Turning Outward

By

Katie Leonard

Senior Honors Thesis

Department of Philosophy

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

April 5, 2023

____

Dr. Michael Vazquez, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Markus Kohl, Reader

Dr. Geoff Sayre-McCord, Reader

Acknowledgements

This thesis exists only because of the web of supportive individuals I can only begin to name. Thank you to the Kimball King Research Fund, Honors Carolina, The Department of English & Comparative Literature, and, most of all, The Department of Philosophy, especially its Parr Center for Ethics. Between administrators, classmates, and professors, you all have collectively turned my undergraduate experience upside down for the better.

Thanks to the readers and their support, feedback, and encouragement over the years. Professor Markus Kohl, your classes have illuminated ways of thinking that have reshaped how I view the world. Thank you for embedding a sincere care for students within your teaching. Professor Geoff Sayre-McCord, your thoughtful and lively instruction is able to highlight the urgent questions embedded within even hundreds-year-old philosophical texts. Thank you for answering questions with the same eagerness now as you did in my very first semester of college. Most of all, thanks to my advisor, Professor Michael Vazquez. This project has taken endless shapes over the academic year and would not have morphed into anything of coherence without your steadfast guidance. I am continually grateful for your support as not only a teacher and advisor but also an example of a public philosopher and person. Your patience, enthusiasm, and precision should be an example to us all, and I cannot think of a person who more genuinely exemplifies "love of wisdom." Thank you for all that you do!

Additionally, I owe endless thanks in particular to the supportive friends who have volunteered hours to read, comment on, or discuss dozens, if not over a hundred, pages of some version of this thesis, namely: Ethan Delves, Jennifer Judd, Susanna King, Maddie Purser, Conner Tucker, and, especially, Hayden Graham and Elijah Parish. All of your thumbprints undeniably pepper these pages and have left them better off. Thank you for transforming this seemingly solo endeavor into a fruitful opportunity for collaboration. Thanks also to those who, whether through friendly support or academic deliberation, have contributed to this thesis' development in some way: Abby Barnes, Raj Dutta, Samantha Ewing, Austin Foushee, Kathryn Haenni, Juliana Hemela, Campbell Lindquist, Louise McKown, Sally Moore, Daniel Muñoz, Alex Richardson, Sam Schmitt, Delaney Thull, Arleen Wood, Marie Young, and the balance of fellows, classmates, and professors affiliated with Caldwell Hall. I could not have done this joyfully without all of you; your philosophical instincts and comic relief work wonders. Thank you for coloring my day-to-day with an irreplaceable vibrance.

Acknowledgments would be incomplete without inclusion of my pre-, elementary, middle, and high school teachers, advisors, librarians, and peers, groups full of individuals who have lovingly looked out for me throughout my academic development. Most of all, big hugs to my family, without whom none of this would be remotely possible. Thank you for encouraging a love of learning but, more importantly, loving me as I learn. ♡

If we turn our mind towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself."

Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*

"Humility is not a peculiar habit of self-effacement, rather like having an inaudible voice, it is selfless respect for reality."

Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good Over Over Concepts*

Table of Contents

I: Introduction: On Living Well

I.I: Desiring the Good & The Platonic Ascent [2]

I.II: Weilian & Murdochian Attention [6]

I.III: Our Roadmap [8]

II: Turned Inward

II.I: Default Disposition [12]

II.II: A Failure of Turning Outward: Nietzschean Will to Power [13]

II.III: Murdoch on Plato's Allegory of the Cave [16]

III: Turning Outward

III.I: Paradigmatic Literary Examples: Augustine & Ivan Ilyich [18]

III.II: Restlessness [21]

III.III: A Pull [22]

III.IV: A Failure of Turning Outward: Stoic Invulnerability [27]

III.V: A Failure of Turning Outward: Epicurean Self-Interest & Insulation [30]

III.VI: Cultivating Attention: Weilian *Décréation* [33]

III.VII: Cultivating Attention: Murdochian Unselfing [34]

IV: Attention as Love [36]

V: A Looming Worry [37]

VI: The Final Word [39]

I. Introduction: On Living Well

How do we live well?

This thesis seeks to suggest an answer to this looming question. Aristotle calls a state of living well[1] 'eudaimonia.' Eudaimonia is the highest human good, desirable for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else. It is not equivalent to our modern conception of 'happiness,' a psychological experience of satisfaction.[2] Rather, in Aristotle's account, eudaimonia requires virtuous performance of characteristically human activity. To be virtuous is to have a disposition for excellently[3] performing one's characteristic function. The characteristic human function,[4] says Aristotle, is to reason. Thus, having a disposition for reasoning excellently is necessary for a human to be virtuous and, ultimately, to experience eudaimonia. Broadly, I propose that reaching eudaimonia requires 'turning outward.' But how does a person do that?

Turning outward begins by focusing on cultivating one's inner life—as opposed to outer life—in a particular way to bring about eudaimonia. 'Inner life,' indicates one's *disposition* to do, think, and feel particular things. 'Outer life,' by contrast, describes a person's actions. Once the inner life is transformed, the outer life is situated to present itself as a result. In other words, the outer life is a function of the inner life.

---

[1] Or of flourishing. Flourishing can be thought of in terms of plants. When a plant has water, sunlight, and fertile soil, it can grow to its full potential. However, identification of human flourishing cannot occur simply by looking at a person.
[2] Pleasure should not be sought for its own sake, though Aristotle justifies it as a consequence of seeking a higher end (e.g., *eudaimonia*). Pursuing pleasure for its own sake is for the life of an animal. A *human* pursuing pleasure for her own sake is someone who chases a pleasure which is "beneath" her.
[3] i.e., doing the "right" thing with the "right" intention
[4] The characteristic human function is a contestable claim. For instance, anthropologically speaking, the characteristic human function might be considered to be cooking or using tools. For my purposes, I will stick with Aristotle's definition.

I suggest that a person can reach *eudaimonia* by cultivating an outward-turned inner life. This inner life is characterized by cultivating 'attention,' a humble disposition consisting of vulnerability to and appreciation of truth. How does a person cultivate attention?

I.I. Desiring the Good & The Platonic Ascent

Cultivating attention, first, demands a dialectical desire for the Good.

'Desire' indicates the longing prompted by a sense of 'lack' (*egestas*) that an agent alone cannot satiate, an attraction to something presently beyond reach. Here, I imply a specific form of desire described by Talbot Brewer: *dialectical* desire.

The term 'dialectical' is best contextualized by an understanding of intrinsic value. Something of intrinsic value is something of non-instrumental goodness whose value is obscure to the agent and is incrementally revealed to her through direct engagement. 'Dialectical' describes the form of directly engaged activity or desire with something of incrementally revealed, obscure value. An outside observer is unable to grasp intrinsic value; only by dialectical engagement in the intrinsically valuable activity does the moral agent gain full appreciation for and understanding of it. For instance, I cannot hold a conversation with the activity of friendship itself to uncover its essence; the dialectical activity of trying to become a good friend is the only way to understand what friendship really is. Distinct from but related to dialectical activity, dialectical *desire* is the ceaseless desire, specifically, for the Good (*epithumia*). But what *is* the Good?

The Good is a transcendent, mysterious, ultimate form of goodness; it both *is* what is really real and reveals everything else that is real. To further conceive of this concept, let us consider Plato, who

suggests the Good is a non-physical and incorruptible form.[5] The Good is the ultimate or highest form and is both above and within everything. In Plato's account, this means every form, including those of Truth and Beauty, participates in the Good. Thus, the form of Good is the immutable cause of all knowledge and truth; the Good 'shines a light on' what is true, similarly to how the sun reveals what is otherwise hidden by darkness. In other words, the Good *is* what is 'really real,' and it reveals everything else that is real; to grasp truth, we must desire the Good.[6] Brewer suggests that the embodiment of the Good is God: an 'ultimate' object of desire with intrinsic value and opaqueness.[7] Thus, dialectically desiring the Good is the ceaseless desire for the Good, a process revealing what is 'really real.' For our purposes, let's save the metaphysics for another day and take God to be equivalent to or, if you like, merely a metaphor for a nonsectarian conception of this ultimate form of goodness.

Note: defending a particular *metaphysical* conception of the Good would require a separate project; within the broadly Platonic tradition of thinkers, different interpretations of the Good—whether literal or metaphorical in form—seem to counsel a person to do and think similarly. Thus, in an effort to maintain focus on the Good's *role* in living well and to include thinkers who operate differing metaphysical backdrops, I deliberately leave the Good loosely defined. I do not do this in order to evade difficult metaphysical questions. Rather, I use a loose definition because the thinkers I

[5] In Plato's account, a "form" is a perfect, transcendent reality (i.e., a non-physical, ultimate ideal). Every conceivable physical object has a corresponding form. For instance, a tree I see outside of my window is tangible, but it "participates in" the intangible ideal of "treeness." Every particular (i.e., perceptible, self-contained objects or ideas about them contained in one's own mind) participates in a form, and all forms participate in the form of the Good.

[6] "This reality, then, that gives their truth to the objects of knowledge and the power of knowing to the knower, you must say is the idea of good, and you must conceive it as being the cause of knowledge, and of truth in so far as known" (Plato, 1992, 508c).

[7] Baked into dialectical desire, Brewer says, is an innate, human longing for God. Consider Gregory of Nyssa: "This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire (*epithumia*) to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more" (Brewer, 2009, p. 56).

explore in this thesis hold different metaphysical convictions. For instance, Simone Weil conceives of God as the embodiment of Good, whereas Iris Murdoch defines the same concept atheistically. In my account, turning outward does not demand one particular metaphysical belief; rather than view thinkers' differences as foils to each other, I embrace diverging metaphysical justifications for the Good in order to focus on their ethical verdicts and uncover a converging account of how to live well.

Again, to be clear, I define 'the Good' as a transcendent, mysterious, ultimate form of goodness; it both *is* what is really real and reveals everything else that is real. I will use the Platonically inseparable concepts of 'goodness,' 'truth,' and 'beauty' in different contexts throughout the paper to evoke the conception of Good. Though admittedly abstract, we will continue exploring the idea; understanding a dialectical desire for the Good is a dialectical activity in itself.

