplete. I then go on to argue that these undesirable effects of attention narrowing brought about by these goal pursuit techniques may be ameliorated by also engaging in certain indirect modifications of cognition, particularly those which broaden attention. The suggestion, then, is that attention narrowing techniques of goal pursuit, along with attention broadening modifications, might best facilitate virtue cultivation when employed together. While the particulars of how we might best go about this are currently unclear, this paper ends by looking at empirical research on Open Monitoring Meditation as providing a hopeful option that might be further investigated.

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I. Introduction

Recently, empirical standards of virtue-based theories have been raised,[1] with many now focusing on giving empirically informed accounts of how we might go about developing virtue. Some have suggested we *change the situations* we find ourselves in, so that the situational cues we encounter trigger different cognitive and behavioral effects.[2] Others have argued we *directly modify our cognition* by adopting particular intentions, resulting in

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better behaviors.[3] And still others have suggested we *indirectly modify our cognition*, through routine practices like meditation.[4]

In this paper, I first look at empirically informed proposals of virtue cultivation that rely on *direct modifications of cognition* – in particular, those that use varying techniques of goal pursuit – in order to change one's behavior. I argue that these techniques of goal pursuit effectively change behavior due to the *attention narrowing* they bring about, and further show that such attention narrowing can threaten the appropriate exercise of phronetic-related capacities. When these phronetic-related capacities are threatened, two derivative problems arise: (1) One can end up acting in morally inappropriate ways, and (2) Even in cases where one performs the morally appropriate action, one nonetheless can fail to notice and appreciate features of moral value. I argue that in light of these concerns, such techniques of goal pursuit – at least, by themselves – serve the most good for those who are merely trying to avoid vice, rather than cultivate virtue. And so, I suggest that such accounts of virtue cultivation are incomplete. I then go on to suggest that these undesirable effects of attention narrowing brought about by the use of these techniques during goal pursuit may be ameliorated by also engaging in certain *indirect modifications of cognition*, particularly those which broaden attention. My suggestion, then, is that these direct and indirect modifications of cognition might best facilitate virtue cultivation when employed together. While the particulars of how we might best go about this are currently unclear, I end this paper by exploring one option that might be further investigated.

II. An overview of goal pursuit in proposals of virtue cultivation

Various empirically grounded proposals of virtue cultivation have invoked the use of goal pursuit. While different proposals emphasize different aspects, I take 'goal pursuit' to involve the following three features:

(1) Adopting a goal
(2) Selecting a course of action to achieve that goal
(3) Executing the course of action

A common empirical model of goal pursuit, *The Rubicon Model of Action* (Heckhausen & Gollwitzer, 1987) lays out four stages of goal pursuit, where the first three map on to the features I mentioned above: One first begins with deliberation about what goal to adopt. In *adopting a goal*, one commits to it by forming an intention, which moves one from having a mere wish and into the volitional stages, which consist first of planning and then of acting. The planning phase involves *selecting certain subordinate goals or plans that detail a specific course of action* which is to be taken for the sake of

a larger goal.[5] During this planning phase, "[one] should address questions of *when* and *where* to start acting, *how* to act, and *how long* to act" (Gollwitzer, 1990, p. 57). After formulating a plan of action, one then moves on to *initiating that action*. The Rubicon Model also posits a fourth step: After carrying out the action, one evaluates what one has done. When the goal is not reached, one might adjust the goal or return for another try. These phases of the Rubicon Model can be seen in Figure 1.[6]

Matt Stichter (2018) has recently proposed an account of virtue cultivation that invokes the Rubicon Model of goal pursuit. Stichter suggests that goal pursuit plays an important role in self-regulation, which is necessary for the development of amoral or moral (e.g. virtues) skills.[7] Stichter explains that setting a goal, and committing to it, "is part of this process of forethought, [which] ... motivates the next phase of forethought in planning what steps to take to achieve that goal" (p. 18). Once having completed the planning phase, you "can implement your plan and take action to achieve your goal" (p. 20). By committing oneself to a goal, and developing a plan to achieve that goal, one begins down the path of changing one's behavior. Such behavioral changes will require self-regulation in order to follow through with one's plan and to avoid alternatives that could prevent goal satisfaction. For Stichter, goal pursuit is an essential part of cultivating virtue, since Stichter holds that virtues are skills, and developing skills requires self-regulation. Goal pursuit is an important kind of self-regulation, as it helps us stay focused on carrying out particular actions without getting distracted or giving up.

The Rubicon Model of Action doesn't only explain how goal pursuit is carried out in a conscious and explicit manner, but also can account for a more automatic and preconscious method. Achtziger and Gollwitzer (2018) explain that in cases where the goals are pursued in an automatic way, the planned action is consistently performed in particular goal-relevant

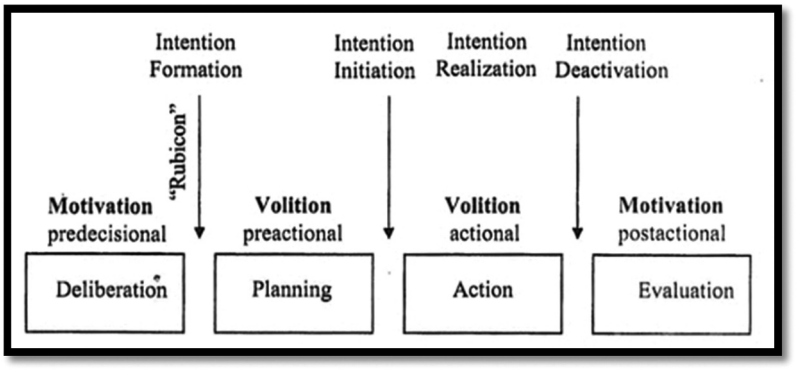

Figure 1. Taken from Gollwitzer & Achtziger (2018), Figure 1 illustrates the four phases of the Rubicon Model of Action.

situations and the behavior eventually becomes paired with these situations, forming habits. In such cases of habitual goal pursuit, goals are activated and initiate behavior, skipping past the deliberative and planning phases because "all that remains to be done is to wait for the critical situation to arise . . . as soon as the critical situation is encountered, the respective goal-directed behavior is initiated" (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2018, p. 492).

Implementation intentions, a specific technique used in goal pursuit, is a way of transitioning from explicit and conscious goal pursuit to a mode that is more habitual and automatized. When one is in the planning phase and explicitly forms plans of action to carry out, this typically consists of specifying the 'when', 'where', and 'how' (Gollwitzer, 1990, p. 57). Implementation intentions specify *if-then* plans of action whereby one links specific situational cues ("if I am offered a beer . . . ") to a specific behavioral response (e.g. " . . . then I will ask for a sparkling water instead."). By formulating the '*if*' portion of the plan, certain situational cues become more accessible, making it easier to pick up on such cues. By formulating the '*then*' portion of the plan, it is thought that we will be better able to execute the behavioral response. When these specific plans are continually rehearsed and carried out, they become habitual and automatic. Indeed, implementation intentions have proven effective in this realm, and have helped with behavioral modifications (Gollwitzer & Brandstätter, 1997; Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2009; Webb & Sheeran, 2007). Several goal-pursuit accounts of virtue cultivation have made use of implementation intentions, including Besser-Jones (2008), Kamtekar (2004), Railton (2011), and Stichter (2018).[8] Stichter, for instance, suggests implementation intentions as a way to off-load cognitively taxing self-regulation in the process of skill acquisition, including the moral skill of virtue.[9] Others, such as Railton (2011), focus on the ways that implementation intentions can be used to 'save' virtue from the situationist critique. While it might be true that particular situational factors trigger very specific behaviors, we not only change what situational factors become salient to us through the use of implementation intentions, but also the way we respond, due to the particular situation-behavior pairs or associations established.

