

VIRTUES OF ART
PETER GOLDIE AND DOMINIC McIVER LOPES

I—PETER GOLDIE

VIRTUES OF ART AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

What is the point of art, and why does it matter to us human beings? The answer that I will give in this paper, following on from an earlier paper on the same subject, is that art matters because our being actively engaged with art, either in its production or in its appreciation, is part of what it is to live well. The focus in the paper will be on the dispositions—the virtues of art production and of art appreciation—that are necessary for this kind of active engagement with art. To begin with, I will argue that these dispositions really are virtues and not mere skills. Then I will show how the virtues of art, and their exercise in artistic activity, interweave with the other kinds of virtue which are exercised in ethical and contemplative activity. And finally, I will argue that artistic activity affords, in a special way, a certain kind of emotional sharing that binds us together with other human beings.

I

Introduction. The central idea that I want to argue for is that artistic virtues—virtues of art production and of art appreciation—are as much genuine virtues as ethical and intellectual virtues, and that, as such, their exercise, like the exercise of these other virtues, is done for its own sake and is constitutive of human well-being.¹

In a recent paper, ‘Towards a Virtue Theory of Art’ (Goldie 2007a), I began to explore this idea, in an Aristotelian spirit, by drawing an analogy between ethics and art. This paper picks up from where that one finished. The concern I want to address now is, roughly, whether the exercise of the virtues of art really is an exercise of *virtue*, and thus partly constitutive of human well-being, or whether instead what I claim to be the virtues of art are really not virtues proper. Rather, the concern is, they are more like local skills

¹ Unless the context suggests otherwise, by intellectual virtues I mean the virtues which are expressed in what Aristotle called contemplative activity or *theōrein*, thus excluding practical wisdom, which I will subsume under the ethical virtues. I will say more about contemplation later.

whose exercise is by no means constitutive of human well-being.

This is a real challenge. Art and artistic activity, when well done, are, we might all accept, a Good Thing. But there are many good things in a human life that are not themselves constitutive of well-being and that are not sought after for their own sake. Some of these are luxuries, such as excellent food, designer clothes and private swimming pools, which we often delight in partly because we have them and others do not. Others are skills and the products of skills, such as the ability of a cobbler to make a good shoe, something which is good of its kind. And yet other good things are necessities, such as nourishment, sleep, leisure, protection from the elements and good health. But, at least for Aristotle, leading an ethical and intellectual life is more than just necessity, skill or optional extra; it is what living well or well-being consists of. The challenge, then, is to show that artistic activity, whether of production or appreciation, is really expressive of the virtue of art, and really is just as much part of what well-being consists of.²

Why does this matter? What would be materially different if artistic activity were just a luxury or a skill, or, like sleeping, just a necessary condition for leading a good life? The central concern here is that artistic activity should be both non-instrumentally valuable and partly constitutive of human well-being.³ But the point is not just an abstract one about the kind of value in artistic activity. The point is also one about human psychology, about motivation. Having a good night's sleep is instrumentally valuable, valuable only in so far as it enables one to lead a good life. Shoes are valuable only for the purpose of wearing on your feet, and the exercise of the skill of making them is valuable only for this purpose and is not valuable for its own sake. A luxury item (a mink coat for example) might be valued for its own sake as well as for its purpose (of keeping out the cold), but still it should be thought of as an optional extra, so that its possession and use is neither necessary for leading a good life nor a constituent part of it.⁴ In contrast, if I am right, the activities of art-making and of art appreciation are part of a good life, and are

² Aristotle drew an analogy between art and ethics, but did not himself include artistic activity in his account of well-being—although see my remarks about *theōrein* later.

³ I will leave intrinsic value to one side, and will not consider what the relation is between non-instrumental and intrinsic value.