Now, let us turn to Plato's *Symposium*, which illustrates dialectical desire. In the dialogue, speaker Diotima considers the ascent[8]: a philosophically and visually relevant structure. The ascent is the process needed to possess goodness in perpetuity. In Diotima's account, first, one realizes the beauty in a particular beautiful body—and, then, the beauty of all bodies; in doing so, the individual discards desire for just one. Next, the individual considers the beauty of minds to be superior to that of bodies. Eventually, the observer uncovers the beauty in practices and laws and, then, in forms of knowledge; each beautiful thing leads the individual to the next and is, in Diotima's account, discarded along the way. At last, one particular type of knowledge catches the individual's attention: beauty *itself*. Beauty neither comes into being nor ceases; it always *is*. It is neither beauty in a particular form or piece

---

[8] Plato, 1999, 210a.

of knowledge nor beauty that exists in a place. It is beauty single in form, unmixed, absolute.[9] The right way to approach or be led to love is to begin with one beautiful thing and move 'upward,' reaching the pure form of beauty by way of a 'staircase' that begins with beautiful bodies. Diotima concludes by suggesting that human life should be spent focused on beauty. It is only in desiring pure beauty that one can produce *true* virtue.

So, what is 'a dialectical desire for the Good'? It is a desire to possess goodness in perpetuity.[10] The value of this goodness cannot initially be fully understood by the moral agent; her appreciation for the Good grows as her engagement with it deepens. To imagine this, I find the aforementioned ascent to be useful. However, though I wish to adopt Plato's description of desire, I do not mean to imply that 'possession' of goodness implies a seizing or ownership over love. By 'possess,' I imply reverence of or appreciation for the object of desire.[11] Additionally, I disagree with Plato's Diotima, who states that a moral agent must abandon love of particulars (e.g., beautiful bodies) while ascending toward the Good. Rather, I assert that the ascent promotes love for what lies on even the lowest rung of the ladder; in the words of A.W. Price, "[T]he ascent deepens interpersonal love rather than replac[es] it."[12] Now, let us examine two processes involving dialectically desiring the Good: Simone Weil's '*décréation*' and Iris Murdoch's 'unselfing," different but related methods of cultivating attention.

[9] "All other beautiful things share in its character" (Plato, 1999, 211b), but this pure form remains unchanged.
[10] Ibid 204e–205a.
[11] Murdoch, 1997, p. 63.
[12] Gill, 1999, p. xxxviii.

I.II. Weilian & Murdochian Attention

What is 'attention'? Simone Weil describes attention (*l'attention*) as a humble, curious, and open disposition. Metaphorically, attention entails 'standing still' instead of 'leaning in.'[13] It is an inner posture of deliberately waiting; this is distinct from an attitude of actively searching for or willing of something in particular.[14] More specifically, attention demands a renouncement of one's own self and seeks, instead, what lies outside of the self.[15] If 'attention' indicates a disposition to attend, then 'atten*ding*' is the dialectical activity prompted by this particular disposition (i.e., an activity in which a moral agent quiets herself to appreciate what is real). Notably, attention is not equivalent to the physical act of 'looking.' For example, a teacher might urge a student to 'pay attention,' but if the student merely adjusts her eyesight and furrows her brow, neglecting to listen and concentrate, then the student is not truly attending.[16] Similarly, I could glaze my gaze from word to word without actually reading; I might discern the meaning of individual terms yet fail to comprehend the narrative.

Iris Murdoch, influenced by Weil, describes attention as a 'just and loving gaze.'[17] Within an interpersonal context, attention prompts an agent to see another person 'as she really is.'[18] Consider Murdoch's example of two people named M and D. M's first impression of D is one of hostility; she finds D unrefined, rude, and juvenile. However, as time passes, well-intentioned M decides to

[13] "[T]here is a special way of waiting upon truth, setting our hearts upon it, yet not allowing ourselves to go in search of it. (Weil, 2021, p. 212).
[14] "Above all our thought should be empty [*vide*], waiting [*en attente*], not seeking anything [*ne rien chercher*], but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it" (Ibid, pp. 110-111)
[15] "This way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth" (Ibid, pp. 115).
[16] Ibid, pp. 109-110.
[17] Murdoch, 2001, p. 33.
[18] "When M is just and loving she sees D as she really is. ... Attention is the effort to counteract...states of illusion" (Ibid, p. 36).

deliberately consider who D 'really' is. M mulls over D's intricacies, noticing the complexities of D's character. Through attention, M's interpretation of D changes. She discovers D is not unrefined but, instead, spontaneous; not juvenile but, instead, refreshingly youthful. M is not deluding herself or pretending as though D is delightful when she is not; rather, through the dialectical activity of continually focusing her gaze lovingly and justly, M sees who D has been *all along*.

Relatedly, note that the term 'love' or 'loving' is often used by Murdoch, Weil, and others; when I invoke 'love' in my account of turning outward (as opposed to when I paraphrase a thinker's ideas), I specifically imply an outer life of doing, thinking, and feeling justly in response to what we, in our inner lives, attend. Rather than avoid other thinkers' use of the term 'love,' let us embrace the close relationship—even fluidity—these thinkers examine between love and attention, the Good, etc.

I will henceforth use 'attention' to indicate a humble disposition to become vulnerable to (i.e., exposed to, open to) and appreciative of the truth; by 'truth' I mean reality as it 'really is.' Weil and Murdoch's accounts suggest that, through attention, an agent has some influence in her (in)ability to accurately understand truths about the world, including those of its inhabitants.[19] If I am concerned only with myself and my immediate wishes—or you with yourself and yours—then the world's intricacies, for instance, that lie outside each of us become unavailable for our consideration. However, by cultivating the humble disposition of attention, I grasp what is 'really real.' Murdoch describes this eloquently: "Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that

[19] "As moral agents we have to try to see justly, to overcome prejudice, to avoid temptation, to control and curb imagination, to direct reflection. Man … has some continual slight control over the direction and focus of his vision" (Ibid, p. 39).

something other than oneself is real. Love ... is the discovery of reality."[20] In gazing outside of ourselves, we may see truth. But what does perceiving truth have to do with eudaimonia?

Recall Aristotle's account: eudaimonia requires virtuous performance of the characteristically human activity of reason. A human cannot excellently reason without, first, knowing what is true. We can understand what is true by exercising attention. In other words, "What we do depends on what we see. And what we see is partly up to us."[21] If M attends to D, then M acts in love toward D. Dialectically desiring Good facilitates cultivation of attention. For Weil, the only desire of attention is the divine; for Murdoch, the only desire of attention is the pure form of goodness. Attention determines what we can attend *to*. Attention cultivates a reflex for love, which I have deemed the mark of a virtuous life; thus, love constitutes and contributes to eudaimonia.[22] Desiring the Good prompts an inner life of attention, and an inner life of attention prompts an outer life of love:

desiring the Good → inner life of attention → outer life of love → eudaimonia

This progression outlines my argument. Let us consider a roadmap for the intricacies of the second step of the progression—the process of cultivating an inner life of attention—in broad terms.

I.III. Our Roadmap

First, you might wonder: what *compels* a person to cultivate attention?

To answer, we must consider the 'starting place' of a person's inner life. I presume that people, 'by default' (i.e., initially), do not live outwardly. Instead, I suggest that, in general, our unexamined inner lives are turned inward. Crucially, the term 'inward' is not equivalent to 'inner life'; your inner

[20] Murdoch, 1997, p. 215.
[21] Panizza, p. 41.
[22] "The moral life ... is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices. What happens in between such choices is indeed what is crucial." (Murdoch, 2001, p. 36).

life might be oriented inward or outward. By 'turned inward,' I mean that a moral agent seeks eudaimonia with an inner life colored by a primarily self-interested disposition. That is, our 'default' disposition seems to be one of chasing our narrowly self-regarding wishes, before anything else, to achieve eudaimonia. To worsen matters, we swim in cultures that glorify perpetual self-worship, which discourages individuals from desiring the Good.

Thus, I assert that striving for *eudaimonia* while turned inward is a fruitless pursuit. This sort of inner life leads to an invulnerability to reality and, as a result, an obscured interpretation of the truth (i.e., the moral agent does *not* interpret reality as it 'really is'). However, though turned inward at the outset, I presume that every moral agent possesses the capacity to turn elsewhere.[23] (Hooray!) But, if not inward, where ought we turn?

Outward. By 'turning outward,' I imply a moral agent cultivating an inner life defined by a disposition of attention. That is, she considers concerns not most immediate to her; she is vulnerable to objects outside of herself while in pursuit of eudaimonia.[24] However, an agent simply desiring a disposition of attention does not immediately grant it to her. I suggest a moral agent begins to cultivate attention as a result of at least the latter, if not both, of the following: restlessness and a pull outward.

First: restlessness. Restlessness is an awareness of the tension between desire and lack, between desiring what is needed and insatiety. That is, I find it plausible that, in many cases, a moral agent grows overwhelmed by the *egestas*—a sense of 'lack' or despair—that results from being turned inward. This seemingly insatiable feeling prompts her to desire objects outside of herself. In other words, the process

[23] This presumption comes from personally witnessing and reading about instances of moral reformation. However, I admit that this idea may be more of an inarticulable faith in or mysterious hope for human ability to overcome innate selfishness.

[24] Murdoch, 2001, p. 58.

of attending to what lies outside of the self is incited by a dissatisfaction with current means for reaching *eudaimonia*; she lacks what she desires yet is unsure where to attain it.[25] I call this phenomenon 'restlessness.' To visualize, imagine a small child in a grocery store who, mesmerized by twirling around in her favorite dress, has become aware that she is suddenly alone. Overcome with worry, she skids from aisle to aisle, earnestly desiring to catch a glimpse of her mother yet is unaware where she might be. Comparably, a moral agent who is restless is both turned inward and aware of the dissatisfaction and/or inability to see reality as it 'really is' as a result. Restlessness might prompt you to orient your inner life elsewhere (namely, outward), opening you up to experience reality as it really is (i.e., vulnerability). But dissatisfaction is mere awareness of a problem, not a solution. So, what comes after this?

