

Ideals and Idols:

On the Nature and Appropriateness of Agential Admiration

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When I was a beginning graduate student, I once attended a public lecture by Martha Nussbaum on the capabilities approach. At the beginning of the Q&A session, a gentleman – probably a professor – raised what he clearly thought was a devastating objection. Nussbaum started her reply by saying “There are six reasons why that’s not right”. For the next five to ten minutes, she presented those reasons in long and beautiful English sentences, all speaking directly to the point. Each was individually convincing; together, they amounted to a decisive rebuttal of the challenge. The rest of the session proceeded along the same lines. I, for my part, was awestruck. I had never seen anything quite like that. There was no obfuscation, misunderstanding, changing the topic, or appeal to authority, just calm, lucid reasoning in response to a somewhat hostile charge. I thought that was the way a philosopher or indeed an academic in general should conduct herself, and I thought “I hope that one day I’ll be like that myself.” I went back to work with new energy.

Clearly, my attitude towards Nussbaum was (and is) one of admiration. What I’ll try to do in this paper is clarify the nature, function, and appropriateness of the kind of admiration we can feel towards agents, rather than nature or inanimate objects. I’ll pay particular attention to commonalities and differences between admiration and related attitudes like pride, contempt, and shame. I label such attitudes *exhortative*, since they all in different ways serve to guide us towards realizing ideals of the person in our lives by developing or

maintaining the right kind of characteristics and shedding problematic ones. Admiration, in particular, fixes on a perceived exemplar of an ideal we endorse, focusing on the whole person rather than a particular act. Given its person-focus, I argue, it is not always all-things-considered appropriate even when it's fitting in the sense that the person is in some way admirable – though at the same time, it is not inherently ethically problematic, unlike pride that focuses on oneself as a person rather than as the author of particular acts.

1. Attitudes and Ideals of the Person

My discussion does not presuppose any particular theory of emotion or attitudes, but I do assume that they have two important features: they are both intentional and motivational. More precisely, they have a double intentionality: they have an intentional object or target, such as a person, and they construe that target as being in a particular way, for example dangerous. The feature that the target is construed as having is often called the emotion's formal object. Equally importantly, emotions inherently motivate us to act in a way that makes sense in light of the construal – for example, anger, which construes someone as violating or having violated a norm we endorse, motivates us to act in a way that makes it more likely for them to conform to the norm in the future, other things being equal. Finally, the intentionality of attitudes yields conditions for their fittingness or warrant or correctness. I'll say that an attitude is fitting if the target really has the evaluative features it is construed to have. I think that this amounts to the same as saying that the target's features are reasons to act as the attitude motivates, but my arguments here won't rely on this assumption.

We have many different evaluative attitudes that can be classified in different ways. One fundamental division is based on the different social functions of the attitudes. Consider, first, that some possible choices make living together impossible, difficult, or a nuisance, while other possible choices spread joy and wealth. To discourage the former and encourage

the latter, in other words to *regulate* what people do, we endorse and enforce *norms* for actions. It is such normative expectations that are manifest in act-focused responses like guilt, anger, and indignation. We also have attitudes like gratitude that respond to meeting or exceeding such expectations.

But besides particular actions, we also know that there are some people whose choices form a pattern across different situations that results in their thriving and the thriving of others around them, promoting or realizing important values, while others consistently cause misery, ugliness, and disappointment. The former may serve as *exemplars*, giving content to *ideals of the person* that we have, and the latter fall dramatically short of them. While normative expectations concern *doing* specific kinds of things, ideals of the person concern *being* and *living* in a certain way. We may have such ideals in the abstract – we might want to be fair and brave, say – but given our cognitive and imaginative limitations, coming to understand how to actually realize them in our lives typically requires attending to those who appear to have already succeeded. The role of what I’ll call *exhortative attitudes* (for want of a better term) is thus to give direction to personal growth and change. They do so by motivating us to push ourselves or others in the direction of developing or maintaining the right kind of characteristics, and getting rid of the wrong kind of ones.