⁴ Christine Korsgaard (1983) discusses examples such as these, of what she calls 'mixed value'. The mink coat is, in fact, her example.

not done for some further end, but for the sake of art, under the concept of art, as I put it in my earlier paper, following Richard Wollheim.⁵ So, if I am right, in engaging in artistic activity, of production and of appreciation, one would be as mistaken to be motivated only by some further end as one would be if one were to think that a contemplative activity such as doing philosophy should be done only for some further end—valuable only in so far as it gives rise to a pleasant feeling perhaps, or enables one to make a living or impress one's colleagues.⁶ This, then, is why the challenge matters.

To begin with, I will consider, and respond to, a concern that the dispositions—what I claim to be virtues—of art-making and art appreciation seem intuitively to be unlike the ethical virtues in two important respects. First, they are much more *local* than the ethical virtues, which require a high degree of what is called *cross-situational consistency*. Putting it very roughly, we have no problem with someone who has only a very local artistic ability, but we expect more of ethics—it is not enough just to be honest with one's friends, say, one should be honest *period*. This might seem to imply that the virtues of art are not really virtues but skills—abilities that have only a very limited range of application. I will argue that this is not the case: one of the marks of the dispositions of art-making and art appreciation being virtues (and not mere skills) is that they do have a wider range of application within the arts than might at first appear. And yet this still reveals a difference with the ethical virtues—a difference now that is one of degree. I will argue that this difference of degree is one important feature of the artistic virtues which they share with the intellectual virtues, rather than with the ethical virtues.

Secondly, what I claim to be the virtues of art seem to be unlike the ethical virtues in another respect: the ethical virtues are motivationally *demanding* in ways that the artistic virtues are not. The point is a familiar one. If someone fails on an occasion to do what is required of his ethical virtue, honesty for example, then we will think the less of him, whereas this does not seem to apply where the

⁵ In Goldie (2007a), I discussed the difficulties surrounding motivation, and in particular what kinds of motivation can reasonably be included as falling 'under the concept of art'.

⁶ The 'only' is important here. Much artistic (and intellectual) activity is done both for its own sake and for some further end, and will thus be examples of Korsgaard's mixed value. For example, shields, swords and religious artefacts can be made under the concept of art, as well as for some further end.

artistic virtues are concerned. In this respect, again, they seem more like skills, which one can exercise on an appropriate occasion if one chooses, but which one is not *required* to exercise. But I think that the answer to this concern is very much along the same lines as the first, namely that there is a kind of demandingness in relation to the artistic virtues, but that, in this respect too, the artistic virtues are analogous more to the intellectual virtues than to the ethical virtues. If one were to insist that these other kinds of virtue must be like the ethical virtues in *all* respects if they are to be virtues proper, then one will find oneself excluding not only the artistic virtues but also the intellectual virtues that are expressed in contemplation.⁷

The next part of my response is to show that, in spite of there being important normative and psychological differences between the three broad kinds of virtue, the exercise of the virtues of art-making and art appreciation are, in important ways, intimately interwoven with the exercise of both the ethical and the intellectual virtues, and this has important consequences for the virtues of art. In particular, I will show how our use of certain thick concepts has application across all three domains. The differences between the virtues, then, should not mask these important connections—connections made manifest in the fact that the exercise of all kinds of virtue is constitutive of well-being.

Finally, I will try to develop a discussion of something which I think is distinctive of the virtues of art that I touched on at the end of my last paper: the idea that the exercise of the virtues of art-making and art appreciation, when properly virtues and not mere skills, binds us together, unites us, in emotional sharing with our fellow human beings.

II

The Virtues of Art: Cross-Situational Consistency and Demandingness. When we think about someone's ethical virtue, such as honesty, we expect it to be expressed in thought, feeling and action across

⁷ It might be suggested here that an appeal to contemplation as a virtuous activity will only be persuasive to someone who has already bought into an Aristotelian picture of what a virtuous life consists of. Perhaps. But one should not forget here that my notion of contemplation, which I discussed in Goldie (2007a), is a broad and ecumenical one, of putting to use an enquiring mind, and with this notion in place, contemplation does seem more intuitively to be partly constitutive of a human being's good life.

a wide domain within the ethical. But this does not seem to be the case with the virtues of art, a fact which seems to threaten the claim that the virtues of art really are virtues, rather than more localized skills.

