



## Living with Wisdom

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**100-word abstract:**

Flourishing is generally acknowledged to be a matter of living well. Yet in contemporary literature, there is little attention paid to the life of the mind as a component of human flourishing. Those contemporary philosophers who do examine wisdom or understanding as a virtue generally focus on the place of practical, rather than theoretical, wisdom in the good or flourishing life. While Aristotle and others have proposed controversial claims about contemplation as actualizing the highest human capacity, I will propose three uncontroversial ways in which theoretical wisdom should be held to contribute significantly to a flourishing life.

Flourishing is generally acknowledged to be a matter of ‘living well.’ If human beings are a kind of animal with which certain advanced cognitive capacities are associated, e.g., capacities for reflection and understanding, one might think that ‘living well’ as a member of our kind typically or normatively involves the perfection of these cognitive capacities beyond merely the instrumental use of cognition for directing other human activities. Yet in contemporary ethical literature, there is little attention paid to the life of the mind as an intrinsically valuable component of human flourishing. Those contemporary philosophers who do examine wisdom or understanding as a virtue generally focus on the place of practical, rather than theoretical, wisdom in the good or flourishing life.<sup>1</sup> Such theories all reflect on the way in which we utilize cognition for the sake of other pragmatic aims, and do not address whether or how cognitive activities could be cultivated for their own sake.

Even more starkly, some Neo-Aristotelians have explicitly excluded contemplation from their account of human flourishing. Rosalind Hursthouse associates claims about the place of contemplation in the flourishing life with an implausible non-naturalism in ethics:

There is, of course, room for disagreement over what we are. It might be said, for example, that what human beings *are* are possessors of an immortal soul through which they can come to know and love God for eternity. But ‘ethical naturalism’ is usually thought of as not only basing ethics in some way on considerations of human nature, but also as taking human beings to be part of the natural, biological order of living things. Its standard first premise is that what human beings *are* is a species of rational, social animals, and thereby a species of living things – which ... have a particular biological make-up and a natural life-cycle. ... We might say that the [end of human beings] was the preparation of our souls for the life hereafter, or that it was contemplation – the good functioning of the theoretical intellect. But to adopt the first is to go beyond naturalism towards supernaturalism, and even philosophers have balked at following Aristotle and endorsing the second.<sup>2</sup>

As Hursthouse points out, Aristotle held that intellectual activity is the most valuable human activity because it is the most divine. Wisdom, consequently, has the central place among all Aristotle’s virtues.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, what might be worrying is that this view of theoretical wisdom was not restricted to Aristotle. In fact, if there is anything approaching *consensus* in the history of philosophy, it surrounds the claim that contemplation should have a central place in the good life. Views as disparate as Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism are broadly agreed that activities of the mind according to which humans contemplate the highest truths (e.g., *prajna*, wisdom) are the activities most conducive to a well-lived life, or those activities in which living well essentially consists.

I recount these classical intuitions about the role of intellectual achievements in the good life not to defend them in detail, but merely to question whether the principled exclusion of contemplation from ethical theory has led to a blind spot concerning how intellectual activities have a significant

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<sup>1</sup> Many identify wisdom simpliciter with practical wisdom. E.g., Shane Ryan, “Wisdom: Understanding and the Good Life,” *Acta Analytica* 31, 3 (2016): 235-251; Stephen R. Grimm, “Wisdom,” in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 93, 1 (2015): 1-16. For an exception to this trend, see Valerie Tiberius and Jason Swartwood, “Philosophical Foundations of Wisdom,” in *Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom*, edited by Robert Sternberg and Judith Gluck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 206, 218.

<sup>3</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a-1179b. For one reading of Aristotle’s claims, see Gavin Lawrence, “Aristotle and the Ideal Life,” in *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 102, No. 1 (Jan. 1993): 1-34.

place in every life lived well. For my part, I will not here defend the classical intuition that theoretical wisdom has *the* central place among all the virtues. Instead, I will argue for a modest claim that intellectual virtue has a *significant* place in constituting a life well lived. I will propose three uncontroversial ways in which theoretical virtues, perfecting the life of the mind, can contribute significantly to a flourishing life, and so indirectly make a case that there should be greater explicit focus on the role of theoretical wisdom or contemplation in contemporary accounts of what it is to live our lives well.