Here’s a table of the key exhortative attitudes that shows how they relate to ideals of the person:

	<i>First-personal</i>	<i>Third-personal</i>
<i>Conspicuously close to ideal</i>	Pride	Admiration
<i>Conspicuously far from ideal</i>	Shame	Contempt

Roughly, pride is the first-personal response to living in accordance with or approaching an ideal we endorse (Fischer 2012) and shame to falling short (Tangney and Dearing 2002),

while admiration is a third-personal response to another's living in accordance with an ideal (Shoemaker 2015) to a higher degree than the norm or oneself, and contempt to falling short (Mason 2003). Note that in saying that these attitudes are responses to living in accordance with approaching or falling short of an ideal I don't mean to suggest that we first have some articulated conception of an ideal of the person in mind and then judge that someone approaches or falls short of it. More plausibly, our ideals are manifest in our reactions: it is what we admire or feel contempt for that shows what our ideals are, and as long as we have such responses, we have ideals, even if we have no explicit belief or conception of them.

I want to begin examining admiration more closely by looking at its commonalities with pride. First, I'll set aside their non-agential forms, which have nothing to do with the person's activity. Clearly, I could be non-agentially proud of my thick hair or long legs, if I had such. In taking pride in such things, I take them to reflect myself – to show that I meet some aesthetic ideal I endorse. Something similar is true of admiring someone's brown eyes or smooth skin – though it seems to me that in this case, our attitude might not be person-directed at all, in that we might not take meeting the aesthetic ideal to redound to the subject's credit. That is, I can admire your *features* without admiring *you*, like I can admire the shiny fur of a capybara without admiring the capybara itself.

Non-agential admiration or awe is a kind of 'wow-response', to borrow Sophie-Grace Chappell's term (this volume), but it isn't admiration in the sense that interests me. The reason we use the same term is probably the phenomenal similarity in the feelings aroused by exemplary people, on the one hand, and objects or characteristics that are in some way excellent tokens of a type, on the other. But beyond the feeling aspect, non-agential admiration differs from agential admiration both in its intentional and motivational content, which strongly suggests it's really a distinct attitude. When it comes to intentional or representational content, non-agential admiration involves no attribution of responsibility to

the target. It may be perfectly fitting to admire a beautiful sunset or a butterfly in this sense. And in terms of motivation, it involves no tendency to emulate the target, nor other motivations characteristic of admiring agents. Its function might be primarily social – after all, what it does motivate us to do is often to invite others to attend to its target as well (“Check out that sunset/riff/math genius!”). Insofar as attitudes are centrally individuated by their intentional and motivational content as well as phenomenal feel, there are thus good grounds for thinking that the awe-like response toward non-agential objects or features is a different emotion from admiration proper. This is to be expected from a functionalist perspective: after all, as I’ve already suggested, admiration proper has a distinctive function of identifying those who give concrete shape to our ideals and guiding us towards realizing them.

My focus, then, is on *agential* forms of admiration and pride. As I’ve suggested, their target is a person, who is construed as leading a life manifesting (or approximating) an ideal of the person we endorse. The intentional content of admiration and pride is thus Janus-faced: on one side, there’s a pattern of excellent performances, on the other, something excellent about the agent that is made manifest by the performances, in virtue of which they are attributable to the agent (so that she is in a sense responsible for them)¹. I think both are necessary. It’s not sufficient that someone possesses a virtue to a high degree, for example – in that respect, talk of ideals of the person might be somewhat misleading. As Hume observed, bad luck, such as being stuck in “a dungeon or desert”, might prevent a virtuous person from ever exercising their virtue (Hume 1975, 584). We may still esteem or approve of such a person, but they’re not an object of great admiration but rather something like pity. If you’re inclined to think otherwise, consider whether you’d admire Nelson Mandela as much, had he never been released from Robben Island, which might of course have happened.

At the same time, merely *doing* something excellent doesn't as such merit admiration or pride. This is clearest when someone *accidentally* or *unintentionally* accomplishes something. Imagine that Donald Trump places a call to what he takes to be a Japanese businessman with the intention of getting him to invest in a chain of casinos, and ends up bragging about his popularity and intelligence. Unbeknownst to him, however, he is in fact talking to Kim Jong-un, who consequently has an epiphany: just like Trump, he has deluded himself about how his people feel about him, and decides to step down and dismantle the North Korean dictatorship. This would no doubt be a great accomplishment for Trump, but it would not be to his credit (though he would probably *take* credit for it).