Aside from the use of implementation intentions, others – such as Nancy Snow (2006, 2010, 2016) – have made use of the automatic activation of goals as a technique for developing virtue-related habits and carrying out virtue-related actions: Snow explains that our lives often involve pursing certain goals – such as being a good parent – which require the development of particular virtues, like patience, humility, and love. When the goal is held over a long period of time, is of high importance, and is continually pursued, the goal will eventually be activated in an automatic and preconscious way. In these cases, encountering certain goal-relevant stimuli can produce goal-relevant behaviors. Goal-relevant stimuli and goal-relevant behaviors will be

more salient and more accessible when compared to stimuli and behaviors that are not associated with the particular goal one has set. In her case of being a good parent, Snow explains that such a person, "places great importance on the goal of caring for her child ... When she encounters situational features that activate or trigger the representation of a goal, other things being equal, she will respond by acting in ways that promote goal attainment" (Snow, 2016, pp. 139–40). Snow supports her case by citing empirical research from those like Aaars and Dijkersterhuis (2000), Bargh (1990), and Bargh and Gollitzer (1994), which suggests that goals can be activated non-consciously when one encounters goal-relevant cues or is in goal-related circumstances. This body of empirical literature indicates that setting goals and forming goal-related habits can often result in activation of the goal unconsciously. And when this happens, "the activation of the goal to act automatically elicits habitual behavior" (Snow, 2010, p. 44).[10] When goals that we set are activated, this influences what stimuli are made salient to us, and thereby how we respond to the situation at hand. Thus, Snow suggests that by setting certain goals (and not others), our actions might become more closely aligned to virtue.

It is worth noting that Snow makes use of empirical literature of goal and behavioral priming, which has recently come under scrutiny. For instance, Snow invokes John Bargh's work, and several of the findings reported in Bargh's studies – such as Bargh et al. (1996), Bargh et al. (2001), and Williams and Bargh (2008), – have since failed to replicate, as shown by Doyen et al. (2012), Harris et al. (2013), and Shanks et al. (2013). If these recent replication failures indicate that there are no effects of goal priming on behavior, Snow's account might fail to give us empirically supported methods of cultivating virtue through behavioral changes.

While this body of literature is complicated and the effects are far from straightforward, a complete dismissal of goal priming effects would be too quick, as these replication failures do not necessarily show that there are no such goal priming effects. Dijksterhuis et al. (2014), for instance, argue, that "we should not ... believe that the initial findings [of goal priming effects] were false positives ... [as the priming effects] have been obtained in many different published experiments" (p. 208). A recent meta-analysis carried out by Weingarten et al. (2016) looked at 352 effect sizes, from 133 published and unpublished studies, revealed small but robust, significant goal priming effects on behavior (p. 490).[11]

Others – such as Klatzsky and Creswell (2014), Loersch and Payne (2011, 2014), Payne et al. (2016), and Schröder and Thagard (2013), – have accounted for the mixed results by arguing that these priming effects are more nuanced than initially thought. Previously overlooked moderators can help explain under what circumstances priming effects do and do not take

place. Given the strong evidence for efficacious use of automatized implementation intentions, one potential moderator may involve the specificity of the goals adopted. While Snow seems to suggest that broader, superordinate, goals – such as being a good parent – can be automatically triggered by the situational cue, it is unclear if this is in fact what Bargh suggests. In his (1990) piece that Snow draws from, Bargh speculates it is the more specific goals – such as the particular plans of action – that are automatically activated when encountering particular situational cues:

> In general . . . it would seem that the more abstract and less concrete the goal – that is, the broader the array of behaviors that will satisfy it – the less likely it will be for that goal to become capable of direct activation by the environment. This is because the 'longer' a cognitive pathway is (i.e., the more links it contains), the less likely it is to become automated; the more abstract a representation, the greater the number of analytic steps both between it and the relevant environmental feature detectors on the one hand, and the action effector units on the other. (p. 117)

If the specificity of the goal adopted does in fact influence the effectiveness of goal-automaticity, then we might think that Snow's suggestion is correct, but only in a restricted sense – perhaps virtue could really only be cultivated with the use of more narrow goals, rather than merely vague, or superordinate, goals which she speaks of.

Even if it were true that Snow relied on shaky empirical findings, we can set these specifics aside, for there is a general point that still holds: Adopting and pursuing goals – whether done in an explicit and conscious or automatic and unconscious manner – will likely impact our cognition and influence our behavior. If it were to turn out that a particular technique of goal pursuit, such as goal priming, doesn't actually change behavior at all, then this method would be irrelevant for virtue cultivation, since the purpose of using goal pursuit as a way to cultivate virtue is so to *change our behavior* to better align with virtuous actions. And so, if a particular technique of goal pursuit in fact fails to bring about behavioral effects, then this technique becomes irrelevant for my argument, since such techniques are no longer goal pursuit accounts *of virtue cultivation.*

III. The role of phronesis-related skills in virtuous goal-directed behavior

In the previous section, I discussed recent accounts of virtue cultivation which invoke the various techniques of goal pursuit. While goal pursuit may involve adopting a larger, superordinate goal, it also usually involves formulating more specific plans or subordinate goals that are a means for achieving the larger goal.[12] But pursuing virtue-relevant goals will not necessarily amount to performing virtuous acts, for one will also need

certain phronetic-related skills to discern which goal ought to be pursued at a given time, and what is the best course of action for doing so.

Virtuous action requires at least two skills related to phronesis, which I call *perception* and *evaluation*. In exercising the skill of perception, one correctly identifies which goal(s) are relevant to pursue within a given context. The need for such a perceptive skill applies to both superordinate goals and the more specific plans for achieving that goal, for one must correctly identify which superordinate goals are relevant within a given context, as well as what course of action is currently a realistic means for achieving that superordinate goal. This skill of perception is largely attentional in nature: By directing one's attention to relevant goal-related stimuli, one correctly sees what goals are relevant within a given context. What I call perception is similar to what Dan Russell (2009) describes as the practical capacity of *comprehension*, which involves "the ability to 'read' a situation . . . so as to recognize what is salient" (p. 21). Darnell et al. (2019), likewise, detail a 'constitutive function' of phronesis, which "enables an agent to perceive what the salient features of a given situation are from an ethical perspective" (p. 118). Russell (2009) notes that comprehension is "not prescriptive but only discriminatory (p. 21), for 'reading' the situation tells us which routes of action are relevant, but it does not necessarily tell us which ones we ultimately ought to pursue. Thus, this skill of perception involves simply being aware of morally relevant features and routes of action within a given situation.