Second: a pull outward. Often, though not necessarily, prompted by restlessness, I suggest a moral agent can be 'pulled outward.' During this phenomenon, she becomes convicted by an unbidden longing for—i.e., a conviction to attend to—something outside of herself. In such cases, there is a recognition of a truth beyond the self. For instance, I might lie on my back and, in awe, gaze at a sunset melting across an expansive sky. Awareness of the sublime might shake me into remembering the fact of how small I am in the expanse of the cosmos.[26] Similarly, I might spend hours riding in a car to hear about the distresses and joys of a friend, which is information granting me a more complete understanding of reality. Alternatively, I might find myself at a doctor's office reading about my

[25] In some instances, a moral agent might be apathetic to the prospect of ruminating on and/or changing the object of her desires—or entirely disinterested in explicitly reflecting on her pursuit of eudaimonia. In such cases, I suspect either that *egestas* is felt but ignored, restlessness to be on the agent's horizon, or for her to miss out on reaching eudaimonia entirely—though she might experience psychological sensations of happiness nonetheless.

[26] Consider, for example, Carl Sagan's "Pale Blue Dot."

diagnosis with chronic illness, a newly uncovered component of truth. In any case, as a result of these experiences, much like putting on a pair of glasses to clarify what was once unseen, the moral agent gains a fuller grasp of reality as it 'really is' and recontextualizes her understanding of truth. In some cases, these particulars might 'come out of nowhere' and pull someone outward. In others, however, if also prefaced by restlessness, these pulls may feel less like a surprise and, instead, more so an antidote to the moral agent's insatiability—e.g., the previously missing parent for the wandering child in the grocery store. (Note: being pulled outward might serve as a precursor to a moral agent's deliberate cultivation of attention, but it remains a component of attending.)

After restlessness and a pull, the individual might continue 'turning outward' by cultivating a disposition of attention. Attention is cultivated through a process such as Weil's *décréation* or Murdoch's 'unselfing,' circumstances under which a moral agent lessens her narrowly self-interested considerations and, instead, focuses on the Good and whatever might be drawing her closer to it. Now, rather than continue to view the world in relation primarily to herself, the moral agent begins to view everything 'in the light of' the Good. Due to the sheer magnitude—whether in grandeur or number—of opportunities to comprehend her placement, she may experience the cyclical occasion of being pulled further outward, 'ascending' to the Good. This is emblematic of Brewer's notion of dialectical desire illustrated by the Platonic ascent: an agent's constant refining of reverence for the intrinsic value within the outward objects on which she focuses. That is, 'the Good is like a light that enables us to see goodness in particular things.'[27]

[27] Murdoch, 2001, p. 93.

Now on a journey of turning outward, the moral agent is situated to love, which is to say that she lives virtuously. Love is the outer life resulting from an inner life of attention. By dialectically desiring the Good, the moral agent may become compelled to react to the truth she uncovers. A moral agent can act only on what she takes to be true; whatever reality is considered to be 'really real' immediately impacts what she does. I argue that she can develop an outer life of love and, ultimately, eudaimonia by, first, developing an inner life directed at the Good. She makes this turn from inward to outward by cultivating a disposition of attention.

II. Turned Inward

II.I. Default Disposition

An agent's 'default' disposition often seems to be one of viewing everything outside of her own person in relation, first and foremost, to herself. This presumption is illustrated here: "[T]here is no experience you have had that you are not the absolute centre of. The world as you experience it is there in front of…or behind YOU. … Other people's thoughts and feelings have to be communicated to you somehow, but your own are so immediate, urgent, real."[28] Everything around us, from a traffic stop to an experience at work, is—if failed to be thoughtfully considered—filtered through a lens of self-interest. This might imply that we, consciously or not, believe that this disposition is of utmost significance in achieving *eudaimonia.* However, when we are turned inward, we coax ourselves into believing a false conception of what is 'really real.' As Murdoch says, "The self, the place where we live,

[28] Wallace.

is a place of illusion."[29] The world is not situated around each of our individual existences[30]—and is, in fact, expansive to an almost incomprehensible degree.[31]

To intensify these circumstances, a recurring theme across cultures—from Socrates' ancient Athens to twenty-first-century America—is a glorification of this self-filtered view of the world. In many cases, we are trained to discern only how other people's needs might infringe upon our own—or are unjustly forced into projects to further others' self-interest. In extreme instances, we may begin to worship our own selves.[32] Without metaphorical glasses to view reality as it 'really' is (well, as much of reality as one can grasp from an embodied perspective) we are blind to truth (i.e., what is 'really real'; distinct from intelligence) our self-focused filters blind us from additional components of reality beyond the tips of our own noses. Such behavior, because it begins with a self-regarding worldview, often occurs under the guise of being on the path to eudaimonia.

II.II. A Failure of Turning Outward: Nietzschean Will to Power

To conceptualize the *eudaimonia*-obscuring nature of a life turned inward, let us consider Friedrich Nietzsche. He suggests that a moral agent's life is affirmed (i.e., value is proven) by properly channeling the 'will to power.' According to Nietzsche, an *übermensch* (i.e., 'over-' or 'superman'; *human-become-god*) is the human ideal and improved replacement for God.[33] The *übermensch* does not

[29] "The self, the place where we live, is a place of illusion. Goodness is connected with the attempt to see the unself, to see and to respond to the real world in the light of a virtuous consciousness" (Murdoch, 2001, p. 93).

[30] "The argument for looking outward…and not inward…is that the self is such a dazzling object that if one looks *there* one may see nothing else." (Ibid, p. 30).

[31] "The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot" (Sagan).

[32] In Socrates' case, this is especially evident in his opposition to the (pre-philosophical) Homeric framework of heroism and warfare.

[33] By this, we suppose he suggests that the Christian God is "unworthy of belief." Nietzsche suggests this leaves the accompanying psychologically unhealthy morality of self-denial unjustified (Nietzsche, 2001).

reject his urges; instead, he embraces them, along with weaknesses and suffering, to rise above himself (i.e., self-overcome). An *übermensch* strives to become great, continually triumphing over his past self.

To bring about self-overcoming, Nietzsche advocates for channeling the will to power: a drive to overcome resistance. This drive, according to Nietzsche, is found in shifting centers of power throughout the entire inorganic and organic world, including human psychology. An *übermensch* makes the activity of expanding power his life's guiding move. The will transcends obstacles impeding his accomplishment of goals, and, when properly harnessed, this force can cultivate creativity and confidence, as expressed within the painter who renders a beautiful illustration, the composer who curates masterpieces, or the writer who compiles poignant prose. According to Nietzsche, a moral agent's will to power affirms her life; she does not require external input to justify her existence. In fact, the only type of person this individual 'needs' is a peer or an enemy—that is, someone to challenge her and who she may defeat in order to become stronger and 'rise above' the average individual. Properly channeling the will to power demands continually excellent performance of life-affirming activities.

Nietzsche's ultimate aspiration to affirm life is, by most accounts, an incontestably admirable goal. I concur that striving for continually excellent performance is worthwhile. However, I take issue with the means by which Nietzsche advocates accomplishing these ends; his project of properly channeling the will to power restricts the *übermensch* from uncovering power—and, therefore, value—within anything other than himself. As a result, I am concerned that Nietzsche's *übermensch* is invulnerable to components of reality outside of himself.

If successfully channeling the will to power affirms one's life, then a moral agent would presumably only view reality through a lens of self-regard, rather than in light of the Good. For

instance, while interacting with another moral agent, rather than consider the complexities of the life of a fellow human being, a Nietzschian might ask herself: how does this person stand in the way of—or hold the ability to further—my life-affirmation? It seems that moving through life with this inward-focused filter would obscure the moral agent from what is 'really real.' She would only consider the nuances of the person in front of her as they relate to her ability to self-overcome. Closed off to the opportunity to perceive truths and focused only on her own ends, this moral agent is unable to be impacted by the other components of reality surrounding her. She shields herself from truth.

Relatedly, Nietzsche argues for perspectivism, the idea that knowledge of truth is inherently dictated by and is relative to a moral agent's values, goals, and presuppositions. That is, a moral agent's interpretation of the world reflects her underlying psychological and physiological framework.[34] Thus, for someone like an *übermensch* philosopher, who would create values and frameworks through which to interpret the world, his search for truth *is* his will to power. Again, Nietzsche's will to power prizes human achievement over regard for what is 'really real'; if regard for self-overcoming exceeds our desire for truth, then we accept delusion in exchange for an affirmation.

There is no denying that an *übermensch* would produce glorious art or serve as a confident leader, but we each need a life preserver inflated by something more substantive than our own fickle egos and abilities, such as desire for the Good. Otherwise, we set ourselves up to drown. Instead of continually overcoming the past self by channeling the will to power to reach new heights of human

[34] Nietzsche scholars squabble over perspectivism's compatibility with relativism and the Platonic (i.e., "God's-eye") view of objective truth. Relativism is the view that truth itself—not merely knowledge of it—is not absolute and is dependent on each perceiver's perception. The Platonic view is the view that truth exists independently of perception of it. Rather than analyze which conceptions of (the interpretation of) truth are (in)compatible with Nietzsche's, I merely wish to highlight that his perspectivism implies that a moral agent's ability to interpret reality is impacted by her will to power (Anderson).

excellence, I suggest we overcome 'the self' itself. We will consider this concept later. At this point, we're leaving Nietzsche behind. But if he was to posthumously reject his will-to-power-ing, he would be welcome to join us in the journey outward.

II.III. Murdoch on Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Now, let us consider a more generalizable illustration of life 'turned inward' by analyzing Plato's allegory of the cave. In the scenario, prisoners are chained up, facing the back of a cave. On the wall in front of them, projected by a fire roaring out of their sight, shadows dance in a puppet show of sorts. These images are mere projections of objects; they are not the 'real' objects themselves. However, these prisoners have never left this position, and watching the elaborate scene on the wall is all they have ever experienced. Would they be able to discern that there is something 'really real' beyond these shadows? Might they mistake the puppet show for real life? In other words: are our desires too often turned inward that we fail to attend what is 'really real'?

[35]

Continuing the allegory, imagine a prisoner who frees himself from the chains. He stumbles toward the opening of the cave and becomes overwhelmed by a blinding light: the sun hurts his eyes. Initially, he wants to turn back. However, as he adjusts to the scene before him, he realizes that the shadows are merely representations of real objects. Now, outside of the cave, he can perceive real

[35] An Illustration of the Allegory of the Cave

objects and can look at the sun itself. He appreciates truth! In response to this revelation, the escaped prisoner seeks to bring the rest of the prisoners into the truthful view of the world. However, as he makes his way back inside the cave, the darkness hurts his eyes; seeing this, the prisoners believe the man has been harmed by what lies outside. They are unable to see beyond superficial appearances, taking what they perceive at face value. Essentially, escaping the cave means you can see the truth, but doing so does not mean you will easily be able to convince others of it. There is no replacement for one's own personal experience of leaving the cave and coming to terms with what is 'really real.'