Similarly, it possible to do something great *intentionally but for the wrong reasons*. This is obvious in moral cases, but not limited to them. Imagine it turns out that Bruce Springsteen felt no compassion for people of colour facing deadly official prejudice when he wrote and performed 'American Skin (41 Shots)', his moving take on the shooting of unarmed immigrant Amadou Diallo by New York City police, but instead put on a calculated display to manipulate emotionally vulnerable audience in the hopes of amassing even more money than he already has. Since a crucial part of what makes his actual performance praiseworthy is that it gives audible form to a deep concern and compassion in a way that enables listeners to empathize with mistreated members of society, there is little to admire in the hypothetical alternative.

Let me try to be a little more precise. Here's my first thesis: Admiration construes its target as leading a life characterized by praiseworthy achievements that are to a significant degree explained by their meeting a worthwhile ideal of the person – for short, as *realizing* a worthwhile ideal – and doing so to a notably higher degree than the norm or oneself. Consequently, it is *fitting* when the target indeed leads such a life in virtue of realizing the ideal to such an extent. We might also say it is *justified* when the evidence available to the

subject warrants thinking that the target has done the things and has the features she is construed as having, and that the ideal in question is worthwhile – even if the evidence happens to be misleading, so that admiration is not in fact fitting.

I'll return to the implications of this thesis in what follows, but I'll first explicate it a bit. I've argued in the past that for something to be a praiseworthy achievement, it must be a competent performance that meets or exceeds a contextually relevant, authoritative, and challenging standard without excessive opportunity cost (Kauppinen 2017a). A standard is authoritative in the relevant sense when it derives from a system of rules, practice, or aim that promotes, honours, or realizes a sufficient amount of some genuine value. Moral standards are an obvious example of authoritative standards, but there are many different kinds of value that can be realized by a variety of different practices with internal standards, such as sports or even participation in a market economy. Consequently, many kinds of performance, such as executing a perfect pirouette, improving a microchip, or clinching a trade deal, can be praiseworthy, even if they don't directly promote or realize value. I emphasize, however, that exhortative attitudes are appropriate on holistic grounds. While we might take an individual achievement to be indicative of realizing an ideal (as well as partly constitutive of it), admiration is rightly reduced by subsequent failures. (I'll return to this soon.)

At the same time, as I've just argued, it is not enough that a performance is praiseworthy. To warrant an attitude toward the agent herself, the performance must be explained by something deep about the agent – by their meeting or approximating a worthwhile ideal of the person in virtue of having the right commitments and character traits.² Typically, having such characteristics goes hand in hand with realizing them in action. Consider a non-moral ideal, being a good scholar. If you ask me, it involves something like coming to understand some complex subject matter(s) ever more deeply, and conveying one's insights to others in talks, writings, and teaching. It takes more than, say, intelligence and

systematic knowledge to *be* a good scholar – you also need to *do* things like write and teach. It is an ideal I endorse, and have chosen to try to realize in my own life, unlike many other ideals I also endorse. I admire people like Nussbaum or Parfit, who seem to me to live up to such an ideal. Indeed, as exemplars, they *shape* the ideal: they show how the relevant values can be promoted or realized. Conversely, I'm still ashamed of a couple of bad talks I've given in high profile conferences, because they are not only evidence of but partly constitutive of my conspicuous failure to live up to the scholarly ideal.

Next, I acknowledged that admiration construes its target in comparative terms, as realizing the relevant ideal to a higher degree than oneself or at least the norm. As Simon Robertson points out (this volume), there is a Nietzschean case to be made against admiration on the grounds that it involves a kind of self-abasement relative to the target. However, I think it does make good sense to admire someone for conspicuously exceeding the norm with respect to an ideal, even if one takes pride in doing so oneself as well – why couldn't Bob Dylan admire Robert Johnson without false modesty? And when someone else really is superior to me with respect to a genuine virtue, looking up to them isn't servile, but an honest acknowledgment of having work left to do.