Consider someone who is honest only with friends and loved ones. She cannot be said to be an honest *person*, or to have the character trait or virtue of honesty, for we expect more of such a person. This is what Rosalind Hursthouse says we should expect of the honest person:

[W]e expect a reliability in their actions; they do no lie or cheat or plagiarize or casually pocket other people's possessions. You can rely on them to tell you the truth, to give sincere references, to own up to their mistakes, not to pretend to be more knowledgeable than they are; you can buy a used car from them or ask for their opinion with confidence ... [W]e expect them in conversation to praise or defend people, real and fictitious, for their honesty, to avoid consorting with the dishonest, to choose, where possible, to work with honest people and have honest friends, to be bringing up their children to be honest ... [W]e expect them to uphold the ideals of truth and honesty in their jobs ... (Hursthouse 1999, pp. 10, 11, 12)⁸

Hursthouse's point can be put like this. An honest person's disposition, his virtue, which is expressed in honest thoughts, motivations, feelings and actions, must not be restricted in its domain; rather, it must be expressed consistently, and in a fully engaged way, across a wide range of different ethical situations, just as her examples illustrate. If it were restricted just to friends and loved ones, for example, or just to one's colleagues, or just to matters of claiming one's expenses, it would not be a virtue proper but a more localized disposition. This idea of *cross-situational consistency* does, indeed, seem to capture what we expect of an honest person: a tendency to be honest only in certain aspects of one's ethical life does detract from our willingness to ascribe the virtue.

One worry here which I should mention, and then put to one side, might seem to threaten across the board the very idea of the virtues. The worry is that is our virtue ethics expects more than is psychologically possible of the honest person; that it is not psychologically realistic to expect such cross-situational consistency as Hursthouse's discussion seems to require. Much work has been

⁸ I cite and discuss this passage in Goldie (2004).

done recently in social psychology which seems to show that these expectations are indeed unrealistic, and these findings have been adopted by a number of philosophers recently to support the claim that there are no virtues of the kind that virtue ethics postulates; and so virtue ethics is in deep trouble.⁹ My reply to this, which I have argued for elsewhere, is that this degree of cross-situational consistency implied by our notion of the ethical virtues arises because we are *idealistic* about them: we consider, of ourselves and of others, that if we are an honest person we *ought* to think and act honestly in all these diverse kinds of situation, and not just when it concerns our friends and loved ones, or when it concerns our expenses claims.¹⁰ And it is for this reason that failure to be honest in one domain detracts from our willingness to call the person honest.

Now, this might rescue the virtues, and virtue ethics, but it might seem also to result in even more pressure being put on the idea of the virtues of art. For we are not idealistic about these in at all the same way as we are in respect of the ethical virtues. Consider the artist who is an excellent sculptor, or the art appreciator who is a knowledgeable and sensitive appreciator of the works of the impressionists. According to me, these are virtues of art-making and art appreciation, activities pursued for their own sake, and constitutive of well-being. And yet we do not expect cross-situational consistency from these people: if the excellent sculptor cannot paint or play music, or if the appreciator of impressionism fails to appreciate baroque music or German expressionism, then this does not detract from our willingness to call them excellent at art-making or excellent at art appreciation.

I think this is true: we do hope for cross-situational consistency in ethics more than we do in art.¹¹ But I do not agree that this implies that the relevant artistic traits are not virtues.

The first part of my response is that cross-situational consistency is a matter of degree, and that the virtues of art also require a certain degree of consistency. What is required, I think, is that the possessor of the trait, the putative virtue of art, has what might be summarized as a certain artistic *receptivity*, sensitivity, or openness outside their particular local domain of interest—such as sculpting

⁹ See, for example, Harman (1999) and Doris (2002).

¹⁰ See my discussion in Goldie (2004, chs. 3 and 4).

¹¹ There are a number of reasons for this, connected to a general need for reliability in virtues which directly involve the concerns of others, which I will not consider here.

or impressionism. Let me explain what I mean.