### 1. Argument One: Perfecting Innate (Species-Typical) Capacities

This first argument hinges not on the view that we have an obligation to cultivate our capacities, as Kant might argue,<sup>4</sup> but merely on the idea that wisdom or theoretical reflection has *intrinsic value* regardless of its ability to contribute to practical aims or purposes. If the life of the mind has intrinsic value, then a life lived well will involve, to some extent, cultivation of the intellectual life. There are two lemmas here: first, the claim that cultivation of cognitive capacities generally without aiming at practical result has intrinsic value; second, that intrinsic value would justify a place for cognitive activity in the good life.

On one hand, there are reasons that those interested in a good or flourishing life might neglect the intellectual for a focus on moral virtue. Aristotle introduces the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue precisely in terms of the way in which exemplifying the moral virtues in a high degree seems to have little connection to virtues traditionally identified as intellectual virtues: e.g., wisdom, understanding, knowledge. Aristotle confesses that intellectual virtues do not make us good human beings *simpliciter*, but only good thinkers – good in a particular respect.<sup>5</sup> This would seem to imply that theoretical virtues do not contribute to living well, but are rather like being good at a craft or a sport, i.e., a *techne*.

On the other, there are good reasons to think that, even if intellectual perfection is a limited kind of perfection of the human person only in a qualified respect, intellectual virtue nevertheless has intrinsic value. Many find it plausible even that mere knowledge – e.g., justified true beliefs with an anti-Gettier condition – has intrinsic value. A much-discussed ‘value problem’ in contemporary epistemology besets certain theories of knowledge according to which knowledge does not appear more intrinsically valuable than merely true belief. For many people, such a result would be intuitively wrong; *knowing* the truth is more intrinsically valuable than merely believing it.<sup>6</sup> The argument becomes more plausible when considering not merely knowing the truth – a rather

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<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant proposes such an obligation in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, ed. Lara Denis (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6:391-392. See further, Robert N. Johnson, *Self-Improvement: An Essay in Kantian Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102b-1103b.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Linda Zagzebski, "The Search for the Source of Epistemic Good," in *Virtue Epistemology*, eds. John Greco and John Turri (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 152. For a broad overview: Duncan Pritchard, John Turri, and J. Adam Carter, "The Value of Knowledge", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/knowledge-value/>>.

minimal achievement in the case of trivial truths, such as knowing how many cups there are in my cupboard – but in some higher and sustained cognitive activities. It is very plausible that, if knowledge is more valuable than merely believing the truth, that there is *mutatis mutandis* a greater value in those intellectual activities that aim at something greater than mere knowledge.

John Henry Newman is among those who directly defended the value of cultivating our intellectual capacities for their own sake. In his *Idea of a University*, he drew an analogy from beauty or excellences:

Surely it is very intelligible to say, and that is what I say here, that Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence. Every thing has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of things; and the perfection of one is not the perfection of another. Things animate, inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a *best* of themselves, which is an object of pursuit. Why do you take such pains with your garden or your park? You see to your walks and turf and shrubberies; to your trees and drives; not as if you meant to make an orchard of the one, or corn or pasture land of the other, but because there is a special beauty in all that is goodly in wood, water, plain, and slope, brought all together by art into one shape, and grouped into one whole. Your cities are beautiful, your palaces, your public buildings, your territorial mansions, your churches; and their beauty leads to nothing beyond itself. There is a physical beauty and a moral: there is a beauty of person, there is a beauty of our moral being, which is natural virtue; and in like manner there is a beauty, there is a perfection, of the intellect.<sup>7</sup>

Newman's kind of argument is most at home with an Aristotelian way of thinking about flourishing as perfecting the kind of things human beings are, presuming some account of the teleological ends associated with humans as a species. Nevertheless, the argument does not require that particular metaphysical superstructure to be plausible. For example, the claim that not just any kind of intellectual activity perfects the human intellect also does not strictly require an account of the teleology of those cognitive faculties.