Let's suppose, then, that the positive exhortative attitudes of pride and admiration present their target as at least approximately realizing an ideal in their lives to an unusually high degree. Insofar as the motivational aspect of an attitude makes sense in light of its intentional content, we'd expect similarities on that side as well. And indeed they can be found. Roughly speaking, pride motivates us to *keep* doing what we're doing even if it's hard (Williams and DeSteno 2008) – to keep living in a way that approaches an ideal we endorse. Admiration, it is often said, motivates us to *emulate* the person we admire – that is, to try to *start* living in a way that approaches the ideal they realize in their lives. This is related to its comparative nature, the sense of looking up to the target that it involves, or at least regarding

them as better than most. This action tendency is presumably why the emotion evolved in the first place: there are benefits to be had by identifying successful people and doing the sort of things they do. Nonetheless, this claim about motivation must be qualified. I don't have to adopt every ideal of a person that I endorse as my own. I admire Zinedine Zidane, but this doesn't motivate me to execute clever breakthrough passes in the midfield. But watching him does inspire me to try to do better at my own chosen *métier*, and to recommend aspiring footballers to emulate him. (I don't think this exhausts admiration's motivational impact; I'll come back to this later.)

I do think that some kind of motivational aspect pertaining to realizing ideals we endorse is essential to admiration as an *attitude*. This may be obscured by the fact that we can often say that we admire someone without feeling any motivation (or indeed having any introspectively discernible feeling). But that's because such talk can express not only an attitude, but also a judgment to the effect that the target approximates some ideal, or that admiration is warranted. The difference between thinking that someone is *admirable* and occurrently *admiring* them comes out most clearly in the motivational aspect.

2. Ideals, Focus, and Fit

I've given an initial sketch of how thoughts about ideals and exemplars enter into the content of admiration. But matters turn out to be somewhat complicated. Looking more carefully at how our evaluative attitudes are focused reveals that among commonalities, there are important differences between pride and admiration, and that it is somewhat puzzling why admiration is fitting toward the kind of imperfect creatures we all are.

Let me first try to distinguish between two aspects of the intentionality of an attitude, target and focus. The *target*, as I've already said, is the object that the attitude is directed towards, such as a person or a chair or an idea. *Focus*, in contrast, is the feature of the target

that it has to have for the attitude to be fitting. I emphasize that having the focus isn't sufficient for fit, since there may be and typically are other conditions, such as those relating to what the target does. For example, anger construes an action as a violation of a normative expectation, and an agent (the target of anger) as the author of the action. We can say its focus is authorship of the action – for short, I'll say it's act-focused – but for it to be fitting, authorship doesn't suffice, since the action must also violate a legitimate normative expectation. Importantly, focus can be seen in the way in which the attitude moves us to relate to the target. An attitude that focuses on someone merely as the author of a particular act leaves other modes of relating to the person intact, or nearly so. But not all attitudes are like that, as we'll soon see.

When it comes to focus, the basic distinction that matters for my purposes is between what I will call *act-focused* and *person-focused* attitudes. I'll say that an attitude is act-focused when it is directed towards oneself or another as the author of a particular action, and person-focused when it is directed towards oneself or another as the bearer of an enduring constellation of traits and attitudes (as the kind of person one is). Person-focused attitudes may be and often are based on particular choices, but in that case the choice is taken to reveal something deep and lasting about who the agent is. Between these two there's also a third class of what we might call *trait-focused* attitudes, which are akin to person-focused attitudes in that they target a lasting feature of the person, but it is not taken to reflect something about the person as a whole.

Here's a tentative classification of some evaluative attitudes in terms of this distinction:

<i>Act-focused</i>	<i>Trait-focused</i>	<i>Person-focused</i>
Guilt	Localized shame?	Shame
Anger, indignation		
		Love
		Contempt
Authentic pride	Hubristic pride	Hubristic pride
		Admiration