In my earlier paper on this, I mentioned a wide range of traits that we are concerned with when considering a virtue of art: traits such as imagination, insight, sensibility, vision, creativity, wit, authenticity, integrity, intelligence, persistence, open-mindedness, and courage (Goldie 2007a, p. 383). Many of these underlying traits will be clustered in constituting the trait of being a good artist or being a knowledgeable and sensitive appreciator of art. Now, what would we say of the person who had this latter trait of art appreciation, specialized in impressionism, but who was unwilling to make any effort to deploy the range of underlying traits in relation to other aspects of art appreciation outside his local domain of interest, refusing to consider even the possibility of any merit in, for example, German expressionism, or in early Sieneese painting, let alone in music or any of the other arts? If he was not in any way open to the possibility of merits in these areas, if his receptiveness were restricted only to the local domain of impressionism, then I think we would be inclined to say that what he has is just a skill, with a very narrowly focused domain of application. And the same kinds of comments would apply to an unreceptive sculptor. Moreover, as a matter of psychology, I suspect that such a person, lacking the required kind of receptivity, would characteristically be pursuing his artistic activity not for its own sake (under the concept of art), but rather would be doing what he does merely for some instrumental reason—as a pastime, perhaps (that is, as a way to pass the time), or as a way to make money. For if one's goal is merely to make money, or merely to pass the time, one's interest in the arts will typically be limited to those activities that serve this further purpose.

To sum up the first part of my response to the challenge of cross-situational consistency, we do, after all, expect a certain amount of cross-situational consistency in the exercise of the virtues of art—more than might appear at first sight. The second part of my response to this challenge is concerned with the fact that, in spite of what I have said, there does remain a significant difference of degree of cross-situational consistency in the ethical virtues and the virtues of art. For example, we do not expect the same level of ability from a sculptor across a range of other media, or the same level of knowledge from the expert on impressionism across other styles of painting. I readily acknowledge this fact, but I do not accept that this remaining difference in degree with the ethical virtues implies that

the artistic virtues are really not virtues proper. For the difference in degree with the ethical virtues is to be found also in relation to the intellectual virtues. For example, if a good, intellectually virtuous philosopher specialized in modal realism or the philosophy of religion, we would not expect them to have the same level of knowledge and ability in other spheres of philosophy. However, the first point remains, that receptivity or open-mindedness are required of the philosopher, just as they are of the artist or art appreciator. It is, one might say, part of intellectual and artistic virtue to see how different areas of activity connect with each other, and to be open to what is worthwhile outside your area of specialization; it would be a mistake to think that what is worthwhile is restricted to what you *find to be worthwhile*.

Now let us turn to the *demandingness* of virtue, the second important respect in which the virtues of art (as I claim them to be) are different from the ethical virtues. Philippa Foot (1978, pp. 7–9) has argued that a virtue, unlike a skill, is not a ‘mere capacity’, but a disposition that ‘must actually engage the will’.¹² Kindness is a virtue. If someone is a kind person, and yet is not motivated to act in a kind way on an occasion when kindness is appropriate, just because she does not feel like it, then we would think the less of her; the disposition, kindness, has failed actually to engage the will. Whereas if someone plays the violin very well, and on an occasion chooses not to play it because she does not feel in the mood, we do not think any the less of her, or of her violin-playing ability. Violin-playing is not demanding in the same way as kindness. So, it is said, violin-playing must be a skill rather than a virtue.

This distinction, though, very much like the one regarding cross-situational consistency, is not as sharp as might at first appear. For there really is a kind of demandingness in relation to violin-playing which applies on occasions where one is fully engaged.¹³ It is one thing suddenly to decide that you are not in the mood to play the violin to entertain your fellow guests after a dinner, and another thing to choose to stop playing during a string quartet concert perform-

¹² For a detailed discussion of the contrasts between virtue and skill, see Zagzebski (1996, pp. 106–16).