Given that perception only descriptively highlights important ethical features of a situation, another phronetic-related skill is required to identify what feature or option is most important – I call this skill, *evaluation*. Evaluation involves judging which goal ought to be pursued within a given circumstance. Given this, correct evaluation will depend on correct perception, but it will also go beyond insofar as evaluation involves judging evaluative importance. Additionally, proper evaluation will need to occur both at the superordinate and subordinate level. Darnell et al. (2019) describe a sort of evaluative weighing at the superordinate level when they explicate the 'integrative function' of phronesis, which involves "integrating different components of a good life, especially in dilemmatic situations where different ethically salient considerations or virtues appear to be in conflict" (p. 118). On the other hand, Russell (2009) notes a component of phronesis involving evaluative judgment-making at the level of planning, whereby one "correctly adjusts one's grasp of what one must do in particular circumstances as regards a general end, such as acting generously or as a good friend" (p. 22). Thus, whether this judging occurs at the superordinate level of goals or the more particular level of forming plans to achieve that goal, I call this weighing of relative importance the skill of evaluation.

Failures in either perception or evaluation can lead to problems for cultivating virtue. Thus, any goal pursuit account of virtue cultivation will need to make room for the importance of phronetic-related skills of perception and evaluation.[13] Without such skills of discernment and judgment, one will likely fail to appropriately pursue the appropriate goal(s) in a given circumstance.

IV. Goal pursuit and the role of narrowed attention

In *Section II*, I considered a few accounts of virtue cultivation that rely on techniques of goal pursuit, along with noting the different phases of goal pursuit, such as goal adoption, planning, and execution of said action. In this section, I return to the empirical literature to highlight the importance of attention narrowing in the planning and action phases of goal pursuit.

Recall The Rubicon Model of Action, which posits four stages of goal pursuit. After the initial phase of deliberation, one forms an intention or commits to a goal. This commitment results in focusing in on forming a plan of action and then executing that plan. Whether this is done consciously and deliberatively, or unconsciously and automatically, the planning and action execution involve a 'closed-minded' cognitive state, in which attention is focused on the course of action. This is often described as 'goal shielding', in which other concerns or goals are blocked out, so that one can narrow in on one's particular plan of action.[14] Furthermore, the extent to which one can narrow in on one's plan and action is related to the likelihood of successfully carrying out that action, for, as Gollwitzer explains, "it matters [for goal satisfaction] whether one can shield an ongoing goal pursuit from distractions … [and] competing temptations" (Gollwitzer, 1990, p. 494). Failing to reach the desired end-state specified by the goal is often a result of insufficient attention narrowing in on one's prescribed plans and actions, or a lack of goal shielding.

One way in which goal shielding occurs is by changes in visual attention. Van der Laan et al. (2017), for instance, found that when primed with diet-related goals, participants visually attended more toward goal-relevant, healthy foods, as measured by eye-tracking movements. This, in turn, resulted in an increase in healthy food choices. Likewise, when implementation intentions are activated by the relevant situational cue, attention is similarly captured and focused: Janczyk et al. (2015) explain that a "heighted activation of the stimulus specified in the if-part of an implementation intention appears to enhance early attentional processes, such as attentional filtering" (p. 208), which accounts for why certain stimuli are narrowed in on while others ignored. Wieber and Sassenberg (2006) found that when a participant was visually exposed to the cue associated with the *if* portion of an implementation intention, visual attention was drawn toward the cue

and away from other stimuli. Webb and Sheeran (2007) likewise found that subjects who adopted an implementation intention *if X, then I'll do Y*, were more likely to detect *X* than subjects who didn't adopt this implementation intention. Achtziger, Bayer & Gollwitzer (2012) found similar results with auditory attention as well.

While attention initially narrows in the Planning Phase, a 'close-minded' state and narrowed attention occurs during the Action Phase as well. When carrying out the goal-directed action, Achtziger and Gollwitzer (2018) note the following attentional effects:

> Individuals . . . do not consider alternative strategies, neither do they form implementation intentions or action plans . . . they ignore any potentially disruptive aspects . . . The action mindset focuses attention on those aspects of the self and the environment that sustain the course of action. (p. 492)

Indeed, (at least part of) the success of implementation intentions and goal-priming in changing behavior is due to such sustained, narrowed attention during the Action Phase. It is because one's attention stays focused on the action at hand that one is more likely to complete it, avoiding distractions or temptations.[15]

That narrowed attention plays this important role in effective goal pursuit is evident when we consider the fact that the desired outcome specified in a goal is more likely to occur when using techniques that employ specified, as opposed to vague, goals.[16] Plausibly, this is at least one reason why the use of implementation intentions has proven rather effective at achieving the desired behavioral outcomes.[17] Gollwitzer (1990) explains that "implementation intentions are subordinate to goal intentions" (p. 494) and so we might think of implementation intentions as involving *very* specific, subordinate 'goals.'[18] Penningroth & Scott (2008) explain that we can think of "subordinate-level goals . . . [as] specific activities that can be executed in order to meet a high-level goal" (p. 74) whereby they explain that these activities can take the form of implementation intentions, but also other means such as prospective memories (ibid).[19] The more specified the goal or prescribed activity is, the more alternatives will be shielded, and so techniques of goal pursuit that involve greater specification of one's goal will be more effective in bringing about the goal-specified outcome.

V. The downfalls of goal pursuit accounts

In the last section, I highlighted how narrowed attention plays an important role in effectively carrying various methods of goal pursuit. In this section, I argue that, while virtuous goal pursuit needs to be guided by the phronetic-related skills of perception and evaluation, the most effective techniques used in goal pursuit can threaten the appropriate exercise of these skills. I

then go on to show that two further derivative problems arise when perception and evaluation are threatened: (1) one may carry out morally inappropriate actions, and (2) even if a person avoids (1), she may still fail to notice or appreciate important moral features.

V.A. Narrowed attention threatens appropriate exercise of phronetic-related capacities

As Beckman and Heckhausen (2018) observe, once "crossing the Rubicon, people tend to either forget about the alternatives they have rejected or play them down" (p. 115).[20] While such forgetting or downplaying can be a good thing when this results in disregarding information that ought to be ignored, sometimes we overlook information that merely *seems* irrelevant.

Empirical research suggests that appropriate exercise of perception can be threatened by goal pursuit, especially when using a particular technique of goal pursuit that involves highly specific subordinate goals or plans, as this usually narrows or focuses attention. For instance, subjects using implementation intentions stuck to their plan of identifying *x* cue and responding with *y* behavior, even when a more efficacious path was available for achieving the same goal (Belyavsky-Bayuk et al., 2010; Masicampo & Baumeister, 2012; Parks-Stamm et al., 2007). Likewise, implementation intentions make one *worse* (when compared to those who weren't using implementation intentions) at exhibiting goal-relevant behavior when the specific situational cue is absent (Bieleke et al., 2017). In addition to proving counterproductive to achieving the specific goal at hand, using implementation intentions has also shown to interfere with noticing goal-relevant cues for *other* goals (Wieber & Sassenberg, 2006). In their review of goal-directed behavior, Ordóñez et al. (2009) note that "goals focus attention," but, "unfortunately, goals can focus attention so narrowly that people overlook other important features of a task" (pp. 7–8).