Guilt is the paradigm act-focused attitude.³ If I treated you harshly because, as I finally realize, I was trying to prop up my own fragile ego, I may feel guilty for what I did. It is the particular choice I'm responsible for that I wish I could unmake, and for which I feel like I must make amends. Guilt thus involves thoughts regarding a specific action and motivates attempts at reparation and acting otherwise in the future. Anger and indignation are second-personal parallels. Shame, as many psychologists emphasize, is quite different. Famously, we need not take ourselves to be responsible for something to be ashamed of it. But even when we're ashamed of something we did, it is because we see it as deeply implicating who we are. We are defective, unfit to enjoy the regard of others. As June Tangney and Jessica Tracy (2013) put it, it involves feeling small and exposed and unworthy. Acute shame permeates our self-relation – we don't just feel bad about a particular thing we did, but regard everything about ourselves in a negative light. So it is natural that shame motivates us to hide ourselves or hide what we did by denying it, and often shifting the blame to others to escape the burden of self-hatred.

Love and contempt further illustrate the distinctions in focus. They are characteristically person-focused. While we do sometimes say things like "I love your sense of humour" or "I feel contempt for your weakness", I think these sentences either express

some sort of evaluation rather than attitude (I might have said “You have a great sense of humour”), or are used to indicate the grounds of our attitudes toward the person as a whole (I might have said “The reason I have contempt for you is your weakness”). These attitudes, too, permeate the way we relate to their target, which makes them hard to fit together, given their contrasting polarity. While anger is quite easily compatible with love – after all, it may even reflect our high expectations towards someone we care about (see Kauppinen 2017b) – contempt isn’t, because it is hard to find someone wonderful and worth cherishing at the same time as regarding them falling far short of being the kind of person they should be, and being motivated to avoid their company as far as possible. (It is no surprise that Gottman and Levenson (2000) found contempt to be the best predictor of divorce.)

For my purposes, the most important issue concerns the bottom two lines of the table. The salient difference here is that there’s a choice-focused form of pride, which I’ve labeled ‘authentic pride’, in accordance with terminology in use in psychology. In contrast, admiration, I’m claiming, is never choice-focused, but always targets the person. The second difference that I’ll come to soon is that while hubristic pride is ethically problematic, person-focused admiration is not.

I adopt the distinction between authentic and hubristic pride from recent psychological literature. Jessica Tracy and Richard Robins characterize the distinction as follows: in the case of authentic pride, we “attribute [...] success to internal, unstable, and controllable causes”, while in the case of hubristic pride we “attribute success to internal, stable, and uncontrollable causes” (Tracy and Robins 2007, 522). What they mean is that when I’m authentically proud of something, I think that my praiseworthy achievement results from a specific effort or choice that I made that I might not have made, and that was up to me to make. Authentic pride is thus the counterpart of guilt, which similarly focuses on specific choices that were up to me. Hubristic pride, in contrast, involves thinking that I’m successful

because of something inherent in me, a talent or trait that is superior to that of others, which is not up to me in the same way.

The labels ‘authentic’ and ‘hubristic’ might well be thought to be tendentious. The rationale for them is that findings suggest they have different consequences for individuals. Studies by Jessica Tracy and her co-authors suggest that authentic pride motivates further effort to repeat a status-enhancing success that one doesn’t take for granted, and is linked with personality traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and self-esteem. Hubristic pride, in contrast, promotes seeking social status by domination, intimidation, and manipulation – if you think you’re special, it’s no surprise if you demand special treatment. Crudely, the difference between authentic and hubristic pride is the difference between thinking “What I did is great” and thinking “I’m so great”. The former construes the self *thinly*, as the responsible author of an act who might well do something different the next time in the absence of renewed effort, while the latter construes the self *thickly*, as the bearer of enduring traits and talents that are responsible for one’s achievement. It is plausibly ethically problematic to regard oneself in the latter way – *even if* it’s true that one has met some ideal in virtue of talent or an enduring trait. I’ve suggested in earlier work (Kauppinen 2017a) that such thoughts involve something akin to Sartrean bad faith, namely thinking of oneself as existing in the manner of a thing, when in fact the existence of our traits and exercise of our talents requires ever renewed choice. When it comes to virtue, we can’t rest on our laurels, since no virtue guides or constrains our future choices without our continued active involvement.