¹³ I discuss this idea of being fully engaged in Goldie (2007b, pp. 347–62). Marcia Eaton (1989) discusses the idea that ‘it is useful to view the aesthetic person as one who sees what is required in the way of attention and reflection’ (p. 163), and that ‘You *should* enjoy trees and sunsets and music, where again the *should* is the “meaning-of-life” should’ (p. 175). So Eaton too finds a certain demandingness in art.

ance. Moreover, there is another kind of demandingness that comes with artistic virtue: the demand to *care* about what one is engaged in; mere virtuosity of performance is not enough.

But still, it is clear that there is here too a remaining difference of degree with the ethical virtues. And, again as in the earlier discussion, there is a similarity with the intellectual virtues that are expressed in contemplation. Must doing philosophy, for example, 'actually engage the will' in the way that Foot says it must if it is to be expressive of a virtue? Surely not—or there is no hope for many of us. Surely it is not a condition of having intellectual virtue that one must engage in doing philosophy when the moment is appropriate even if one is not 'in the mood' (although there is again the possibility of being fully engaged in the activity). And again, we expect more than just cleverness or virtuosity of argumentation; there is here too the demand to *care*, and to care for the right reasons. As Aristotle said, having the right feelings is part of what it is to be virtuous, part of what it is really to be committed to the activity for its own sake.

It is beginning to look as if there are a number of respects—we have seen two so far—in which the virtues of ethics, of the contemplative intellect, and of art should not all be seen as having the same normative or psychological structure; and in these respects, the virtues of art seem to be closer to the virtues of the intellect than to the ethical virtues. There is a third respect in which this is the case, and this is in our overall judgement of the character of a person. If someone is lacking in an ethical virtue then we are inclined to make a judgement that he is, at least in this respect, not a good *person*, whereas if someone is lacking in an intellectual virtue that is required for contemplation, or is lacking a virtue of art, we are not inclined to make the same judgement of him as a person. Once again, it seems, we should not always take the ethical virtues as the paradigm in our analysis of the notion of virtue, against which all other kinds of virtue must be measured.

But, in spite of these important differences, the three broad kinds of virtue do not each stand alone, normatively or psychologically. Indeed, as I now want to show, the exercise of the virtues of art-making and art appreciation are, in important ways, intimately interwoven with the exercise of the more familiar ethical and intellectual virtues, and this has important consequences for the virtues of art.

III

The Interweaving of the Virtues of Art with the Other Virtues. A rather quick route to the adoption of the virtues of art as virtues proper would be to identify them with the ethical virtues, somewhat in line with the familiar saying that beauty is goodness and goodness beauty. Recently, for example, Colin McGinn has advanced what he calls the aesthetic theory of value, which holds ‘that virtue coincides with beauty of soul and vice with ugliness of soul’ (McGinn 1999, p. 93).¹⁴ However, even disregarding the normative and psychological differences that I have just been discussing, I would prefer a more cautious route, drawing on what McGinn says, without adopting his aesthetic theory of value. Let me try to map out that route.

The notion of thick and thin ethical concepts (Williams 1985) is now a familiar one. Thick ethical concepts, concepts such as ‘brave’, ‘brutal’, and ‘compassionate’, are concepts which have both an evaluative and a descriptive content, and their application typically provides the thinker with reasons for action. In contrast, thin ethical concepts such as ‘good’ and ‘right’ are evaluative, but have minimal descriptive content, and they are less directly connected to action. In addition to these thick and thin ethical properties, McGinn draws our attention to a third category of ethical concepts, concepts which are thick, in the sense that they have more descriptive content than concepts such as ‘good’ and ‘right’, but which also have a distinctive aesthetic flavour. McGinn says this:

These are almost wholly neglected in standard discussions of moral concepts, for reasons that go deeper than mere arbitrary selectivity—since they suggest a conception of moral thought that is alien to the entire outlook of twentieth-century philosophical ethics. There are many terms of this type: for example, on the positive side, ‘fine’, ‘pure’, ‘stainless’, ‘sweet’, ‘wonderful’; and on the negative side (which is richer), ‘rotten’, ‘vile’, ‘foul’, ‘ugly’, ‘sick’, ‘repulsive’, ‘tarnished’. These words, or their uses in moral contexts, have certain distinguishing characteristics. They are highly evaluative or ‘judgemental’, expressing our moral attitudes with particular force and poignancy, somewhat more so than words like ‘generous’ and ‘brave’. Correspondingly, they are less ‘descriptive’ than those words, telling us less about the specific features of the agent, though they are more descriptive than words like ‘good’ and

¹⁴ My position is closer to that of Eaton, who argues that ‘moral value and aesthetic value really come together at the deep, meaning-of-life level’ (Eaton 1989, p. 171).

'right'. They convey a moral assessment by ascribing an aesthetic property to the subject'. (McGinn 1999, pp. 92–3)

There is a converse point to be made in relation to the artistic domain, a point which McGinn mentions, and also in relation to the intellectual domain: we use many concepts that would seem to be primarily ethical in our artistic and intellectual thought and talk: ethical concepts such as 'brave', 'gentle', 'brutal', 'generous', 'sensitive' and 'dishonest', as well as concepts that are ethical in a broader sense of the ethical, such as 'nervous', 'tentative', 'clumsy', 'offensive' and 'thorough'. In and across all three domains, these interweaving concepts can be applied to a variety of things: to persons, to states of character, to motives, to actions, to the product of actions in states of affairs or in artworks or in intellectual works of philosophy, and so on. We can as readily call the brushstrokes in an artwork brutal or the philosophical argument crude as we can call the action of a generous person fine.¹⁵

So there seems to be an interweaving of our conceptual repertoire across these three domains. Let me focus for a moment on the use of ethical concepts in the intellectual and in the artistic domain, and return in particular to my earlier example of honesty. In the intellectual domain of philosophy, for example, we can have an honest argument or a dishonest approach to a difficult counter-argument; and in the artistic domain, we can have an honest depiction of the hardship of life, or a dishonest approach to the problem of painting a portrait of one's patron. Now, where intellectual and artistic activities have these kinds of ethical connections, we also tend to find that the degree of cross-situational consistency and demandingness is greater, closer to what one would expect in the ethical domain. So if someone is an honest person, we would expect him to be honest in his intellectual or artistic activity as well as in his ethical dealings with other people, and we would think less of him if he was not. And this would apply even where the thick concept is being used in a rather metaphorical sense, as for example, in the sense that a picture can be dishonest. Similar remarks apply to the virtue of integrity, and to many others.¹⁶ It begins to look as if the virtues of honesty,

¹⁵ Notably, 'fine' is often the translation given for the Greek word *kalon*, which is ascribed both to ethical actions and to, for example, the action of an athlete as he returns to his place after throwing the discus.

¹⁶ Integrity is discussed in Zagzebski (1996, p. 162), where she discussed the connections between the intellectual and the moral virtues.

integrity and so on have application across the whole field of human activity, and not just in the directly ethical sphere, the sphere which is directly concerned with our dealings with other people.¹⁷

Similar issues arise in relation to intellectual concepts when used in the ethical and the artistic domain. Dominic McIver Lopes says this in relation to the cognitive value of pictures: ‘One demand that fine pictures obviously make of us is that we be “fine observers”’. Here there is a symmetry between what is required of pictures’ makers and what is required of their viewers’ (Lopes 2006, p. 148). Being a fine observer demands ‘delicacy of discrimination’, ‘accuracy in seeing’, and ‘adaptability of seeing’, and fine observation, he says, is ‘one intellectual virtue fostered or reinforced by looking at pictures’ (Lopes 2006, p. 150). Fine observation, then, is an intellectual virtue, and yet a connected thick concept such as ‘delicacy of discrimination’ has a home in art production and art appreciation just as much as it does in an intellectual activity such as doing philosophy. And, of course, delicacy of discrimination has a home too in the ethical domain: for example, it is an integral part of the virtue of kindness or of generosity—the ability to see what is the kind thing to do to help an independently-minded person, or to see what is the right sort of generosity to the friend who has little money of her own.¹⁸

I now want to turn to my final task: to develop the idea that the exercise of the virtues of art-making and art appreciation, when properly virtues and not mere skills, binds us together, unites us, with our fellow human beings in shared emotional experience.