Recall that in the previous section, findings from Van der Laan et al. (2017) and Janczyk et al. (2015) indicated that goals influence action through their effects on directing visual attention. Likewise, Büttner et al. (2014) found that when adopting an implemental mind-set – as occurs during the Planning phase, participants focused their visual attention on objects in the foreground (Büttner et al., 2014, p. 1248). If the mere targets of visual tracking are impacted by the goal being pursued, it is no surprise that one's goal(s) influence what stimuli one perceives and responds to in one's actions. This can become problematic when pursuing a given goal prevents one from perceiving other important stimuli relevant to other (perhaps, more important) ethical concerns.

In addition to negatively influencing perception, there is some evidence that at least some methods of goal pursuit could also impact appropriate exercise of evaluation. Belyavsky-Bayuk et al. (2010) found that even when subjects did notice an alternative option, if this alternative fell outside of their adopted implementation intention, subjects misjudged the alternative's value, incorrectly deeming it not valuable for attaining for their superordinate goals.

It is important to note that, if goal pursuit reliably results in goal satisfaction, it will be (at least in part) due to the attention narrowing effects of the particular goal pursuit-technique used. This means that, perhaps not all means of pursuing goals – such as the employment of more vague, or superordinate ones – will strictly narrow attention, and so will likely not face these negative consequences.[21] But, because such means of goal pursuit typically do not involve attention narrowing mechanisms, we should suspect they will be less effective in bringing about the desired behavioral changes. Given that I am concerned with techniques of goal pursuit that bring about behavioral changes for the sake of virtue cultivation, it is worth clarifying that I am concerned with the attentional effects that typically occur in techniques of *effective* goal pursuit.

Thus, whether it be through failures of perception or evaluation, techniques of effective goal pursuit narrow attention, which can interfere with the exercise of important phronetic-related skills, such that one overlooks and/or undervalues alternatives that ought to be considered.

V.B. Two derivative problems

Given that narrowed attention underlies effective techniques of goal pursuit and that this can lead one to overlook and undervalue alternatives, morally inappropriate action can result. Even if we adopt virtue-relevant goals, this can nonetheless lead to less-than-virtuous action when circumstances are morally complex. Consider Darley and Batson (1973) Good Samaritan study, whereby subjects were instructed to walk across campus in order to attend a talk on The Good Samaritan. Subjects were divided into three conditions, whereby the degree to which they needed to hurry to arrive at the talk on time varied. We might say that (at least some of) the subjects employed the specific goal of *getting to the talk on time*, perhaps as part of their broader goals of *respecting the speaker*, or *learning more about being a Good Samaritan*. Subjects who were in the high-hurry condition plausibly adopted highly specific, particular plans of action that they would *walk fast*, and *not stop to sight-see, talk to strangers, etc.*[22] While adopting and implementing these specified plans likely helped the high-hurry subjects arrive on time to the talk, the study also showed that these subjects were less likely to stop to help a confederate who was disguised as a stranger in physical

distress. In discussing their results, the researchers noted that "it would be inaccurate to say that [these subjects] realized the victim's possible distress, then chose to ignore it; instead, because of the time pressures, they did not perceive the scene in the alley as an occasion for an ethical decision" (Darley & Batson, 1973, p. 108). By giving the subjects a particular goal (*to get to the talk within a small time frame*), whereby they then adopted even further specific plans or subordinate goals (*walking fast, not getting distracted by sightseeing or strangers*) – their attention became narrowed. Despite the fact that subjects adopted virtue-relevant goals, given that the particular means to pursue their goal involved highly specific plans, and resulted in narrowed attention, and so they fell short of what morality required of them to do.[23]

Yet, even in cases where engaging in such means of goal pursuit does not result in morally inappropriate action, another problem may loom: Virtue may require us to appreciate certain moral features, even if we should not, all things considered, act on them. The attention narrowing that occurs with particularly effective means of goal pursuit can infringe on perception and evaluation, making such appreciation harder to come by.

First, consider some similarities between goal pursuit accounts of virtue development and a McDowellian view of virtue, under which a virtuous agent is unified in her moral judgment and lacks inner conflict. According to McDowell, a virtuous person 'silences' – or does not attend to – reasons that run contrary to the virtuous act. McDowell claims that the virtuous person is simply concerned with "keeping [her] attention firmly fixed on what Aristotle calls 'the noble'" (1978, p. 27), such that other considerations will not enter into her practical reasoning. Like the techniques of goal pursuit we are concerned with, silencing accounts of virtue seem to operate by way of narrowed attention, screening out all non-goal related or non-virtue relevant features. In her critique of silencing accounts, Karen Stohr (2003) notes that if one were to not silence other features and instead recognized the complexity of the situation, the right action would be "hard for [one] to perform, despite the fact that it [would be] the right thing to do" (2003, p. 343). That silencing other features makes the right action easier to do is, likewise, the aim of using highly specified goals or plans in order to cultivate virtue: by narrowing one's attention, distraction and temptation is prevented, making it easier to follow through with the goal-relevant action. Thus, at least conceptually, both these techniques of goal pursuit and silencing accounts of virtue seem to involve a narrowing in on the action to be pursued, ignoring other features.

Given these similarities, objections raised against McDowell's silencing view might likewise apply for goal-based accounts. Some have argued that silencing accounts face the following problem: Virtue can require loss and sacrifice. Failing to appreciate those things lost or forgone is a mark against virtue, not in favor of it. For instance, Susan Stark (2001), argues that,

according to Aristotle, "death and injury are painful, and even to the virtuous person, and in fact, *even more so* to the virtuous person, because she has more to lose than the rest of us" (p. 448). She goes on to explain what this means for the silencing account: "McDowell's virtuous person seems to act flippantly with regard to her own life and health. She proceeds into battle, seeing the danger, yes, but not internalizing the danger, not seeing it as danger to her, potential loss to herself. But virtue is not this flippancy" (ibid). Ann Margaret Baxley (2007) makes a similar observation, claiming that "virtue can have a cost, and a mark of the wise person is that she recognizes it" (p. 419). A virtuous person will see the various conflicting objects of value in the situation before her; if one paid no attention to them, we might plausibly think such a person to be cold and calloused, rather than virtuous.