We see an inner life turned inward explicated through Iris Murdoch's interpretation of the allegory. She suggests that the fire represents the self, a false sun of sorts, something easier to fixate on—'worship,' even, she suggests—than the true one. That is, she argues that much of what we perceive to be reality (i.e., the cave wall's shadows) is projection of our desires, providing us with a false conception of truth. Additionally, Murdoch deems the sun to be equivalent to her conception of the Good. The presence of the Good allows us to view reality in its proper light. However, it is hard to face this. This difficulty is demonstrated, literally, by the prisoner who becomes blinded upon freeing himself and stumbling into the brightness enveloping what lies outside of the cave. Perceiving truth in light of the Good requires 'getting past oneself.' That is, Murdoch suggests the import of directing our attention away from projections to discern, instead, what is 'really there.' She suggests:

> "Our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world. Our states of consciousness differ in quality, our fantasies and reveries are not trivial and unimportant, they are profoundly connected with our energies and our ability to choose and act. And if quality of consciousness matters, then

> anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity and realism is to be connected with virtue."[36]

Thus, we learn the following from Murdoch's interpretation of Plato's allegory: if we filter reality through self-interest, we will miss what is 'really real,' but if we deliberately attend to what lies outside of ourselves in light of the Good, we will become shaken awake to truth—though it may be disorienting.

III. Turning Outward

III.I. Paradigmatic Literary Examples: Augustine & Ivan Ilyich

To most accurately understand the precursors to cultivating attention, let us consider the lives of Saint Augustine and Ivan Ilyich. These individuals undergo dramatic experiences of turning inward to outward in their inner lives. While the average moral agent will not endure quite as drastic of a transformation, Augustine and Ilyich's respectively autobiographical and fictional stories provide us key images illustrating milestones throughout the process of turning outward. In what follows, I distill each character's story into a brief vignette, highlighting features relevant to our present analysis. First, let us consider Saint Augustine's autobiographical work, *Confessions*:

[*Confessions* by Saint Augustine]

> Told in reflection by now-transformed Augustine, *Confessions* chronicles the young man's journey away from material pursuits and social acclaim. Over and over, Augustine considers his younger days to be marked by a fruitless race into gratifying his immediate desires, often in pursuit of boosting his ego.[37] Especially while working as a rhetorician, Augustine grows restless as a result of an encroaching sense of despair resulting from an inability to remain satisfied by material pleasures or praise. With the wisdom of hindsight,[38] he writes that "mortal

[36] Murdoch, 2001, p. 84.
[37] Augustine, p. 15.
[38] Ibid, p. 2.

goods"[39] (i.e., fleeting, impermanent things of the world), though appealing (i.e., 'seductive'), can be full of misfortune, are unfulfilling, and prove to be unable to promote eudaimonia.[40] Eventually overcome with agony, he walks into a nearby garden.[41] Moved to tears and to his knees, he pleads for his "impure" life to end[42] and mourns over the "impur[ity]" and "bitter agony" of his existence, an act of vulnerability prompted by his restlessness. Augustine hears a young voice repeat the phrase, "Pick up and read," which he interprets to be a heavenly command to open a book and read the first chapter he comes across. Following the direction, he feels a pull to read a passage from scripture; it implores him to revere the divine as the highest good and attend to God, rather 'worldly' desires, to reach *eudaimonia*. At this, Augustine experiences peace and removal of doubt about how to live his life: "it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded my heart."[43] He is no longer dissatisfied with his circumstances and is convicted to live according to virtues he is now certain should be upheld.

So, by Augustine's account, pursuing worldly desires and inflating one's own ego is fruitless in the long-run.[44] Augustine's experience is not unlike what is known colloquially as the 'leaky jars' passage in Plato's *Gorgias,* an anti-hedonistic metaphor that highlights the pitfalls of a self-indulgent disposition: speaker Callicles considers temperance to be indicative of weakness, but Socrates counters him by suggesting that a person with boundless desires will endlessly need satisfaction in the same way that pouring water from a sieve into a jar covered in holes can never become full.[45] Though working against a human instinct for pleasure may seem counterintuitive to reaching eudaimonia, case after case suggests the hedonistic strategy does not work, continually spilling out from metaphorical holes in defeat. Now, consider a second literary example through case of Leo Tolstoy's fictional Ivan Ilyich:

[39] Ibid, p. 3.
[40] Ibid, p. 87.
[41] "[I]n the agony of death I was coming to life" (Ibid, p. 146)
[42] "Rivers streamed from my eyes. ... 'Why not an end to my impure life in this very hour?'" (Ibid, p. 152).
[43] "[I]t was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled" (Ibid, p. 153).
[44] Weil, 1986, p. 122.
[45] Plato, 1967, 493a-c

[*The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by Leo Tolstoy]

> After decades of mundanity and social climbing, courtroom judge Ivan Ilyich faces the tragedy of his own terminal illness. As he suffers from physical ailment, Ilyich finds himself pained by a cognitive "disease": the horror of impending death, about which he spends days endlessly wailing.[46] Horrified by looming death, Ilyich can focus on nothing other than his mortality without feeling that he is deceiving himself from confronting a truth he has, until now, ignored. He suggests a bafflement with the possibility of his life's senselessness, that he somehow 'lived wrong' despite following societal expectations.[47] Forced to realize that his obsession with accumulating piles of material wealth and social acclaim cannot save him from death, Ilyich despairs. In both mulling over the fact that he will die and confronting boredom in the absence of a career, Ilyich experiences an anguish-filled restlessness.[48] However, as a result of his interactions with Gerasim, his young caretaker—notably, also the only person in the novella who is unafraid of death—who shows compassion for him, Ilyich ponders if his life has been good. The combination of restlessness and receiving Gerasim's compassion pulls his desires toward possibly living in a different manner. While Ilyich ponders this, the agony over the prospect of death intensifies, and he is gripped by an awareness of an abstract 'light' akin to a greater goodness or divinity. This 'light' fills him with a sense of possibility to rectify any wrongness he has inflicted (upon his family, specifically). Then, he literally and metaphorically attends to his wife and son. Gripping his wife's hand, he pities how they have endured his acts of mistreatment and begins to speak, "Forgive…"[49] In his (literal) final hour, even self-interested courtroom judge Ilyich is compelled to act selflessly. Suddenly, his fear of death leaves him, and he feels a sense of the *absence* of death overcome him, which brings him to peace. Soon after, he dies.

Similarly to Augustine, the reaction to the consequences of an inward-turned disposition leaves the moral agent unmoored, unhappy, and, in Ilyich's sense, feeling cheated; he realizes his actions did not grant him eudaimonia. Additionally, Ilyich's disposition deters him from realizing the reality of his wife and son until his final hour, when he adopts an attending disposition and, in the light of the Good, can see the 'really real' reality of how he treated them.

---

[46] Tolstoy, 2004, p. 89.

[47] "In public opinion I was moving uphill, but to the same extent life was slipping away from me. … But how could that be when I did everything one is supposed to?" (Ibid, pp. 101-102).

[48] Ibid, p. 54.

[49] Considering that this is a constructed literary text and not an autobiographical account, I wager Tolstoy implies "me" to follow the word "forgiveness."

The beginning of both Augustine and Ilyich's stories demonstrate that being turned inward leaves us, seemingly paradoxically, unsatisfied, unable to reach eudaimonia. In looking to ourselves as the highest good, instead of the Good, we are unable to perceive truth—and thus unable to act in love in response to what we see, and inch closer to the good life. Now, let us consider what is entailed in turning outward, a cyclical process summarized by the following components, some of which are bound up in each other: restlessness, a pull, attention, and love. To further illuminate these concepts, we will return to milestones within Augustine and Ilyich's lives along the way.

III.II. Restlessness

I presume that the average moral agent who is turned inward seeks eudaimonia. We see this, for instance, within the initial states of Augustine and Ilyich. That is, they desire what will relieve their *egestas,* their sense of 'lack' (i.e., of what is needed; insatiety). They both seek out material wealth or acclaimed pursuits, though doing so fails to placate their nagging lack of satiety and, thus, leaves them both in agony. Augustine and Ilyich's angst is found in the inability to reach eudaimonia despite desiring to have it. I call this dynamic—the self-aware tension between desire and lack—'restlessness.' Specifically, this results from looking for eudaimonia in the wrong places and becoming aware of the *egestas* that manifests by living turned inward. Notably, restlessness would theoretically leave a person vulnerable (i.e., exposed to, aware of) to what lies outside of herself, as she abandons the conviction that her own self could provide the path to eudaimonia.

A moral agent's experience of restlessness would likely not occur until she has tried—and failed—to flourish by living turned inward. For instance, a person facing a 'midlife crisis,' suddenly becomes fed-up with unfulfilling ends she has pursued for much of her life. Like Ilyich and Augustine,

this moral agent might desire to live differently. However, she might yet be unsure how to do this and achieve the *eudaimonia* she has always desired. In other words, you have wandered deep into a woodsy trail with the intention of reaching a lovely view at its end, but, all of a sudden, look down to discover that your map is for another path and that your compass is broken. You seek the lovely view, likely more desperately than ever. Nonetheless, you are lost.

On the other hand, not every person undergoes restlessness. It is plausible that a moral agent either (a) never thoughtfully considers if there might be a gap between what she desires and what she lacks or (b) does not seek to change her circumstances *despite* feeling this tension. For those who *do*, however, feel and seek to respond to restlessness, I recommend cultivating attention.

III.III. A Pull

Before knocking on Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch's doors for advice, let us consider a key concept wrapped up in the process of cultivating attention. This is a concept I call a 'pull' outward, a moral agent's experience of stirring with unbidden longing for a particular object outside of herself. In such cases, there is a recognition of a truth inclusive of that which lies beyond the self. The moral agent gains a fuller grasp of reality as it 'really is' and recontextualizes her conception of what is 'really real.'

I argue that these 'pull'-prompting particulars generally fall into two categories: (a) the natural world and (b) other people. However, I concede that these particulars and the mysterious ways in which they pull us outward are too complex to categorize; these categories are not (and, excitingly, cannot be) exhaustive. I include them merely as a tool for what I hope to be effective communication.