John Greco, as an illustration, has addressed the value problem in epistemology by appeal to the value of achievements and skilled performances. Achievements are valuable in themselves, because the value of the skill is partly constitutive of the value of the performance, as in playing baseball well or dancing ballet. Epistemic activities and faculties likewise involve achievement, and achievements in the epistemic arena can be intrinsically valuable.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, even in the epistemic realm, we might value some achievements more than others. I take it that understanding and knowledge of what are traditionally called 'higher' truths – truths of religion or metaphysics or comprehensive scientific understanding – are intuitively understood to be impressive and valuable epistemic achievements than mere knowledge of ordinary facts or figures. Call reflection on these things "contemplation." Nothing hangs on the particular content as long as it seems plausible that there are *some* significant objects of knowledge do involve greater or more significant types of epistemic achievement. To the extent to which intellectual achievements can be significant, for their own sake and not because of the use to which we could put our understanding and knowledge of

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<sup>7</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, new impression (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 121-122. <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/discourse5.html>,

<sup>8</sup> John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

these higher truths, then there is a clear and intuitive sense in which activities like contemplation are intrinsically valuable.

If it is true that contemplation has intrinsic value, how does that justify a place for contemplation in the life lived well? Even if we grant that contemplation has intrinsic value, it might be like the value of athletic capacities: for some, it will be valuable to dedicate time and energy to cultivating these athletic excellences but, for many, it would be a waste of time to dedicate significant resources to trying to honing our, at best, mediocre natural aptitudes. And, plausibly, intellectual capacities are as unevenly distributed as athletic prowess or capacities to engage in aesthetic creation. Not everyone can dedicate their lives to the study of scientific truth, or philosophy, or theology; some are naturally more gifted than others are.

By contrast, we do not need to give an account of the teleological ends or essence of human beings for it to be plausible that everyone's lived might be enhanced by cultivating their intellectual life. First, I propose that cognitive capability is among our *species-typical* capacities. This is to say that capacities for reflection on higher things are typical of members of our species, such that most human beings will be able to cultivate and engage in the activities associated with their intellectual life to some degree. In other words, humans have an innate and species-typical ability to engage, to some extent and at some times, in reflection on higher truths – in contemplation. This makes some moderate achievement in the intellectual life is *relatively* open to all.

Second, as these achievements are relatively open to all humans, achievements of the sort associated with contemplation have a sort of beauty or value that is not lessened by the fact that we might not all be able to engage in continual contemplation. There is no reason to think that cultivation of my intellectual life would interfere with my other activities to the extent that I should *never* engage in contemplation, even if I might be able to engage in real or sustained contemplation only on rare occasions. Yet, in order to show that the life lived well involves a significant place for intellectual goods, the first argument only needs to conclude that cultivating my intellectual gifts, to the extent that I am able, would make the life I am living *better*, more *worthwhile*, than a life lived without this cultivation. And, if it is true both that intellectual activity has intrinsic value and that these activities are relatively open to anyone, then it seems plausible that cultivation of my intellectual gifts *would* enhance the overall value of my life. Even if I am able to take time from my busy schedule to go on a retreat and read poetry or spiritual books once a year, or can only take a few weekends a year for a course on continuing science education, these activities are instances of true contemplation. As long as they do not unduly interfere with my other activities, then it seems that I have good reason to set aside this time for the cultivation of my intellectual life.

## 2. Argument Two: Intellectual Excellences Enhance Other Excellences

If one accepts the first argument, then there is a progressively stronger case to be made for the value of the intellectual life in the second and third arguments. Nevertheless, I take each of these arguments to be substantially independent of the others, although all the arguments will rely on the premise that intellectual activities of contemplation have intrinsic and not merely instrumental value.