While narrowed attention can interfere with the appropriate exercise of phronetic-related skills, which can lead to morally inappropriate action, we see that even in such cases where one ends up doing the right thing, another problem might still persist: Sometimes this narrowing in on the right course of action can amount to ignoring the complexities of the situation – including the costs that morality requires of us. Even if we act rightly, silencing or overlooking such features might be a defect of character, rather than an aspect of it.[24]

VI. Searching for a way forward

Thus far, I have argued that accounts of virtue cultivation which employ particularly effective techniques of goal pursuit tend to be successful due to their attention narrowing mechanisms. While boasting positive effects, such proposals are also subject to problems. However, I nonetheless see these methods of goal pursuit as playing an important role in guiding moral action, and so worth maintaining in some form. In this section, I will first suggest that such techniques used in goal pursuit, which operate via narrowed attention, might be particularly helpful not in cultivating virtue, but in ridding oneself of vice. Thus, these goal pursuit accounts are incomplete when it comes to the *cultivation* of virtue. What is needed is (at minimum) to balance narrowed with broadened attention. I propose that, when cultivating virtue, if one engages in direct modifications of cognition through techniques of goal pursuit – particularly ones that involve a highly specified plan or subordinate goal, and so typically narrows attention – one should also undertake indirect modifications of cognition that would result in some amount of persistent, broadened attention. While the mechanism by which we are to employ in this attention broadening is currently unclear, I offer an intriguing suggestion of how it might be done by turning to empirical research on Open Monitoring Meditation, highlighting its promise in expanding our attention.

VI.A. When is mere goal pursuit most beneficial?

In *Section V*, I made a brief comparison between techniques of goal pursuit and silencing accounts of virtue, noting that they both seem to involve attention narrowing. These similarities likewise bear out in some potential criticisms that both accounts face. But now, I wish to draw again from the literature on silencing to point out the benefits that these sorts of goal pursuit techniques likely have.

Critics of silencing accounts are happy to acknowledge that silencing seems like a good thing to do when the features that are silenced are those which run contrary to virtue. For instance, despite rejecting the silencing view, Jeffrey Seidman (2005) notes that there are cases where the virtuous person should silence at least some options: "[the virtuous person] will exclude courses of action which are incompatible with virtue from the range of possibilities . . . If he is decent, these morally unsound possibilities may not even occur to him" (p. 72). Likewise, Baxley (2007) notes that the silencing thesis gets something right when it is applied to a small range of cases, namely those where "competing options are and should be silenced by the requirements of virtue. These are cases in which competing options in conflict with virtue are actually immoral or vicious" (p. 412). If a course of action is vicious, then it is likely advisable – and even a sign of virtue – to not let this option cross your mind.

A parallel sort of application can be made to certain goal pursuit accounts: At least some techniques used in goal pursuit are likely well-suited when guiding one's attention away from vicious options. Pursuing goals in this way results in overlooking actions that should never be chosen. And, in such cases, the worries I have brought forth in *Section V* seem to no longer apply. For, if these particular techniques used in goal pursuit involve directing our attention away from vicious options, then adopting this vice-ignoring strategy will likely never lead us astray. Like the concerns raised with the silencing thesis, the attention narrowing that is operative in these methods of goal pursuit only become problematic when the overlooked options are not vicious.

Interestingly, implementation intentions are often used when people are trying to kick a bad habit. For instance, a recovering drunkard might seek to avoid drunkenness by never ordering a beer, and the way he does this is by directing his attention away from beer to something else, such as sparkling water. It seems that, for the recovering drunkard at least, adopting a plan of action to always stick to sparkling water would rarely lead him astray. Given one's current vices, some courses of action – such as drinking a beer – might rightfully be silenced. And, so, avoiding vicious courses of action might be where these techniques of goal pursuit can do a lot of the work.

But, avoiding vice is not necessarily the same thing as cultivating virtue. Indeed, the temperate man doesn't fail to notice the value in food or alcohol, but appreciates the value in the right way, to the right degree. But, before a recovering drunkard can acquire the virtue of temperance, he might have to (temporarily) silence some options – namely, those which lead him straight to vicious acts. Thus, various goal pursuit accounts face certain problems, but these problems specifically arise during the cultivation of virtue, rather than the mere avoidance of vicious behaviors. What I seek to do next is examine how certain techniques of goal pursuit might work not just in cases of vice avoidance, but also virtue cultivation. I suggest that we hold on to the efficacious techniques commonly used in goal pursuit, but compliment their use with an intervention that broadens attention, and so may help remedy the problems I have brought forth.

VI.B. The need for broadened attention

In order to explicate my suggestion of how we might go about broadening attention, recall The Rubicon Model of Action that was discussed in *Section II*, and the fact that attention becomes narrowed when one is developing a plan of action, and then again when one carries out that action. However, before and after these phases, attention is typically broadened to allow for deliberation of what one's options are and evaluation of what one has done. Broadened attention allows for the taking in of information at these phases, in order to then select and narrow in on the best one. The Rubicon Model is depicted, again, in Figure 2, but this time color-coded according to the kind of attention that typically occurs at each stage.[25]

Thus far, I have argued that especially effective techniques of goal pursuit involve attention narrowing. However, when engaging in virtue cultivation (rather than mere vice avoidance), we might benefit from a more broadened mind-set. Incorporating broadened attention when cultivating virtue might involve moving from the Rubicon Model depicted in Figure 2, to a modified version depicted in Figure 3.[26]

This version suggests a certain degree of persisting, broadened attention which continues even throughout the more narrowed planning and action phases. Such increased broadened attention may be able to combat the problems that I have previously raised for goal pursuit. I now turn to empirical research on Open Monitoring Meditation, arguing that this may be one way by which one could acquire this broadened mind-set.

Open Monitoring Meditation (OMM) has received little attention in the literature on virtue cultivation, an exception being Candace Upton's (2017) paper in which she proposes (five different kinds of) mediation – including OMM – as an underexplored route for cultivating virtue.[27] Upton (2017) explains that OMM is a kind of meditation where "the focus of the

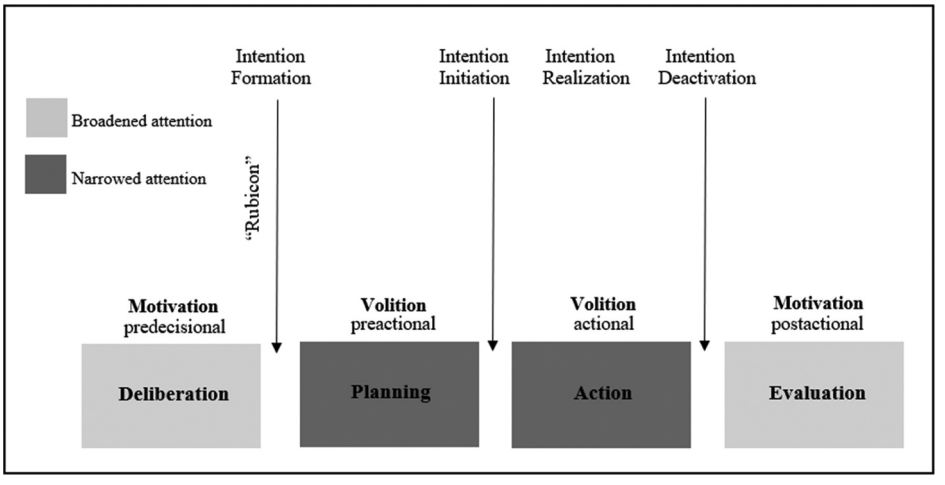

Figure 2. Figure 2 depicts the Rubicon Model of Action, taken from Gollwitzer & Achtziger (2018), but additionally represents the attentional changes throughout the four phases. Indicated by light grey, broadened attention occurs in the Deliberation and Evaluation phases, while narrowed attention – indicated by dark grey – occurs in the Planning and Action phases.