First, consider the natural world. For our purposes, this includes any organic material in the world untampered by humans. Being pulled outward by a component of the natural world might be

categorized as sublime or beautiful, such as gazing at a snow-capped mountain in awe or tracing the path of a vibrant lady bug. Alternatively, engaging with particulars in the natural world might be considered frightening or pitiful, such as finding yourself sprinting across the grass under the pummeling of a rainstorm, reading about an earthquake, discovering an unmoving bird unfortunately stuck to your window. The natural world features beauties and pain and is peppered with particulars who might symbolically sit at the bottom rung of the ladder of love, objects you might value or take notice of for their own sake.

Second, let us think of other people. You might be pulled outward by a hug from a dear friend, an encouraging remark from a professor, or the familiar laugh of a classmate. Further, you could experience this by indirectly encountering a person, even someone you do not know personally. This might look like bursting into tears while reading a touching letter, becoming enthralled by the lyrics or music technique of a piano ballad, or analyzing the words of an author who somehow seems to know the secrets stashed between the sofa cushions of your soul. Conversely, a person could trip and fall a few feet away, a stranger might hurl insults at you, and a close friend could unintentionally cause you to feel pain. You might study the causes of child mortality across the globe or receive word of a family member's terminal illness. Seemingly more complex than the natural world, our interactions with other people can bring about a reaction that could invoke more reverence than even the most lovely flower petal. Other people might invoke brushes with beauty, goodness, or truth that sit higher on the ladder of love than mere features of the natural world.

Now, rather than identify fourth or fourteenth categories that might pull a moral agent outward, I will joyfully admit that it seems that almost everything, whether an idea scribbled on a

whiteboard, philosophical theory, or the squeak of a nearby staircase, can pull us outward. Ordinary or exquisite, hilarious or devastating. Truly, everything. While the aforementioned two categories cannot possibly be exhaustive for all that might pull a person outward, they *also* might not properly work as separate categories. Sometimes, particulars on various rungs of the ladder collaborate to provoke an unbidden longing within a moral agent. For instance, below me, as I walk around, the ground of the terrace shifts as I apply my weight to unsecured, square blocks of concrete. In considering the wobbly pieces, I wonder where the concrete was mixed or what the people who poured it into the ground ate for lunch. To my right, three students giggle as they walk through the parking lot. Above me, an array of twinkling stars pepper the inky blackness of the night sky. By making myself aware of the presence of other people across the way, I can then perceive their different voices and faces, even considering if I recognize them from class. In placing all four of us under the expansive darkness of the sky, I realize our shared humanity,[50] that even if we have different hopes and fears, favorite colors and hometowns, we hold at least our odd place in the cosmos undeniably in common. But to what end? What is the significance of becoming pulled outward by particulars outside of myself?

Vulnerability. By literally or abstractly contemplating objects outside of myself, I become vulnerable (i.e., exposed to, aware of) to what is 'really real,' which, factually, is composed almost entirely of objects that are not me. To gaze at something other than oneself is to bow in reverence to truth, to humbly acknowledge the reality that there is value to be endlessly sought outside of oneself.[51] If seeking value and truth only within oneself, a moral agent closes herself off to what is 'really real' and

[50] Sagan.

[51] "The appreciation of beauty in art or nature is not only (for all its difficulties) the easiest available spiritual exercise; it is also a completely adequate entry into (and not just analogy of) the good life, since it *is* the checking of selfishness in the interest of seeing the real" (Murdoch, 2001, p. 63).

severely limits her opportunities for pathways to eudaimonia. If you view everything within the world as a stumbling block in your journey to eudaimonia, then attaining a life-affirming peace will likely be hard to come by. But if the massive expanse of organic wonders and other people, even the devastating tragedies woven through them all, are instantiations of and reminders of the Good, then we have some hope of a reliable life vest, after all. Consider this excerpt from Simone Weil: "Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate with each other by knocking on the wall. The wall is the thing which separates them but it is also their means of communication. It is the same with us and God. Every separation is a link."[52] Though I see disanalogies here (e.g., divine and human equivalence) Weil illustrates that everything with which we interact is an instantiation of the Good which, as a result, draws us closer to it.

However, the particulars pointing you to the Good should not be used exclusively as means to your end of reaching eudaimonia. Doing so fails to result in genuinely turning outward. If a friendship exists only for furthering your own end of self-discovery, for instance, then you fail to be genuinely vulnerable to this person. If you summit a mountain only so that you may quickly snap a photo of the view to post online, then you interpret your journey to its peak as a means to your own self-interested end; even if the end is related to an admiration of beauty, you fail to be vulnerable to it.

Consider also that restlessness' tension between need and lack provokes within the moral agent the awareness that she cannot bring about eudaimonia only by her efforts. This might provoke within a moral agent an increased capacity for vulnerability. Though not a prerequisite to being pulled outward, restlessness would leave an individual particularly susceptible to being pulled outward. Think back to

---

[52] Weil, 1997, p. 200.

our poor friend who is lost on the trail. Realizing that his tools are futile, he might squint his eyes to see if other hikers are around or if he can spy the north star above him to guide him out. He seeks a new solution that might allow him to reach his initial goal. Though this metaphor does have literal merit, consider only the concept behind it: if your map does not indicate a proper route, then you will look for one that does, if you want to reach the end of the trail. In other words, if being turned inward is not provoking eudaimonia, then you might try turning outward as a viable option to do so.

The instances of a restless person becoming pulled outward—as opposed to finding herself pulled outward without seeking to be—are often quite emotional. Augustine, teary-eyed and thrown to his knees, experiences a wild elation upon hearing his child-provoked interaction with scripture. Like a thirsty man who finally gains a sip of water, he is grateful for a mere taste of the vast goodness from which the divine text is supposedly sprung.[53] Similarly, Ilyich's multi-day streak of wailing is broken only when another person extends him kindness, and he senses an mysteriously sourced indicator of the possibility of redemption. However, these are mere moments of being pulled outward; a lifelong pursuit of turning outward would entail a more sustained commitment to vulnerability.

Though we may be pulled outward at any time, in order to be consistently vulnerable to what is 'really real,' we must develop an inner life of attention. Before exploring how we might cultivate this disposition, let us consider how the Stoics and Epicureans, thinkers who purport to offer a philosophy of life fit for achieving eudaimonia, fall short of my view. Their errors are instructive, highlighting failures of vulnerability and ultimate desire, two key components of turning outward.

---

[53] "I did not know that the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself" (Augustine, p. 68).

IV.IV: A Failure of Turning Outward: Stoic Invulnerability

The Stoic conception of eudaimonia entails 'living in agreement' with both human and cosmic or divine nature. This alludes to their belief in providence, the conviction that a divine force has set out the activities of the cosmos in a rational and blemishless order. It is the job of a Stoic to align herself with this cosmic order, else she finds herself unable to be virtuous; for the Stoic, being virtuous requires aligning oneself with the "flow of reality." Virtue, for the Stoics, is the only good and demands the highest development of one's reason.[54] Notably, the Stoics believe that attaining knowledge depends solely on a person's disposition (not) to 'assent' to impressions, which they can control; thus, attaining eudaimonia is within each person's power and is entirely up to the individual. Further, note that the 'Sage' is the Stoic ideal, an individual who has attained perfect reason and who lies within the reach of human possibility (at least in principle, even if this does not occur very often, if ever).

Crucially, passions have no place in the Stoic conception of virtue. They are irrational and encode false beliefs about what is good, bad, or indifferent. To experience a passion is to disrupt the 'smooth flow' of life and to foil a person's progress toward *eudaimonia*. To a Stoic, many things on which we place value judgments should be merely 'indifferents': things without negative or positive value. For instance, to see a friend's death as 'bad' and the taste of a future sandwich as 'good' is to commit an epistemic failure incompatible with living in accordance with nature and the truth. This is because, for the Stoic, death—even premature death—is part of the natural order of life, and food should be chosen for nourishment, not pleasure; both of these are without inherent value and should not be regarded as having such. However, not all emotional feelings are to be avoided; while *most*

[54] Durand.

emotional responses occur when incorrectly judging 'indifferents' to be good or bad, a Sage's good feelings (*eupatheiai*) would be in response to genuine goods—which can only be virtue. Additionally, 'pre-emotions' (*propatheiai*) are permissible, as they are a physiologically driven set of emotional reactions that may occur within a Sage without sacrificing the knowledge on which her virtue depends.

I admire the Stoic aspiration to see reality as it 'really is' by striving to be in-line with the natural way of things; this is comparable to dialectically desiring the Good. There also seems to be an aversion for a self-indulgent life that lacks a sense of duty to others and to the natural order of the cosmos. In fact, Seneca, an exemplary Stoic, sees attaining a form of endless joy that promotes satisfaction to be 'a serious matter.' He deems that what is good to be what comes from good conscience and action, as well as a steady, unfettered disposition.

However, despite what seems to be an aversion to a life turned inward, as well as an aspiration for the Good, I find the Stoics to have missed the necessary component of vulnerability required in turning outward. As a result, I do not think they will be able to meet their own worthy goal of living in accordance with truth. To illustrate this, consider the following case: John, on his first day of preschool, builds a tower of blocks with fellow four-year-old classmate Ryan. Until the end of high school, Ryan and John attend the same schools and live on the same street, allowing them to cultivate a rich friendship. Now, it is graduation day. The pair of friends are parting geographic ways and will, on most days, be forced to reduce their friendship to phone calls. After fourteen years of shared memories, hardships, and growing up, Ryan and John are loading the last boxes into their car before driving away. Ryan begins to sob, but John responds that emotions distract us from seeing what is 'really real.' Ryan

now doubts the value John has placed on their friendship and thinks he fundamentally misses an understanding of the situation by avoiding his emotions.