In the second argument, the claim will be that intellectual excellences are unique among other kinds of excellences. Contemplation, for example, was described as a kind of reflection on higher truths. Nevertheless, the value of contemplation – an intrinsic value – is here argued to be not merely the value of grasping these truths in themselves. Intellectual excellences have the potential to enhance the quality or value of all of our other activities. The second argument does not conclude as strongly as Socrates' claim that the unexamined life is not worth living (C.f., *Apology* 38a-b). All the second argument aims to show is that your life is *more* worthwhile to the extent that you engage in reflection. Your life might be fully worth living without examination, as contemplation is not necessary to live a worthwhile life, but your life would have been *better* had you engaged in some contemplation. Thus, I will argue that contemplation positively affects how we engage in all or many of our other activities, and so we have additional reason to think that contemplation has a significant role in the good life.

In many individual cases, there are ways it is intuitive that intellectual excellences positively affect or enhance other dimensions of agency. For example, having a contemplative attitude, pursuing poetry, literature, philosophy, or meditation outside of my day job, might seem to enhance the quality of my normal everyday activities. I find greater satisfaction even in the midst of tedious work. Much of traditional monastic life, especially the Cistercian tradition as advocated by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, was centered on repetitive activities associated with farm labor, given transcendent purpose in alternation with a life of contemplative prayer and study. Aside from the intuitive pull of these cases, Matthew Boyle, following John McDowell, has argued against views of rationality where our rational capacities are merely one capacity alongside all of our other capacities. Instead, they argue that we should view rationality as a special capacity that transforms or qualifies all of our other human capacities.<sup>9</sup> Candace Vogler defended that view, with help from Aquinas, and proposed human intellectual excellences have the power to positively transform and enhance our other activities because intellectual powers are unique in qualifying all of our other powers.<sup>10</sup>

Especially if there were a quasi-intellectual moral virtue as practical wisdom, involving right exercise of intellectual capacity in the realm of moral agency, then it would be plausible that developing our general intellectual capacities for contemplation could indirectly enhance or improve the operation of that moral virtue. Iris Murdoch echoes this sentiment in noting that contemplative intellectual excellences have an important connection with our overall moral life: “[We] can all receive moral help by focusing our attention upon things which are valuable; virtuous people, great art, [...] the idea of goodness itself. [...] [Our] ability to act well ‘when the time comes’ depends partly, perhaps largely, upon the quality of our habitual objects of attention.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet, if intellectual achievement or excellence can positively affect my agency in individual activities, it might not follow that intellectual excellences, especially if those excellences were very

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew Boyle, “Additive Theories of Rationality: A Critique,” *European Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 24, No. 3 (2016): 527-555

<sup>10</sup> Candace Vogler, “The Intellectual Animal,” in *New Blackfriars*, Vol 100, Is. 1090 (Nov. 2019): 663-676.

<sup>11</sup> Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (New York: Penguin, 1997), 345.

modest, would contribute generally to a life lived well. To use a personal example, a bane of my existence is a theologian who has discovered a few truths about developments in contemporary natural science and attempts to draw historical-significance from them, to great rhetorical effect. For instance, this theologian might claim that, because biological species developed through a gradual process of natural selection, so it follows that many other things are constantly evolving from states of lesser to greater complexity: universes, the structure of space-time, propositions, and God Himself. Alternatively, they could claim that the theory of general relativity in physics entails that all ethical and physical truths are relative to cultural frameworks. What has gone wrong is that these theologians have a halfway grasp of the science, being led astray by the ordinary language meaning of terms like 'relative' or 'evolution,' and these confusions have led them to misunderstand many other things. Their attempts to gain scientific knowledge have led to them embracing other and more serious false beliefs.

Similar issues occur elsewhere, such that moderate intellectual activity of some kinds can negatively affect my other activities. Research into the Dunning-Kreuger effect might show that, when I reflect on my intellectual capacities, I tend to overestimate them and act more poorly as a result.<sup>12</sup> Aside from these issues, an even more significant worry is that pursuit of contemplation could lead us away from what is truly of value in life. Walker Percy's short book, *Lost in the Cosmos*, proposed a predicament in which contemporary human beings find themselves as a result of scientific progress: "Every advance in an objective understanding of the Cosmos and in its technological control further distances the self from the Cosmos precisely in the degree of the advance —so that in the end the self becomes a spacebound ghost which roams the very Cosmos it understands perfectly."<sup>13</sup> Especially, then, if what is ultimately valuable for human beings is not merely objective knowledge about the universe, intellectual excellence and its pursuit might distance us from a life lived well.