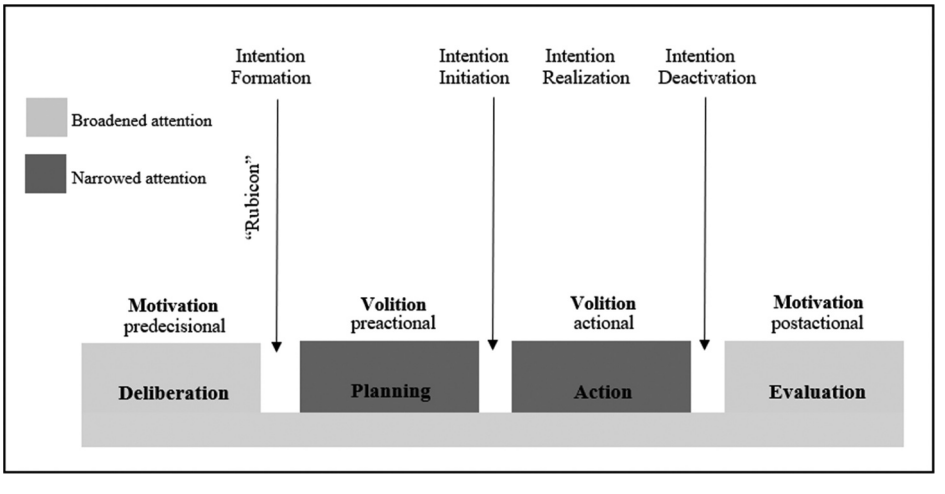

Figure 3. Using the Rubicon Model of Action, Figure 3 shows what attentional patterns might look like during goal pursuit when one also has undergone practices to adopt a persistent, broadened mindset.

practitioner is to stay in the monitoring state, remaining attentive to any experience that might arise, without selecting, judging, or focusing on any particular object" (pp. 336–7). OMM has also been defined as when "the individual is open to perceive and observe any sensation or thought without focusing on a concept in the mind or a fixed item; therefore attention is flexible and unrestricted" (Colzato et al., 2012, p. 1). But, OMM is not simply letting one's mind wander – it uses executive or top-down capacities

and, ironically, still involves directing one's attention: Garland et al. (2015) summarize the process as "involving a shift in attention", but where one's attention isn't intensely focused on a specific object in one's immediate awareness, but rather "monitor[s] the contents of consciousness while becoming aware of the quality of awareness itself . . . [taking on] a metacognitive state of awareness" (p. 301).

OMM is not only conceptually defined as broadened attention, as studies show that engaging in regular OMM produces this effect. For instance, Slagter et al. (2007) found that subjects who had 3 months of Vipassana meditation (a meditation similar to OMM) training showed greater attentional resource allocation when presented with two competing target stimuli. Those who did not have such training were less likely to notice the second of the two stimuli, as their attentional resources were consumed by the first target stimuli. Having been trained in OMM seems to enable people to expand their attentional resources, increasing awareness of the stimuli in their environment. Valentine and Sweet (1999) found that those trained in OMM were more likely to notice unexpected stimuli, when compared to those trained in Focused Attention Meditation (FAM). Hodgins and Adair (2010) found that those trained in mindfulness meditation (of which OMM is a constituent part) were more efficient and accurate when it came to visual attention. Delgado-Pastor et al. (2013) report the beneficial effects of OMM-type meditation on attention via physiological indicators: expert-trained Vipassana meditators "showed greater P3b amplitudes to the [auditory] target tone after meditation" (p. 207), where greater P3b amplitudes typically occur when unexpected stimuli is perceived and attended to. These results "suggest that expert Vipassana meditators showed increased attentional engagement after meditation" (ibid). Note that Delgado-Pastor et al. (2013) reported that increased P3b amplitudes to auditory tones were observed *after* meditation. Likewise, attentional blink effects found by Slagter et al. (2007) were measured *after* completion of 3 months of intensive meditation. Perhaps, then, OMM doesn't just broaden attention *while* one meditates, but regular OMM may also result in a broadened mind-set that would persist – at least to some extent – throughout other activities, including the undertaking of various techniques of goal pursuit.

Lastly, not only does OMM result in increased awareness and so likely mitigate the negative effects of attention narrowing that come along with the particularly efficacious methods of goal pursuit, preliminary research suggests that there is in fact a relationship between broadened attention, ethical awareness, and ethical action: Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) note that "individuals who are less mindful may fail to recognize ethical challenges or to appreciate conflicts of interest" (p. 73). Hong (2019) found that mindfulness mediates unintentional unethical behavior that often arises in pursuing performance goals. While much more research is needed, there is

reason to think that regular OMM leads to broadened attention, enabling one to notice a variety of important moral features.

VI.C. Speculations on the benefits of a hybrid account of goal pursuit & OMM

Thus far, I have discussed how regular OMM might counteract problematic consequences that are often present when engaging in goal pursuit. I now turn to speculate about how pursuit of virtue-relevant goals might counteract detrimental effects of OMM. I conclude that when regular OMM is practiced alongside the pursuit of virtue-relevant goals, OMM doesn't just help ameliorate potential problems that plague various techniques employed in goal pursuit, but pursuing virtue-relevant goals may also help ameliorate problems for OMM. I end this discussion by describing the virtuous mean of attentional breadth, which could perhaps be attained through combining particularly efficacious techniques of goal pursuit with regular OMM.

Recall that one potential problem of using particularly efficacious techniques of goal pursuit is analogous to what silencing accounts face, namely a failure to adequately appreciate moral values or alternatives even when one ought not to pursue these alternatives. Note, though, that another problem exists on the opposite extreme: rather than a particular route of action or feature capturing all of one's attention, it would also be problematic if one were to equally appreciate all options without appropriately varying moral import. One might worry that, since OMM involves attending to one's thoughts and external environment in a *non-judgmental* manner, this does not lend to virtuous *judgment*. If OMM inclines one to become non-judgmental about moral concerns, we don't end up with a virtuous agent, but one who fails to draw any moral conclusions at all.[28] In a similar vein, recent research has also found that OMM interferes with one's autobiographical memory (Fujino et al., 2018) which could mean decreased access to one's moral identity, personal narrative, and moral ideals.[29] The general worry is that the psychological distance which OMM creates might also distance one from the 'good' and 'virtuous' parts of one's self, leading to less morally appropriate behavior, rather than more.