It seems that John is incorrect. In my view, sad emotions are justifiable here because, without them, the pair of friends ignore a crucial truth of these circumstances. The sorrow might compel both Ryan and John to confront reality, to turn outward in realization of the greater picture of their intertwined lives and how their paths might soon diverge. In my understanding of Stoic view, the only permissible instances of emotions during this graduation goodbye would be, first, the uncontrollable physiological responses (to which we can assent or not) and, second, 'happy tears' shed in positive memory of their years of virtuous friendship—a particular bond that left both of them to be better people.[55] More importantly, I deem feeling sadness in this scenario to be not only permissible for both friends but also logically necessary. If the boys are allowed to cry out of joy, then why do they not cry about their friendship every day? There must, then, be something significant about this particular occasion. What is it about the moving boxes and graduation that makes tears—even if only happy ones—suddenly understandable to the Stoics? I think this is because something good is ending. Suppose it was March of their sophomore year of high school and not May of their senior year. There are no moving boxes or graduation robes. I would assume a Stoic would deem it impermissible to shed tears of joy every day. If crying over joy in a friendship every day is likely to disrupt one's ability to live in accordance with nature, what is it about graduation day—if not the fact that their friendship, as they know it, is ending—that might make the emotions justified? Is there not something quite "in

[55] We can set aside the worry that at their young age, and therefore before the age of reason and cultivation of virtue, "happy tears" might not be on the table.

accordance" with nature about crying at a time like this? It seems that the Stoic's goal for a virtuous life of imperturbability blocks them from understanding what is 'really real.'

Though the Stoic resistance to vulnerability ultimately alienates them from my understanding of truth, there is still value to be gleaned from their aspiration to attend to it, for example. Though I disagree that truth can be fully comprehended without vulnerability, the Stoic conception of accepting circumstances as they come demands some extent of redirection of attention outward. The Stoics demonstrate an admirable serenity with which we ought to regard reality, though they, ironically, remain insufficiently vulnerable to it and, as a result, cannot be said to exemplify turning outward.

III.V: A Failure of Turning Outward: Epicurean Self-Interest & Insulation

The Epicurean conception of eudaimonia is to maximize necessary pleasures and minimize pain. Necessary pleasures are desires for survival or joy-prompting, harmless extravagances, such as art and philosophy, knowledge and virtue. While this philosophy is a simple form of hedonism (i.e., a view by which pleasure is the only thing of value, and pain is its opposite) a central tenet of Epicureanism is to avoid 'unlimited desires,' which are the most significant threats to our well-being and prevent us from day-to-day contentment. Examples of such desires include power, praise, and wealth. It is crucial that the Epicurean maintains control over her own values, rather than allowing them to corrode her.

Another tenet of Epicureanism is engagement with people and things outside of oneself. Such interaction ideally occurs within the bounds of the 'Garden,' the gathering place for a community of Epicurean friends pursuing a simple, content life. Here, friendship is desired for the intrinsic joys it

promotes; a friend's pleasure promotes one's own pleasure, and her pain promotes one's own pain.[56] However, friendship's ultimate advantage lies in its insurance that everyone's needs (within the community) will be mutually fulfilled. In the end, avoidance of unpleasantness is king.[57]

I find the strength of Epicureanism to be its embrace of vulnerability. An Epicurean values emotions and the joys they bring, as well as celebrating value found in interacting with the natural world and fellow community members. Within the Garden, it is mutually beneficial to be aware of and to attend to each other's needs. This might take the form of acts of kindness to one another or admiring the beauty within the Garden's natural world. This disposition is central to the cultivation of attention and perception of what is 'really real' and, thus, is necessary in turning outward.

While the Epicurean life might, from the outside, seem to exemplify a life turned outward, I find the philosophy one, ultimately, of self-interest. Instead, the Epicurean's highest goal is maximizing necessary pleasures and, more crucially, minimizing pain. This implies that attempts to cultivate attention occur for ultimately self-interested purposes. While an Epicurean might value attending to a fellow Epicurean inside the Garden or even self-sacrificing for a community member's sake, she would not do so for someone outside of it; the sacrificer lacks the assurance of securing her own needs in the act of attending to what lies outside of the Garden. Generous action might oftentimes be a by-product of Epicurean life, but selflessness for selflessness' sake—without a guarantee of avoiding pain in the process—would not be justified within Epicurean simple hedonism.

---

[56] "Some Epicureans … argue that consideration for a friend's pleasure is subordinate to that of one's own, but a friend's pleasure brings about one's own pleasure and so one should treat a true friend as a second self" (Cicero).
[57] "[W]e do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror" (Laertius, 10.121–135).

So, while vulnerable to activities within the Garden, Epicureanism seems to shield the moral agent from *complete* vulnerability—a vulnerability to the fullness of the world which, in a large part, lies outside of the theoretical Epicurean community. Though 'more vulnerable' than the Stoics, the Epicurean community acts essentially as an extension of the self; thus, the Epicurean, no matter how simply, is ultimately motivated by self-interest. However, there the rest of the world lies outside of the Garden and is filled with other people who have their own ideas about the world, who laugh, who suffer. Though an Epicurean is seemingly inclined to cultivate what looks like attention, she cannot fully be described as adorning a humble, loving, and open disposition to the world—cannot be described as 'waiting' to be moved by something outside of herself—if she would only adopt this attitude for the ultimate sake of self-interest, rather than in ultimate desire for the Good.

Here, we see another key conflict with turning outward: Epicureans lack an ultimate desire for Good. With a simple hedonistic view guiding one's inner life, they would only begin to (seemingly) ascend toward the Good as a by-product of self-interested pursuits, even if such self-interest lacks indulgence. And such pleasures can only motivate someone so far. While a moral agent who is turned outward might engage in acts of cosmopolitan solidarity, an Epicurean would not. For example, someone turned outward might go on a hunger strike to empathize with those starving across the world, promote justice for individuals other than her friends, or vote for a cause supporting others at the expense of her comfort.[58] In addition to desiring self-interest (rather than the Good), there is a uniting cosmopolitan principle lacking in Epicureanism. These are components fundamental to turning outward and living in a *eudaimonia*-promoting manner.

[58] An Epicurean would only endure such pains for a friend because, ultimately, doing so is not sacrificial for an Epicurean.

III.VI. Cultivating Attention: Weilian *Décréation*

Now, let us consider the final, defining component in turning outward, which requires vulnerability at its core: attention. We will look at Simone Weil's and Iris Murdoch's methods of cultivating it.[59]

Simone Weil suggests attention occurs through detachment (*décréation*). Her view is encapsulated in the following statement: "Great human error is to reason in place of finding out."[60] I believe we can take her to mean that, despite good intentions, it is a mistake to 'sit around' and theorize about one thing or another rather than dialectically engaging with it in 'real life.' For instance, it is a mistake to write a dissertation about how to be a good piano player rather than spending that time playing the piano. In this way, good piano playing is a dialectical activity and requires engagement to be understood. In order to engage with 'real life' in this way, Weil argues for detachment (*décréation*) from one's own selfishness long enough to find out about the world.[61] That is, she believes we ought to 'undo' our self, since it is the obstacle to 'joining' (i.e., understanding, interacting with) what lies outside of ourselves. Specifically, attention ought not to be a search *for* anything in particular—rather, attention *is* waiting, a readiness of sorts.[62] But what, exactly, do we wait for?

Grace, Weil would say. That is, we adopt a posture of waiting for God to perform mysterious work within the self. Attention, for Weil, is a 'negative effort,' neither a tiring search to grasp onto something nor a grueling force of the will to set and reach a goal. Rather, attention entails a suspension

---

[59] Cultivation of attention is my answer to the following: "[A]re there and techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?" (Murdoch, 2001, p. 53).

[60] West.

[61] "May I disappear in order that those things that I see may become perfect in their beauty" (Weil, 1997, p. 42)

[62] "We must not want to find…it is only effort without desire (not attached to an object) which infallibly contains a reward" (Ibid, 1986, p. 212).

of thought, a detachment that prepares us "to be penetrated by the object."[63] By "the object," she means God—specifically, God's grace (i.e., God's presence which inspires love). In *Gravity and Grace*, Weil says: "Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void."[64] By 'void,' she seems to indicate the result of dissatisfaction or inability to near eudaimonia that might be left by turning inward. Thus, enduring restlessness is not a failure. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that something other than the self must be 'the answer.' For Weil, attention is an 'attitude of supplication' and is an *opportunity* for grace to move in. It is necessarily turning to something other than oneself in order to detach from the self.[65]

To cultivate attention, Weil suggests to focus neither on yourself nor any particulars. In the process of self-effacement and waiting, we focus on God by default. Through *décréation* (i.e., detaching from ourselves), we may make room for grace to take hold of ourselves; prayer—"unmixed attention"—is "the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God."[66]

III.VII: Cultivating Attention: Murdochian Unselfing

Now, let us consider Iris Murdoch's take. She explicitly builds on Simone Weil's work on attention, though through an atheistic lens. Rather than venerating God, she praises the sovereignty, simply, of 'Good,' which she defines as a Platonic sort of "transcendent perfection."[67] Similarly to Weil's advocacy for orienting our attention to the highest good by way of diminishing one's own self, Murdoch outlines a related idea: *unselfing*.

---

[63] Ibid, 2021, p. 62.
[64] Ibid, 1997, p. 55.
[65] Ibid, p. 47
[66] Ibid, 2021, p. 57
[67] "I think there is a place both inside and outside religion for a sort of contemplation of the Good" (Murdoch, 2001, 101).

Unselfing is a process of continually turning one's attention to what lies outside of herself, to reality. Murdoch depicts this idea through the following scenario:

> "I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but a kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. And of course this is something which we may also do deliberately: give attention to nature in order to clear our minds of selfish care."[68]

Here, Murdoch outlines a more literal understanding (than Weil) of what it is to turn away from ourselves. The circumstance is gripping, in part, in its sudden expectation. The agent is not looking out the window in a deliberate effort to rid herself of selfishness. Rather, Murdoch simply *finds herself* 'altered.' Something outside of herself grips her gaze, pulling her outward. She focuses on something 'really real' outside of herself. Murdoch notes that this can occur with intention: someone could deliberately look outside of the window and become entranced by the kestrel.

A fixation on truth lies at the crux of Murdoch's philosophy of attention. In, literally, noticing what lies outside of oneself, there is an effect of viewing oneself within a larger picture (e.g., as a brick within a brick archway). If Murdoch had not attended to the kestrel, it seems likely that her brooding state might have continued without interruption. However, when she grew transfixed by other facets of the world, there was no choice but to reframe her own frustrations and reflections within the context of a larger picture. Drawn to something besides herself, the focus on her own situation is lessened and is taken up by the other matters in the world. The process of unselfing is seeing the "real world" through the lens of the Good,[69] undiluted by solely personal interests.

---

[68] Ibid, p. 82

[69] "[W]e love particular individuals in light of the Good, and we love the Good through particular individuals" (Hopwood, p. 486).