3. Fittingness and Appropriateness of Admiration

Assuming that pride indeed has two facets and that admiration is its third-personal sister attitude, we’re left with two important questions. If pride can be act-focused, why not

admiration? And why isn't person-focused admiration ethically problematic, if hubristic pride is? Let's start with the first one. I think there's a number of reasons to think that agential admiration must be person-focused, rather than act- or trait-focused. (We can of course have a kind of wow-response towards actions like juggling seven burning swords, but as I've argued, that's a different attitude.) This is one respect in which my view differs from Linda Zagzebski's (2017) well-known account, since she holds that admiration is directed toward particular traits, whether native talents or acquired excellences.

The first reason to think admiration is person-focused is that any bad behaviour, or more generally falling conspicuously short of any important ideal we endorse, is properly a strike against admiring someone. When it came out that the comedian Louis CK had sexually harassed a number of female colleagues by exposing himself to them, it didn't make him any less funny, but it did appropriately reduce the admiration that many had felt for him. Further, isolated acts simply don't make admiration fitting – though we may of course say that we admire someone *on account* of a tough choice, when we take it to reflect commitments or character traits apt to lead to a life of praiseworthy achievement. Focus on the person also explains the common phenomenon that the more we know of a hero of ours, the less we admire them: we come to realize that even if they do approximate one ideal, they fall short along many other dimensions (for example, any number of successful men turn out to have been inveterate womanizers). The second, and related, reason is that admiration's effects on interaction with its target are pervasive, like the effects of love or shame. They're not limited to motivation to emulate the target in ways that are related to their perceived excellence. It's not unusual for us to start dressing like our heroes, for example, even if it's not sartorial elegance that grounds our admiration. But admiration also involves a disposition to pay attention to and find out more about its target, to recommend her as a model to others and to

defend her against criticisms, to feel happy when the target is successful or gets recognized and sad when they suffer a loss or die, and so on.

There are several further reasons, too. Two of them have to do with relationships to other exhortative attitudes. Consider the possibility of self-admiration. If such a thing exists, it is virtually indistinguishable from hubristic pride. If what I say is right, they have basically the same intentional content – both portray me as living up to an ideal I endorse in virtue of my enduring features. Insofar as admiration motivates emulation, self-admiration motivates me to be like myself – or just glory in my magnificent self. And that’s just hubristic pride. And since hubristic pride is uncontroversially person-focused, admiration must be the same, or the two wouldn’t coincide in the case of self-admiration. The fourth argument is similar, except it begins with the observation that the contrary of admiration is contempt or disdain, which is also widely considered a person-focused attitude (Bell 2013). The difference between contempt and admiration is polarity, not difference in focus. Act-focused attitudes like resentment and anger do not have admiration as their contrary, but rather gratitude or contentment.

Finally, fitting admiration seems to have a higher bar than fitting pride. You might legitimately be proud of getting the kids to school in time when your spouse is away. Nevertheless, don’t expect me to admire you for it. What explains this difference? Well, if admiration focuses on the person, it’s harder to merit it, because you’ll need to have a set of traits and lasting commitments that explains a pattern of praiseworthy performances. You could easily get the kids to school without such a psychology. (You’ll also have to be superior to me, but that’s probably true when it comes to this kind of case.) Since authentic pride, in contrast, is act-focused, it can be appropriate on the basis of a single act.

Some of these arguments point to admiration being focused on enduring features. I’ve already given reasons why such focus is holistic, but some might still insist that we can

admire character traits. But I think this is misleading. I may admire your tenacity. But I'm not sure if it makes sense to admire tenacity as such – it's not really the character trait, even a virtuous one, that is the object of the admiration. (Nor do I envy wealth as such, but *your* wealth.) And in admiring *your* tenacity, it seems that I'm admiring *you*. That's why I don't admire Margaret Thatcher's tenacity, though I grant that it was a virtue of hers. On the other hand, I confess I admire Lyndon Johnson's ruthlessness in twisting Southern senators' arms to ram through civil rights legislation, even though I don't think ruthlessness as such is a good thing. It's really Johnson I admire. Finally, it may be that a trait, such as acerbic wit, is both grounds for admiring and grounds for not admiring someone (assuming it hurts people, for example).