While OMM comes with problems of its own, it is worth speculating how engaging in OMM *in conjunction with* goal pursuit might alleviate such concerns. Due to their broadness and generality, superordinate goals have been described as akin to values or ideals (Carver & Scheier, 2001; Schwartz et al., 2001). If one sets and strives after goals, the use of OMM might not just help one become more attentive in general, but also more aware of these importantly held (virtuous) values and goals. Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010), for instance, found that "those high in mindfulness are more inclined to bring their attention to their current internal experience, to actively observe

and reflect on their thoughts and feelings" (p. 76). Likewise, Carlson (2013) argues that engaging in a metacognitive monitoring of one's current experience can remove informational barriers to self-knowledge. Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) suggest that if one values being virtuous or moral, and one becomes more aware of such values, such experiences result in an "increase [in] the self-importance of moral identity . . . the importance an individual places on protecting or enhancing her moral self-image" (p. 77). Thus, OMM might lead to problems for virtue cultivation – including a sort of amoral detachment – when done in isolation. But, when carried out in conjunction with the pursuit of virtue-relevant goals, perhaps this leads to both a greater awareness and focus on one's moral values, rather than detachment from them.[30]

Another way of construing the possible benefit of practicing OMM in conjunction with goal pursuit is seen when we consider an application of the silencing thesis that is most plausibly conducive to virtue: Consider, for instance, the soldier who realizes she must enter battle and the sacrifices this will entail. Yet, if she dwells *too much* on what she stands to lose, this may keep her from following through with what she ought to do. The silencing thesis has something to provide when it comes to virtue cultivation, but perhaps it isn't exactly 'silencing'; rather maybe something more like 'quieting.'

If virtue involves that certain reasons or alternatives be 'quieted', but not necessarily 'silenced', broadening attention – through something like OMM – in conjunction with techniques that focus attention in the pursuit virtue-relevant goals might be able to do the trick. We might suspect that OMM enables one to notice more features or alternatives, without necessarily being swept up by them. Yet, the attention narrowing effects present in

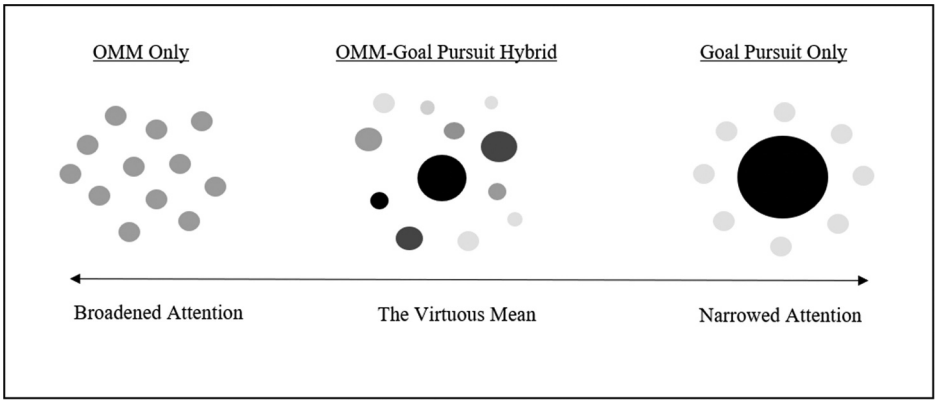

Figure 4. Figure 4 shows where three proposals of modifying cognition and behavior (OMM-Only, OMM-Goal Pursuit Hybrid, and Goal Pursuit-Only) fall on the spectrum of attentional breadth and the evaluative importance given to various features.

various techniques goal pursuit might also lead to subscribing these features or alternatives relative importance, enabling one to 'quiet' some reasons and pursue others.

One way to describe the potential beneficial outcome of this hybrid account of virtue cultivation is that such quieting of a variety of moral features results in the virtuous exercise, or *mean*, of the phronetic-related capacities of perception and evaluation. Such virtuous perception involves noticing and appreciating a spectrum of features and alternatives, rather than *just* the one option she ought (in the end) to pursue. Yet, virtuous evaluation will also at least sometimes involve 'quieting down' certain features or alternatives, for even though the virtuous soldier ought not to overlook the severe loss (e.g. death) that could come in battle, the relative import she ascribes to this potential loss must be kept in check, as she ought to evaluate her moral duty to go into battle as even more weighty and pressing.

This virtuous mean of exercising the phronetic-related capacities of perception and evaluation can be seen in Figure 4, whereby this depicts a balancing between two extremes of excessive attention narrowing and excessive attention broadening.

When attention is broadened too much, one is aware of a variety of objects or features, but remains non-judgmental, or fails to give any relative importance to such features. This is what we might expect with mere OMM. On the other hand, when attention is narrowed too much, one ignores all other features or options except for the sole item of her focused attention. This is what we might see when merely engaging in the aforementioned techniques of goal pursuit – a strict sense of 'silencing'. Yet, somewhere in the middle between these two extremes is where we might find the virtuous balance: a 'quieting' of various features – to a greater or lesser degree. The virtuous person still notices a wide variety of features and appreciates their relative value. Yet, appropriate exercise of the phronetic-related capacity of evaluation will amount to an accurate weighting, where one judges these features or options as having different degrees of moral import in one's particular circumstance.[31]

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I have suggested that several goal pursuit accounts of virtue cultivation involve techniques that narrow attention. While attention narrowing often proves successful in modifying our behavior, problematic ethical consequences loom. By narrowing our attention, our phronetic-related skills can be threatened, leading to morally inappropriate actions. But, even where this does not occur, we might still fail to pick up on the moral intricacies of our situation that virtue requires of us. While I have

argued this might not be problematic in cases where one is avoiding vice, cultivating virtue requires a balancing of broadened and narrowed attention. I suggested that by using both goal pursuit and OMM, we might have a better chance in avoiding problems that plague either in isolation, and so lead to the cultivation of virtue.

Notes

1. Largely thanks to philosophical situationists (Doris, 1998, 2002; Harman, 1999, 2000, 2003) who cast doubt on the empirical adequacy of virtue ethics.
2. See, for instance, (Doris, 2002; Kamtekar, 2004).
3. See, for instance, (Snow, 2006, 2010, 2016; Kamtekar, 2004; Besser-Jones, 2008; Railton, 2011,; Webber, 2016).
4. See Upton (2017); Other sorts of indirect modifications might be daily exercise or getting sufficient sleep.
5. Detailing a specific course of action in the planning phase will involve making subordinate, or more specific and short-term goals. See *Section IV*, where I suggest that planning a course of action is a way of setting a subordinate goal.The Rubicon Model of Action – and in particular the movement from adopting a superordinate goal to forming plans and setting further subordinate goals – is a plausible model of how we naturally go about pursuing goals. Gollwitzer and Brandstätter (1997), for instance, found that two-thirds of their subjects said that had naturally formulated set plans of action for their goals, without being instructed to do so. Likewise, Carver & Scheier explain that superordinate goals often given way to subordinate goals just below them (Carver & Scheier, 2003, p. 189).
6. Figure 1 was taken from Achtziger & Gollwitzer's Figure 12.1 (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2018, p. 487)
7. I am indebted to an anonymous referee for bringing Stichter's work to my attention.
8. In particular, see (Kamtekar, 2004, p. 487–8; Besser-Jones, 2008, p. 328–9; Railton, 2011, p. 323).
9. See Chapter 1 of Stichter (2018)
10. Here, Snow is referencing findings from Aaars and Dijkersterhuis (2000)
11. For further research that has found such priming effects, see: (Bry et al., 2008; Dijkersterhuis et al., 1998; Dijksterhuis & Van Knippenberg, 1998, 2000; Galinsky et al., 2008; Haddock et al., 2002; Hansen & Wanke, 2009; LeBoeuf & Estes, 2004; Lowery et al., 2007; Nussinson et al., 2010; Schubert & Hafner, 2003; Chen & Latham, 2014; Ganegoda et al., 2016; Papies, 2016; Payne et al., 2016; Van der Laan et al., 2017; Latham, 2018; Stajkovic et al., 2019).
12. Cf. note 5
13. I take the skills of perception and evaluation to be *necessary* elements to goal-based accounts of virtue cultivation, but not sufficient. There are likely other elements of phronesis that will also need to be had in order to act in a virtuous manner. However, discussion of all relevant and necessary elements is beyond the scope of this paper.
14. For more on the phenomena of goal shielding, see (Bélanger et al., 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Shah et al., 2002; Veling & Van Knippenberg, 2006).
15. To clarify, the narrowed attention present in the Action Phase is plausibly the same sort that occurs with the use of implementation intentions. As mentioned above in Section II, when one's goals are habitually initiated, "all that remains to be done is to