To cultivate attention, Murdoch suggests turning toward the Good. Through unselfing, we take part in the Good and begin to conceptualize reality accurately. In doing so, we may be able to "pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is."[70]

IV: Attention as Love

There is a reason why, unlike Aristotle, Weil and Murdoch's philosophies include minimal description on how we ought to act. This reason is indebted to their conviction that the inner life steers the outer life. In other words, a moral agent's disposition determines how she will act; if a person seeks to reform her actions, she must, first, reform her disposition. This may seem like a mere difference in emphasis, and it very well may be; like Aristotle,[71] the road to virtue for Murdoch and Weil also begins with practice—but introspective practice, rather than action. Consider this in terms of growing a flower: if you plant a seed and nourish it properly, with water, sunlight, and fertile soil, then the healthy plant that sprouts can be said to be the direct result of proper cultivation of its growth. You cannot promote health for a flower by tickling its petals; instead, it must be nourished before it blooms.

Similarly, virtuous action is not cultivated by willing[72] particular actions; virtuous action results from a virtuous disposition that would more or less 'automatically' lead a moral agent to do what she does. This is the case in turning outward. The work of preparing ourselves to act virtuously is already done[73] by cultivating an inner life of attention. Let us call this consequence of attention the virtuous action of 'love.' We see this word woven throughout Weil and Murdoch's theories on attention and its cultivation. If attending is to see things as they really are, then to love is to act justly in response to what

---

[70] Murdoch, 2001, p. 86.
[71] "We become just by doing just things, temperate by doing temperate things" (Aristotle, 1103a-b)
[72] Murdoch, 2001, p. 47.
[73] Ibid, p. 53.

we attend. Love is the proper response to truth while in pursuit of the Good. In turning our literal and/or metaphorical attention to the kestrel, the runner outside, or the idea of the greater cosmos, we have the chance to *respond* to what we see. When we cultivate attention, we develop in ourselves a reflex to act lovingly. Effectively, attention is love.

We see love as a reflex in the lives of Augustine in Ilyich. As a result of their experiences of turning outward, they are compelled to act in a distinct(ly different) manner. Augustine lives a life driven by a desire to glorify God, and Ilyich seeks forgiveness from his family. For both of them, in addition to shifting to act in love, an overwhelming sense of tranquility and joy or relief emerges as a result. Due to the dialectical nature of desiring Good, the activity of attending is theoretically endless and requires constant, diligent engagement. Thus, it seems that we can suggest that the consequence of attention is love, and the consequence of love is an overwhelming tranquility and joy. If I may be so bold, this sounds quite like Aristotle's eudaimonia. Thus, through an inner life of attending to the Good, we may be compelled, in our outer lives, to act in love. This process constitutes eudaimonia.

V: A Looming Worry

If the Nietzschean, Epicurean, and Stoic accounts are flawed, then what is a worry of turning outward? To answer, let us consider Simone Weil herself, a once-living example of what it means to develop an inner life of attention. At age five, she refrained from consuming sugar in solidarity with the World War I French soldiers who were without it. She taught in secondary schools, often taking students outdoors to observe 'real life' and look out for problems, rather than memorize answers. She worked in an auto factory to understand the alienating effect of industrial labor on workers. Despite her pacifism, she joined an anarchist unit and trained for the Spanish Civil War. The list goes on. She notably

critiqued the human pursuit of power, which turns people into things to be used as a means to an egoistic end. Her vision was unrelenting, compassionate, and self-effacing. But did she go too far?

Classmate Simone de Beauvoir remarked that Weil had "a heart that could beat right across the world,"[74] yet that is, quite literally, what prompted its eventual failure. Her death was pronounced a suicide—specifically, cardiac failure due to self-starvation. Though Weil's motivations and abilities within her final days are contested, one suggestion is her speculated refusal to eat was motivated by solidarity toward hungry war victims. Weil fizzling away so young, at age thirty-four, especially in a potential act of solidarity rather than in the thick of any action, is arguably a danger of turning 'too far' outward. I worry that, if taken to its absolute extreme, cultivating attention could promote a quieting of the self to such a degree that it demands no self at all.

To the specific worry that the attention-cultivating practice of *décréation* promotes the ultimate form of self-sacrifice, I will say this: there is a difference between masochism and asceticism. Masochism advocates for a pleasure that comes from the experience of pain and humiliation. Asceticism demands avoidance of self-indulgence and is comparable to the actions of a monk. However, it is possible to bring about the end of one's life in this way. Self-denial for the sake of self-denial (and, similarly, ascetic practices as a means to express pessimism) is not equivalent to a life of genuine asceticism. At this final hour, I will agree with one of Nietzsche's takes: asceticism *as an end in itself* is a dangerous, life-negating stance. This, importantly, is the lingering question Simone Weil leaves us: did she leave this world valorizing asceticism or denying herself for the sake of empathizing with others, for quieting herself to hear, understand, and respond to the suffering around the globe?

---

[74] Caswell.

Further, is this process of pondering Simone Weil's potential cause of death a dangerous romanticization of tragedy?

We cannot assert what caused her passing; Weil was the only one in a position to know. Though the potential dangers of asceticism may be a relevant contemplation, my intention within this thesis is only to encourage turning our likely inward-turned inner lives a bit outward, offsetting the glaring imbalance between regard for the self and for the other.

VI. The Final Word

In this paper, I have sought to identify a route by which humans may reach eudaimonia. First, I argued that a person is inclined to view the world through a primarily self-regarding lens. I called this living 'turned inward.' However, as illustrated in literary examples from Augustine and Tolstoy, this way of life often leaves a person in a state of restlessness, a self-identified tension between lack and need, which can prompt a moral agent to seek fulfillment elsewhere. Either prompted by restlessness or, in some cases, without any warning, a person may be pulled outward. That is, something outside of her own self captures her attention, such as a feature of the natural world or another person. To continually experience this phenomenon, the moral agent may cultivate attention. I called this living 'turned outward.' This inner life of attention allows her to, as a reflex, love. This outer life of love might entail her acting in accordance with that which lies outside of herself, attending to the needs of an animal, of others, the world at large, etc. As a result of turning outward, she may reach a sense of tranquility or joy. This process constitutes eudaimonia. So, what are we to do with this conclusion?

Well, we ought not merely *think* about turning outward. Instead, upon finishing the next page, leave this stack of papers on your tabletop. Go outside. Take someone with you. Maybe it's cold.

Maybe it's boiling hot. Maybe it's raining. No matter the weather, creak and hold open the door for your friend and step onto the dirt, pavement, grass, whatever it may be.

Now, walk. As you travel together, move your focus past the sweat or nipping wind on your cheeks, how your ankle aches, or how much you wish you could run back inside for one reason or another. Instead, listen to the crunch of the gravel. Narrow your eyes and count the leaves scattered on the path in front of you or, maybe, the number of cars whooshing by. Consider that others may have laid their eyes on these same trees, that every person in each of those cars might have their own friends, calendars, or walks to look forward to. Consider that they might not. Most of all, listen to your friend's footsteps, the cadence of her voice, the questions she raises, the stories she shares. As you amble along, side by side, facing the vastness of a dark, tree-lined trail; a sun-soaked, traffic-adjacent sidewalk; or the downpour in muggy, muddy wetlands, consider the image you make together: two humans, feet likely in lock-step, ears attuned to each other. Two pairs of eyes are fixated on the same oranges within a fading sunset or the same bark on the same trees; together, you attend to the same endless stretch of cosmos before the pair of you. You are exploring the expanse of reality together.

Your walk in the woods is about something that cuts deeper than the sensory. Here, now, turning outward, you are vulnerable. Dialectically pursuing the Good, you may, in love, humbly attend to the people and natural beauty surrounding you in a sincere, cognitive, and even emotional capacity. You are open and able to perceive truth that, I'd like to imagine, may continuously shape your moral affects and lead you closer to eudaimonia, toward a sense of tranquility and joy—a sense that accompanies walking down the path toward a life well-lived. You are turning outward.

☺

Bibliography

Anderson, R. L. (2022, June 21). *Friedrich Nietzsche*. (E. N. Zalta, Ed.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/nietzsche

An Illustration of The Allegory of the Cave, from Plato's Republic.jpg. (2018, Oct. 24). In *Wikimedia Commons*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:An_Illustration_of_The_Allegory_of_the_Cave,_from_Plato%E2%80%99s_Republic.jpg

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1963). *Intention*. Harvard University Press.

Aristotle (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics*. (T. Irwin, Trans.). (2nd ed.). Hackett Publishing. (Original work written 340 B.C.E.).

Augustine, of Hippo, Saint. (1998). *The Confessions* (H. Chadwick, Trans.). Oxford World's Classics. (Original work published 400).

Austin, E. (2023, Jan. 3). *Living for Pleasure: An Epicurean Guide to Life*. Next Big Idea Club. https://nextbigideaclub.com/magazine/living-pleasure-epicurean-guide-life-bookbite/38534/

Baggini, J. (n.d.). *Midgley on Murdoch*. The Philosophers' Magazine. https://archive.philosophersmag.com/midgley-on-murdoch/

Baumann, N. (2022, Feb. 22). Pride and Humility. In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine's Confessions* (T. Toom, Ed.) (pp. 208-226). https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108672405.016

Besser-Jones, L. (2011). Drawn to the Good? Brewer on Dialectical Activity. *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 8(4):621-631. https://doi.org/10.1163/174552411x592194

Bowman, W.E. (2001). *The Ascent of Rum Doodle*. Pimlico. (Original work published 1956).

Bragg, M. (Host). (2014, Jan. 2). Plato's Symposium. [Audio podcast episode]. In *Our Time*. British Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03mhyzk

Brewer, T. (2009). Fragmented Activities, Fragmented Lives. In *The Retrieval of Ethics* (pp. 37-67). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199557882.003.0003

Brewer, T. & Frey, J. A. (Host). (2021, Jan.) Talbot Brewer on Eros and Ecstasy. (No. 5). [Audio podcast episode]. In *Scared and Profane Love*. https://sacredandprofanelove.com/podcast-item/ep-5-talbot-brewer-on-eros-ecstasy/

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023, March 7). Simone Weil. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Simone-Weil

Brouwer, R. (2015, Sep.) Stoic Sympathy. In *Sympathy: A History* (E. Schliesser, Ed.) (pp. 15-35). Oxford Philosophical Concepts. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199928873.003.0002

Byers, S. (Host). (2020, Feb. 27). The Stoic Roots of Augustine's Conversion. [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Morningside Institute*. https://www.morningsideinstitute.org/podcast/2020/2/27/the-stoic-roots-of-augustines-conversion

Cain, S. (2022). *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole*. Penguin Random House UK.