IV

Artistic Activity, Well-Being, and Emotional Sharing. Virtues, so I maintain, are dispositions which are valued as necessary for virtuous activity, and virtuous activity is what well-being consists of. One such virtuous activity is contemplative activity, or what Aristotle called *theōria*—the ‘theoretic life’. In my earlier paper, I suggest-

¹⁷ With thick ethical concepts having application across the whole field of human activity, the concern might arise that, in the end, all virtues will be subsumed under the ethical. If the ethical is understood broadly, as concerned with how one should live, this might well be correct, but I would maintain that under this meta-category one would still need a category of the ethical, narrowly understood as being directly concerned with our dealings with others. Thanks to M. M. McCabe for raising this concern.

¹⁸ For discussion, see Goldie (2007b).

ed a broad, ecumenical understanding of this, as ‘putting to use an enquiring mind, engaging in, and discoursing about, the vast range of deeply important things with which Aristotle was himself concerned’ (Goldie 2007a, pp. 384–5).

This paper is not intended as exegesis of Aristotle’s views, but it is instructive, I think, to see just how inclusive Aristotle’s notion of *theōrein* (the activity of contemplation) is, and even how artistic activity might be assimilated into it. Sarah Broadie interprets Aristotle’s notion as one which ‘covers any sort of detached, intelligent, attentive pondering, especially when not directed to a practical goal’ (Broadie 1991, p. 401). And she then goes on to add something which brings it closer to including artistic activity than does my earlier suggestion: ‘Thus it can denote the intellectual or aesthetic exploration of some object, or the absorbed following of structures as they unfold when we look and stay looking more deeply, whether by means of *sensory presentations* or abstract concepts’ (Broadie 1991, p. 401, my italics). And Terence Irwin, in his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, notes that *theōrein*, the activity of contemplation, is ‘cognate with “*theasthai*” (“gaze on”) and indicates having something in clear view and attending to it’; his translation of *theōrein* as ‘study’, then, is ‘study in the sense in which I study a face or a scene that I already have in full view; that is why the visual associations of *theōrein* are appropriate’ (Aristotle 1985, p. 427). So why could the object of contemplation in *theōrein* not be an artwork just as much as a Pythagorean theorem or a philosophical argument? I leave that question hanging.

Earlier on in this paper, I suggested that, in a number of respects, the virtues of art are closer to the intellectual virtues than they are to the ethical. We can now see that this is also the case when we turn to the related activities which are expressive of these two kinds of virtue: contemplative activity is closer to art appreciation and art-making than it is to ethical activity. First, the way in which the intellectual virtues and the virtues of art are, and should be, expressed by an individual will depend on a number of factors relating to that particular individual, including, for example, what skills and other abilities he has; whereas this is not so in the same way with ethical activity. Secondly, contemplative activity is closer to art appreciation and art-making than to ethical activity in that the first two can directly yield, in profoundly important ways, self-understanding. (The ‘directly’ is important here: the ethical virtues can also yield self-understanding,

in the sense that one might come to understand that one is selfish as a result of having done a selfish thing.) Contemplation, such as engaging in a philosophical exploration of the nature of virtue, whether ethical, artistic or contemplative, can deepen our understanding of ourselves and of what makes a good life. And thinking about these things can in turn lead us to change our life. Similarly, engaging in artistic activity can deepen our self-understanding and change our life, enhanced perhaps by a theoretical understanding of the role of art in human well-being.¹⁹ Artistic contemplation of Picasso's *Guernica* can yield a deeper and fuller understanding of the awfulness of war, especially wars which cause mass death of civilians. And this might lead us to conduct our lives accordingly, standing out against the promotion of such wars. These remarks, recalling Lopes's discussion of what he so nicely calls 'fine observation', are 'symmetrical' between the virtues of art-making and of art appreciation: the artist too can change his life by doing what he does.