wait for the critical situation to arise. . .as soon as the critical situation is encountered, the respective goal directed behavior is initiated." (Achtziger & Gollwitzer, 2018, p. 492). With habitual goals, one skips the Planning Phase and, when the relevant situation arises, the habit is activated, and the Action Phase proceeds. Achtziger and Gollwitzer (2018) note that this not only applies to habits in general, but goals furnished with implementation intentions, as well: "If, upon crossing the Rubicon, the goal was furnished with implementation intentions. . .specifying when, where, and how actions are to be initiated, all that remains to be done is to wait for an appropriate opportunity, to arise (i.e. the "when" and "where" specified in the implementation intention). . .If (the opportunity that arises is) a match. . .goal-directed behavior is initiated immediately" (p. 492). Thus, whether one undergoes explicit planning or already has established habits or implementation intentions, the Action Phase proceeds. Since the "actional mindset is. . .hypothesized to be one of closed-mindedness", and "action mindset should emerge whenever people move effectively toward goal attainment," (ibid) this close-mindedness or narrowed attention is present when one is in Action Phase and effectively moving toward her goal, regardless of whether the goal is or is not furnished with implementation intentions.

16. See (Locke & Latham, 2019, 2013, 2002).
17. That implementation intentions are very specific is not to say that this is the only reason for why implementation intentions have proven effective.
18. In the following passage, Gollwitzer actually argues that implementation intentions are distinct from goal intentions: "[With implementation intentions,] it is not a person's self that is linked to a desired end state (as with goal intentions); rather the person commits himself or herself to respond to a certain situation in a specific manner." (Gollwitzer 1990: 494). However, it is unclear that implementation intentions and goal intentions really do differ in this way, as one could adopt a goal intention for a very specific, subordinate goal, such as to "brush my teeth every morning as soon as I get out of bed." Setting this specific goal of brushing your teeth immediately upon rising seems to link a response (brushing teeth) to a certain situation (getting out of bed), yet it isn't clear how this means it ceases to be a goal intention. In any case, even if there is a conceptual difference between goal intentions and implementation intentions, this difference would seem to be something other than the similarities in specificity and narrowed attention, since goal intentions could be formed in a specified way that is on par with a given implementation intention, and as a result, both would likely have the same sorts of attention narrowing effects.
19. Prospective memories are desired future actions that one commits to, such as "I will go jogging at 7am tomorrow."
20. 'Crossing the Rubicon' is a reference to Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon. This phrase is used to indicate a movement from deliberation to commitment to a course of action.
21. At least, superordinate goals will likely not strictly narrowing attention and avoid such negative consequences when these superordinate goals are not further furnished with more specific subordinate goals.
22. We might think subjects did, in fact, adopt such goals, since those in the high-hurry condition were give these precise sorts of instructions.
23. Conversely, broadened attention has been shown to increase pro-social behavior because when one's attention is broadened, she is more likely to perceive helping occasions in her immediate environment. (Mukerjee et al., 2018).
24. Even if the silencing account is correct and such objections are mistaken, it is unclear that goal-based accounts remained unscathed. Some (Schuster, 2020; Stark, 2001;

Vigani, 2019) have pointed out that the silencing account might only apply to practical reasoning, and so only normative and/or motivating reasons are to be silenced. But this does not mean that all emotional responses ought to be likewise silenced. But, if this is true, then in order for one to emotionally respond to an object of value (even when it ought not, and does not, enter into one's practical reasoning), this object must be attended to. But various goal-based accounts seem to be in tension with such attention. If non-goal related features and values are overlooked and only goal-related aspects are focused on, then perhaps this account fares even worse than other silencing accounts.

25. Figure 2 was adapted from Figure 12.,1, Achtziger and Gollwitzer (2018, p. 487).
26. Figure 3 was adapted from Figure 12.,1, Achtziger and Gollwitzer (2018, p. 487).
27. Upton groups all five different methods together and spells out their virtue-related benefits. Rather than advocating for meditation, in general, I rather propose we specifically look to the literature on OMM and the attention broadening effects that OMM can bring. In addition to focusing on OMM, rather than meditation more generally, my account also differs from Upton's, for I intend to incorporate the use of OMM *with* methods of goal pursuit.
28. I thank Sabrina Little for highlighting this problem. For a personal account of how taking up a non-judgmental mind-set can interfere with making evaluative judgments which morality requires, see Ratnayake's (2019) essay.
29. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for bringing this research to my attention.
30. Research indicates that OMM does produce the attention-broadening effects that I have noted, but that OMM practitioners often begin by focusing their attention on a particular object, such as with FAM. For instance, Slagter et al. (2007) detail Vipassana meditation as beginning by first "focusing or stabilizing concentration on an object such as the breath. . . [and then] broaden[ing] one's focus, cultivating a non-reactive form of sensory awareness or 'bare' attention" (2007, p. 1228). Likewise, Lippelt et al. (2014) make note that "once practitioners become familiar with the FAM technique and can easily sustain their attentional focus on an object for a considerable amount of time, they often progress to OMM" (2014, p. 1). This critical role that prelimarly attention focusing plays in OMM makes for an interesting observation with respect to how goal pursuit – and the narrowed attention that comes along with it – could work in conjunction with OMM. Further research should look at whether the narrowed attention that occurs in goal pursuit might take a similar sort of functional role that FAM has played in helping a practitioner carry out OMM. I am thankful to an anonymous referee for highlighting this connection between FAM and OMM.
31. One may wonder whether this hybrid proposal is threatened by what I suggest earlier in the paper, namely: If goal pursuit is most effective when attention is narrowed, then we should expect that introducing broadened attention will actually undermine goal pursuit. While it's possible that OMM has such detrimental effects, it's far from clear that it would. Earlier in the paper, I proposed that the lack of narrowed attention is what makes, at least in part, vague or broad goals rather ineffective. But why vague or broad goals don't often get satisfied is because one fails to maintain focus, and their attention gets swept by other distractions or temptations. Yet, the broadened attention that comes along with OMM is different; it isn't that one's attention 'bounces around', but rather it remains focused on a range of stimuli.

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