None of these cases shows us that intellectual excellence necessarily is such to influence my life negatively, or that intellectual excellence does not have a significant place in the good life. I concede, with Percy, that intellectual excellence in a given area is *sufficient* to live a good life. One way for me to deal with the halfway scientific knowledge of the theologian would be to claim that *some kinds* of intellectual achievement might not be excellences, and that the theologian is exemplifying an intellectual *vice*, rather than an excellence – e.g., gullibility or lack of rigor. Yet, my claim is more modest: that intellectual excellence *can* enhance any life, not that *any* excellence (even if the theologian's grasp of science is an excellence) is sufficient to do so. Such a position does not require that contemplation of *any* truth, at *any* time or in any situation, is sufficient to make your life better. It is perfectly possible, for example, that engaging in contemplation poorly or at the wrong times could distract you from other, more important aims. In the context of the theologian, there are some

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<sup>12</sup> Justin Kruger and David Dunning, "Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 77, 6 (1999): 1121–1134. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121.

<sup>13</sup> Walker Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (New York: Open Road, 2000), 20.



excellences that the theologian could have had – e.g., a better grasp of moral theology – that could have had a better influence on their life.

Even Percy would not claim that scientific knowledge has *negative* value. Instead, it seems plausible that scientific knowledge, at the right time and in the right context, *can* enhance the value of a life – especially if that person has other intellectual excellences (such as good self-knowledge, perhaps). Further, if scientific knowledge could not enhance their life, there might have been other excellences of the intellect that could have done so. Traditional accounts of speculative ‘wisdom’ attempted to identify a valuable kind of intellectual excellence that ranges over the whole of one’s activities and life, such that possession of *this* excellence was sufficient to make every life more worth living. Whether or not there is such an intellectual excellence, what I am arguing is only that, for any life, there are *some* intellectual excellences relative to it, which would plausibly enhance *that* life. This is then to say that contemplation, by being part of their life, would enhance what they are doing elsewhere. Anyone who is living life well, but without having cultivated any of their intellectual capacities, could be better off if they took the time to engage in some appropriate kind of intellectual cultivation.

### 3. Argument Three: Failing to Cultivate Intellect Can Be Vicious

The final argument makes the strongest claim about intellectual capacities: *failing* to improve one’s intellectual virtues can be culpable and vicious. This is not to claim, as Kant earlier was cited as claiming, that we have a persistent duty to cultivate all of our capacities. Rather, the idea is that, in any life lived well, it is plausible that we have obligations to cultivate *some* intellectual capacities at *some* point. Consequently, failure to cultivate intellectual virtue *entirely* will be vicious or culpable. I will argue that the sort of person who fails to cultivate intellectual virtue in this overall way is a narrow-minded person or a bigot, and that the negative connotation of these words is warranted.

First, to illustrate the plausibility of this claim about narrow-mindedness and bigotry, consider Newman’s characterization of these traits:

Narrow minds have no power of throwing themselves into the minds of others. They have stiffened in one position, as limbs of the body subjected to confinement, or as our organs of speech, which after a while cannot learn new tones and inflections. They have already parcelled out to their own satisfaction the whole world of knowledge; they have drawn their lines, and formed their classes, and given to each opinion, argument, principle, and party, its own locality; they profess to know where to find every thing; and they cannot learn any other disposition. They are vexed at new principles of arrangement, and grow giddy amid cross divisions; and, even if they make the effort, cannot master them. They think that any one truth excludes another which is distinct from it, and that every opinion is contrary to their own opinions which is not included in them. They cannot separate words from their own ideas, and ideas from their own associations; and if they attain any new view of a subject, it is but for a moment. They catch it one moment, and let it go the next; and then impute to subtlety in it, or obscurity in its expression, what really arises from their own want of elasticity or vigour. And when they attempt to describe it in

their own language, their nearest approximation to it is a mistake; not from any purpose to be unjust, but because they are expressing the ideas of another mind, as it were, in translation.<sup>14</sup>