However, and this is my last point, I do want to claim that there is something valuable about artistic activity that is not in the same way shared by contemplative intellectual activity, nor by ethical activity, although it substantially contributes to the latter. Artistic activity also involves *emotional sharing*: as expressed in Joseph Conrad's marvellous words, the artist speaks to 'the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts; to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspiration, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn' (Conrad 1897/1963, p. xlviii).²⁰

Emotional sharing arises where two or more people experience an emotion of a certain kind, directed to a particular shared object or to a shared kind of object, and those people are aware that they are experiencing the same emotion towards the same object (see Goldie 2000). For example, you and I are on a rollercoaster, and we share the same thrills, as well as the knowledge that we each have this shared emotion. That we each know this may well enhance the ex-

¹⁹ Amelie Rorty makes this point about the relation between contemplation and the exercise of the more practical virtues: 'The *phronimos* who has also contemplated the species has perfected his knowledge' (Rorty 1978, p. 350); 'contemplating humanity and the *energeiai* that are its proper functions and ends perfect and fulfil that life' (Rorty 1978, p. 351).

²⁰ In the preface to his *The Nigger of The 'Narcissus'*. I discuss this passage in Goldie (forthcoming).

perience of the emotion, and our screams and yells may well be more extreme than they would have been if we had been on our own.

Of course this is a familiar thing in our experience of plays and films: we tend to find the experience of the good comedy or the good tragedy more worthwhile in a full theatre, with all the members of the audience fully engaged in what is being enacted.²¹ But I intend much more than that, and I read much more than that into Conrad's words. What we have in artistic activity is an intimate awareness of the *permanent possibility* of emotional sharing. When appreciating a picture such as *Guernica*, for example, alone in the gallery, we are aware that the artist, and the picture, 'speaks to' our shared human responses, as Conrad puts it—to responses that we know we can and do share with others. We share them not only with the artist, through our artistic engagement with the work that is the product of his virtuous activity. We share them also with those to whom we are closely connected and with others of our own culture, and yet more widely, across cultures and generations, to include 'all humanity'.²² This, I believe, is what is special about artistic activity.

Again, there may be analogies here with contemplative intellectual activity, for this too might well yield up shared intellectual emotions, such as a shared feeling of amazement at the subtlety of a Pythagorean theorem, or a shared wonder at the complexity of the double helix.²³ Nevertheless, what may well be unique about artistic activity is that it can reach out to the full gamut of human experience and human emotion, to everything that is part of the human condition, not just our rational nature, but including our many sillinesses, our irrational fears and hopes, our unethical envies, our illusions of our own immortality, our fantasies. This kind of emotional sharing, as part of artistic activity, is valuable in its own right, and, of course, it is also valuable in so far as it plays a role in the deployment of our ethical virtues, in leading a good ethical life in our inter-

²¹ A point is worth making briefly here, about tragedy. In our engagement with tragedy, we may experience, and share with others, painful emotions, such as grief and desolation. It is no paradox for me to say that the experience of these painful emotions, as *part of the expression of the virtue of artistic appreciation*, is partly constitutive of well-being. For my account of well-being is not in any way hedonistic.

²² And here again, to echo Lopes's earlier remarks, there is a 'symmetry' between artist and viewer.

²³ For discussion of the intellectual emotions, see Stocker (2004).

action with others, and in our self-knowledge.

We might finally note here that Aristotle thought that one of the reasons why a life of contemplation was the supreme virtuous activity is that it is a God-like life: ‘For someone will live it not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as he has some divine element in him’ (Aristotle 1985, 1171b27). I think this is something that would finally and definitively mark out artistic activity from purely intellectual contemplation. One might even be tempted to say that what is marvellous about artistic activity is its very humanness—its being something that *cannot* be shared by the gods, for they cannot appreciate from the inside what ‘binds together all humanity’ in the same way that we humans can.²⁴

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