Given the difference between first- and third-person perspectives, person-directed admiration isn't ethically problematic for the same reasons as hubristic pride is, though they seem to be in many ways parallel attitudes. While hubristic pride is smug and in bad faith, admiration isn't. For me, your traits and abilities exist in a different way than they do for you – they're independent of the choices I make or am going to make. For me, they *are* facts about you, while for Sartrean reasons my own traits aren't simply facts about me for myself. I can predict you're going to keep doing good things, but I can't simply predict that of myself, since the truth of the prediction is in my own hands, or rather in the hands of my future self, who is free to decide otherwise. Unlike hubris, admiring you doesn't encourage complacency, but self-improvement or keeping it up. We may have good reason to do our best to resemble an exemplar.

But that is not to say person-focused admiration doesn't raise ethical questions. Indeed, it gives rise to what I'll call the Puzzle of Admiring the Imperfect: everybody falls short of some legitimate ideal of the person, so how can it be fitting to admire anyone? For example, I just said I admire Lyndon Johnson. At the same time, I know that he was a

philandering bully and sycophant, who got his country into the Vietnam war in large part for reasons of domestic political expediency. How could he be admirable? But who is, then?

Even saints have their flaws, as Susan Wolf (1982) famously pointed out. Will it turn out that admiration is after all never, or at best very rarely, a warranted attitude? I don't think so. I'll next consider two possible solutions to this puzzle.

The first way to try to avoid the puzzle is to distinguish between different kinds of admiration. It seems natural to say that someone like Picasso is aesthetically admirable, even if he's not morally admirable. One way to make sense of this is to say that it is fitting for us to adopt one kind of attitude, one of aesthetic admiration, towards him, but not moral admiration, which is a distinct kind of attitude. This would go at least some of the way towards solving the puzzle. I'm not happy with this proposal, however. It doesn't seem to me that there's a variety of attitudes of admiration. To be sure, there's some case for the notion that there are feelings of elevation that are distinctive of admiring those who are morally impressive. This is one reason why some psychologists, such as Algoe and Haidt (2009) distinguish moral elevation from other forms of admiration. We might nevertheless insist that as long as intentional and motivational content are the same, we don't really have a different attitude or emotion. Of course, the ideals and consequently grounds for admiration are different, but that doesn't make for a different attitude, any more than different normative expectations alone give rise to different forms of anger.

The second issue is that there seem to be too many different ways to be admirable for this strategy to be plausible. Even if we can distinguish between a couple of different species of admiration, it won't help explain why Lionel Messi is admirable as a footballer but not admirable as a taxpayer – even if there is an attitude of moral admiration, there isn't going to be an attitude of football admiration and taxpayer admiration.

So how, then, can we make sense of admiring the imperfect? I think we can make the case that admiration can be fitting in many different ways. Rather than a plurality of attitudes, there is a plurality of kinds of fit. Among other things, this solution has the benefit of generality: there are plenty of other attitudes that can be fitting in different ways (Kauppinen 2015). After all, it seems like someone can be, say, aesthetically as well as morally contemptible.

In the case of admiration and related attitudes, there is a straightforward way of explaining why there would be different kinds of fit: there are, after all, different kinds of ideal that a person might realize in their lives. Roughly, to be morally admirable, one must live up to a moral ideal, and to be aesthetically admirable, one must live up to an aesthetic ideal. But this is only the beginning, since our ideals can be quite fine-grained. This goes especially for ideals that derive from standards of excellence that are internal to our various practices. I mentioned the ideal of a scholar above. But there's also the ideal, or possibly many ideals, of a teacher, or a politician, or a doctor, or a father. All of these are possible ways of leading a life that can realize or promote something of genuine value, so that the standards they involve are authoritative. When somebody does approximate realizing such ideals in their lives in virtue of their enduring traits or commitments, they can be admirable in a specific way. Lyndon Johnson, for example, is politically admirable, or admirable from a political point of view, given his ability to find solutions that would persuade people with very different viewpoints.

This account has a number of interesting implications. First, according to it, there's no such thing as being admirable *tout court*, unless that means being admirable from every applicable perspective. It may be that no one is admirable in that way. But that's not a big deal, since it is still fitting to admire many people. Second, it is possible that it's fitting to admire someone from one point of view and disdain them from another point of view.