The claim is then that narrow-mindedness and bigotry are faults of failing to cultivate an intellectual capacity, and these failures can be moral faults in some, even if not all, cases. While it does not seem impossible to be a sort of person who is morally excellent but intellectually narrow-minded, it seems nevertheless plausible that it would be a moral fault in these persons if they *never* strove to cultivate their intellectual powers and widen their outlook, even if – through no fault of their own – their efforts were unsuccessful. That is, one does not seem quite as culpable for one’s bigotry or narrow-mindedness if there was no opportunity to broaden one’s outlook or if one lacked the intellectual capacity to recognize one’s narrow-mindedness.

Even if one is not convinced that one has a uniquely moral obligation to cultivate one’s capacities, most people would still think the life that is better lived is that life in which such people *do* broaden their outlook and cultivate their capacities to some degree. That is, cognitive biases of the sort exemplified in bigotry or narrow-mindedness limit the possibilities of living a flourishing life – and there is empirical research that illustrates the intuitive appeal of this claim.<sup>15</sup> The way to avoid these faults involves a firm, persistent disposition to cultivate my intellectual capacities to some degree, as I am able. For this reason, one might think that intellectual excellences do have some significant place in the life lived well.

#### 4. Conclusion

If these three arguments are successful, whether individually or progressively, then we have good reason to think that cultivating intellectual virtue has a significant place in living a good life. As noted, many accounts of the good life have so far been lacking in identifying an appropriate place for theoretical wisdom. In conclusion, however, I might offer one last consideration from a recent book that attempts to rectify this imbalance. In his forthcoming *Virtue and Meaning*, David McPherson proposes that neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics could benefit greatly from focusing again on a search for spirituality and meaning.<sup>16</sup> Although benefitting greatly from his insights, my argument has been more modest. My proposal has only been that cultivating the life of the mind should

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<sup>14</sup> John Henry Newman, “Wisdom, as Contrasted with Faith and Bigotry,” in *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 307-308. <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/oxford/sermon14.html>.

<sup>15</sup> There is a burgeoning literature in childhood psychology on the role cognitive biases play in developmental disorders. For example: JYF Lau, AM Waters, “Annual research review: an expanded account of information-processing mechanisms in risk for child and adolescent anxiety and depression” *J Child Psychol Psychiatry* 58, 4 (2016):387–407; J Dudeney, L Sharpe, C Hunt, “Attentional bias towards threatening stimuli in children with anxiety: a meta-analysis” *Clin Psychol Rev.* 40 (2015):66–75; JM Cisler, EH Koster, “Mechanisms of attentional biases towards threat in anxiety disorders: an integrative review” *Clin Psychol Rev.* 30, 2 (2010): 203–16; E. Fox, *Cognitive and neuroscientific approaches to understanding human emotions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); IH Gotlib, J Joormann, “Cognition and depression: current status and future directions” *Annu Rev Clin Psychol.* 6 (2010): 285–312; A Mathews, C MacLeod, “Cognitive vulnerability to emotional disorders” *Annu Rev Clin Psychol.* 1 (2005):167–95. Cited in Booth, C., Songco, A., Parsons, S. et al, “The CogBIAS longitudinal study protocol: cognitive and genetic factors influencing psychological functioning in adolescence” *BMC Psychol* 5 (2017): 41. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-017-0210-3>.

<sup>16</sup> David McPherson, *Virtue and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

uncontroversially hold a significant place in any account of a life lived well. However, if my argument is correct, then it seems important to investigate further the possibility of intellectual excellences that contribute greatly to *every* life – e.g., speculative wisdom. The classical positions of those who did believe our final human end lay in contemplation of God or higher truths deserve greater consideration than many contemporary virtue ethicists have given them.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thanks to William Dunaway (UMSL) for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.