Camus, A. (2005). The Myth of Sisyphus. In *The Myth of Sisyphus: There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide* (J. O'Brien, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1942).

Casewell, D. (2021, July 9). *A just and loving gaze.* (N. Warburton, Ed.). Aeon. https://aeon.co/essays/for-simone-weil-our-capacity-to-suffer-united-us-all

Cicero, M.T. (1914). *On Ends* (H. Rackham, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. (Original work published 46).

Cooper, J. M. (1995). Eudaimonism and the appeal to nature in the morality of happiness: Comments on Julia Annas, the morality of happiness. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55(3):587-598.

Driver, J. (2019). *Julia Driver: Literature and Moral Sensibility in Iris Murdoch (Royal Institute of Philosophy).* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kQoGU8ptR8

Durand, M. Shogry, S., & Baltzy, D. (2023, March 21). *Stoicism*. (E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman, Eds.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/stoicism/

Edmonds, D. (Host) & Lipscomb, B. (2022, Jan. 2). Benjamin Lipscomb on 4 Women Philosophers. [Audio podcast episode]. In *Philosophy Bites.* https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9waGlsb3NvcGh5Yml0ZXMubGlic3luLmNvbS9yc3M/episode/YjA1ZWZmMjYtNjZlOC00OTU5LWJlYjctOWQ4YTMxY2Q3YTIy?sa=X&ved=0CAIQuIEEahcKEwiwvumfmej6AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQdw)

Fontaine, M. (2022). *Reintroducing Cicero's Lost Art of Consolation | Paideia Institute Online Lecture.* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZkJhZreJsY

Gardner, J. (1971). *Grendel*. Random House Vintage Books.

Gigante, D. (2021). Review: *Stoic Romanticism and the Ethics of Emotion*, by Jacob Risinger. *Nineteenth-Century Literature,* 76(3):396-400. https://doi.org/10.1525/ncl.2021.76.3.396

Graver, M. (2007). *Stoicism and Emotion*. University of Chicago.

Green, J. (2018). *The Broccoli Tree: A Parable.* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESyJop31cmY

Holmes, B. (2014). *Brooke Holmes on the Sympathetic Cosmos (Lecture One).* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1TPfvMGGdM

Hopwood, M. (2018). 'The Extremely Difficult Realization That Something Other Than Oneself Is Real': Iris Murdoch on Love and Moral Agency. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 26(1):477-501. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12260

Kent, B. (2006). Augustine's Ethics. In *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (E. Stump & N. Kretzmann, Eds.) (pp. 205-233). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521650186.016

Kierkegaard, S. (1946). Works of Love (L.M. Swenson, Trans.). In R. Bretall (Ed.), *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (pp. 281-323). Modern Library Books. (Original work published 1847).

Kierkegaard, S. (2004). The Sickness Unto Death (Trans. H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong). In *Basic Writings of Existentialism.* (G. Marino, Ed.). Modern Library. (Original work published in 1849).

Kierkegaard, S. (2014). *Fear and Trembling* (A. Hannay, Trans.). Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1843).

Konstan, D. (2022, Sep. 21). *Epicurus*. (Zalta, E. N. & Nodelman, U., Eds.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/epicurus/

Laertius, D. (1895). Letter to Menoceus (C.D. Yonge, Trans.). In *The Lives of the Philosophers.* (Original work written in 230 C.E.).

Lewis, C.S. (1996). *A Grief Observed.* HarperCollins Publishers. (Original work published in 1961).

Lewis, C.S. (2001). *The Problem of Pain*. HarperCollins Publishers. (Original work published in 1940).

Mauriac, F. (1932). *Viper's Tangle* (W. B. Wells, Trans). Loyola Classics.

Merritt, M. (2017). Sublimity and Joy: Kant on the Aesthetic Constitution of Virtue. In *The Palgrave Kant Handbook* (Altman, M., Ed.) (pp. 447-467).

Merritt, M. (2018). *The Sublime*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108529709.

Meyer, S. S. (2009). Chain of causes: What is stoic fate? In *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (R. Salles, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Murdoch, I. (1997). *Existentialists and Mystics*. (P. Conradi, Ed.). Penguin Books.

Murdoch, I. (2001). *The Sovereignty of Good.* Routledge Classics. (Original work published in 1971).

Na'aman, O. (2021, Nov. 17). *Imagine the Worst*. Boston Review. https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/imagine-the-worst/

Nagel, T. (1971). The Absurd. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68(20):716-727. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2024942

Nietzsche, F. (1999). *The Birth of Tragedy*. (R. Speirs, Trans.) (R. Geuss & R. Speirs, Eds.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published in 1872).

Nietzsche, F. (1999). *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (T. Common, Trans.). Dover Thrift Editions. (Original work published 1911).

Nietzsche, F. (2001). *The Gay Science* (J. Nauckhoff & A. Del Caro, Trans.). (B. Williams, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published in 1882).

Nussbaum, M. (1997). Serpents in the Soul: A Reading of Seneca's Medea. In *Medea* (J. C. Clauss & S. I. Johnston, Eds.). Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691215082-013

Pageau, J. (2022). *Love and Attention – Thunder Bay Conference*. [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGQVs4ewHFw

Panizza, S. C. (2023). What is ethical about attention? In *The Ethics of Attention: Engaging the Real with Iris Murdoch and Simone Weil*. Routledge.

Percy, W. (1956). *Stoicism in the South: Epictetus or the Psalms?*. Commonweal Magazine. https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/stoicism-south

Percy, W. (2019). *The Moviegoer*. FSG Classics. (Original work published in 1961).

Pieper, J. (1995). *Divine Madness: Plato's Case Against Secular Humanism* (L. Krauth, Trans.). Ignatius. (Original work published in 1989).

Pirruccello, A. (1997). "Gravity" in the Thought of Simone Weil. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 57(1):73-93. https://doi.org/10.2307/2953778

Plato (1967). Gorgias (W.R.M. Lamb, Trans). In *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (Vol. III). Harvard University Press. (Original work written 380 B.C.E.).

Plato (1992). *Republic*. (G.M.A. Grube, Trans). (C.D.C. Reeve, Rev.). (2nd ed.) Hackett Publishing Company. (Original work written 380 B.C.E.)

Plato & Gill, J.C. (1999). *The Symposium* (C. Gill, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work written 385-370 B.C.E.).

Riggle, N. (2022, Dec. 19). *Beauty is not an ornament to the good life, it is at its heart.* Psyche. https://psyche.co/ideas/beauty-is-not-an-ornament-to-the-good-life-it-is-at-its-heart

Rozelle-Stone, A.R. & Davis, B.P. (2023, Mar. 21). *Simone Weil*. (Zalta, E. N. & Nodelman, U., Eds.). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/simone-weil/

Sagan, C. (2009). *Carl Sagan – Pale Blue Dot.* [Video]. Youtube. (Original work published 1994). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wupToqz1e2g

Sagan, C. (2010). *Humility – Carl Sagan*. [Video]. Youtube. (Original work published 1996). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8GA2w-qrcg

Sartre, J. P. (1955). No Exit (S. Gilbert, Trans). In *No Exit and Three Other Plays: Dirty Hands, The Flies, The Respectful Prostitute*. Vintage Books. (Original work published 1942).

Seneca, L.A. (2017). *Letters on Ethics: To Lucilius* (M. Graver, Trans.) (Original work written in 63-65 C.E.).

Stove, J. (n.d.). *Hunting the Hortensius, Cicero's Lost Protreptic*. Antigone. https://antigonejournal.com/2022/04/cicero-hortensius/

The Somonyng of Everyman (1485).

Tolstoy, L. (1987). *A Confession* (J. Kentish, Trans.). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1882).

Tolstoy, L. (2004). *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (L. Solotaroff, Trans.). Bantam Classic. (Original work published 1886).

Vogt, K. M. (2022). *The Project of the Nicomachean Ethics, Episode 1 | Columbia University.* [Video]. Youtube.

Wallace, D.F. (2005). *This is Water by David Foster Wallace (Full Transcript and Audio).* Farnam Street Media. https://fs.blog/david-foster-wallace-this-is-water/

Ward, A. (Host). (2020, Nov. 24). The Art of Attention (Series 2: Iris Murdoch on Morality). (No. 2.3) [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Women in Parenthesis Podcast.* https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3IuZm0vcy8zYzJiNjUyNC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw/episode/NDg5Y2MxMjktMzg4MC00ZWNjLThjZWEtYWEwYjBkYmYwZmEy?sa=X&ved=0CAUQkfYCahgKEwiwvumfmej6AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQjwE

Ward, A. (Host) & Lawson-Frost S. (2020, Nov. 24). Unselfing – a conversation (Series 2: Iris Murdoch on Morality). (No. 2.4) [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Women in Parenthesis Podcast.* https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3IuZm0vcy8zYzJiNjUyNC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw/episode/ODVlNGVjMGEtNTkxMi00MzZiLTlmMTQtZjVhNGE2ZmYzZmQ5?sa=X&ved=0CAUQkfYCahgKEwiwvumfmej6AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQjwE

Weil, S. (1986). Attention and Will. In *Simone Weil: An Anthology* (S. Miles, Ed.). Grove Press. (Original work published 1947-1980).

Weil, S. (1997). *Gravity and Grace* (A. Wills, Trans.). University of Nebraska Press. (Original work published 1942).

Weil, S. (2021). *Waiting for God* (M. Muggeridge & J. Soskice, Trans.). Routledge Classics. (Original work published in 1951).

West, S. (Host). (2022, Nov. 22). Simone Weil – Attention. (No. 172) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Philosophize This!.* https://www.philosophizethis.org/podcast/episode-172-attention-weil

Wilson, C. (2019, Nov. 5). *How to be an Epicurean.* (P. Weintraub, Ed.). Aeon. https://aeon.co/essays/forget-plato-aristotle-and-the-stoics-try-being-epicurean

Women in Parenthesis (2021). *Iris Murdoch: Plato's Cave.* [Video]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3pIP_fE1Dw

Yoda, K. (2017). An Approach to Simone Weil's Philosophy of Education Through the Notion of Reading. *Studies in Philosophy and Education,* 36(6)663-682. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-017-9576-1