Consider Erwin Rommel. He's generally recognized as one of the greatest German generals of World War II, an inspiring leader of men who achieved feats many had considered impossible. At the same time, though he wasn't personally a Nazi and even supported the conspiracy against Hitler, he fought for one of the worst causes in history. So while from a military perspective, he merits admiration, from a moral perspective we must condemn and even disdain him.

Now, it follows from what I've said that you can't, as a matter of fact, adopt both of these attitudes towards the same target at the same time. Both are person-focused, and permeate interactions with the target in ways that are polar opposites. So how should we relate to Rommel, or Picasso, or Messi, then? Let me first emphasize that this is a distinct question from whether someone is admirable in some way (that is, whether admiration is fitting). To make this distinction clear, consider fear. Sometimes you shouldn't be afraid, because the target of your emotion isn't in fact dangerous (say, it's a spider). But if you're caught in the midst of a hurricane, say, fear might well be warranted. At the same time, it might paralyze you and result in great harm. This is a strong reason for you to want not to be afraid, and to do what you can to down-regulate your warranted response. I'm not sure if it makes sense to say you shouldn't feel afraid in such a situation, since it is an involuntary response, but you should try to get rid of it. Similarly, the question of whether it is fitting to admire Rommel from a military perspective is distinct from whether we *should* admire him. It seems natural to me to say that although he's militarily admirable, we have reason to want not to admire him, and perhaps, insofar as admiration is under direct voluntary control, that we shouldn't admire him, given that he fought for a terrible cause.

So, in short, it doesn't follow from that fact that it's in some way fitting to admire someone that we should admire her, just as it doesn't follow from something's being valuable that we should value it in the sense that implies emotional investment. Perhaps the simplest

thing to say is that admiring can be appropriate, all things considered, when the target is admirable in some way and is not disadmirable or contemptible from the moral perspective. Morality, after all, has a unique function and authority in demanding or prohibiting certain attitudes, laying claim to a universal jurisdiction in a way that other perspectives don't.⁴ No one thinks we shouldn't, all things considered, admire a scientific genius just because her personal hygiene leaves much to be desired. Alternatively, we might say that appropriateness of admiration is subject-relative – maybe it depends on which ideals are particularly important to you whether rating low enough by their standards disqualifies someone as an object of appropriate admiration for you, regardless of their achievements on other dimensions.

Whether we should admire someone who is in some way admirable may further depend on our own projects and life history. For example, it makes good sense for me to admire Nussbaum, since we're both engaged in the scholarly project, and she does it so much better than I do, while it is less sensible for me to invest in admiring someone who is good at woodworking, since such pursuits aren't a priority for me now.

Conclusion

To sum up, I've defended the following three theses regarding agential admiration in this paper:

1. Admiration construes its target as (approximately) realizing a worthwhile ideal of the person to a greater degree than the admirer (or the norm).
2. Admiration is always person-focused rather than act- or trait-focused.
3. Admiration is *fitting* from a specific point of view as long as the agent (approximately) realizes the relevant worthwhile ideal of the person, even if they fall short of other ideals. Whether admiration is *all things considered appropriate* depends

also on the relevance of the ideal they approximate to our own projects and on the target's not falling conspicuously short of moral (or subjectively important) ideals.

I suspect that what I've said is controversial in particular when it comes to emphasizing the realization of excellent traits in action rather than merely possessing them, highlighting the holistic focus of the attitude, and noting the consequent restrictions on its appropriateness. But I believe we have good reasons to accept these theses, given the function of exhortative attitudes in general in guiding our personal development and the way agential admiration permeates our relationship to our idols.⁵

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¹ For this sort of responsibility, see Watson 1996 on attributability.

² Compare with Shoemaker 2015 on the grounds of attribution-responsibility.

³ Although, as Simon Robertson reminded me, there are other alleged forms of guilt, such as survivor guilt, which are controversial precisely because they don't relate to one's own acts.

⁴ It follows from this that my admiration of LBJ is all-things-considered inappropriate, insofar as he did morally terrible things (as well as morally admirable ones). Mea culpa.

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