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Freedom's Spontaneity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Philosophy

by

Jonathan Gingerich

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Freedom's Spontaneity

by

Jonathan Gingerich

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Calvin G. Normore, Co-Chair

Professor Seana Shiffrin, Co-Chair

Many people have experienced a peculiar feeling of freedom, of the world being open before them. This is the feeling evoked by phrases like "free as a bird," "the freedom of the open road," and "free spirits." Drawing on a study of literary characters, I develop a phenomenological profile of spontaneous freedom, arguing that we experience spontaneous freedom when we feel that our actions are not fully settled in advance by our own consciously endorsed practical identities, plans, or prior decisions or those of other agents. I argue that the experience of spontaneous freedom is valuable because it is a necessary precondition for the creation of a certain sort of beautiful, creative art—the art that Kant calls works of "genius"—and because it helps us to confront existential anxiety by seeing that we extend beyond our rational, deliberative natures. Appreciating the value of spontaneous freedom requires rejecting or amending some prominent strands of contemporary ethical theory: "integrity theories," such as

Christine Korsgaard's theory of self-constitution, contend that in order to be a good agent, or in order to be an agent at all, one must constitute oneself through rational deliberation and planning. Such views rule out experiences of spontaneous freedom for well-constituted agents because experiencing spontaneous freedom requires acting in a manner not antecedently fixed by one's own plans, decisions, or consciously endorsed practical identities. I further argue that respecting the value of spontaneous freedom requires organizing political and social institutions to ensure that there are not large swaths of people's lives in which they are completely cut off from experiencing spontaneous freedom. Respecting its values also requires that political and social institutions avoid trying to control or manage how people behave in those domains, like artistic creativity, where the value of spontaneity is at its peak. Finally, I suggest that certain sorts of social practices and institutions can predictably occasion experiences of spontaneous freedom, even though such experiences cannot be brought about at will. By encouraging play, games often provide at least a limited experience of spontaneous freedom.

The dissertation of Jonathan Gingerich is approved.

Robert D. Goldstein

Barbara Herman

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2018

For Gladys

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INTRODUCTION

"Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, / Healthy, free, the world before me, / The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose." – Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road"

§ 1. Freedom and Spontaneity

Many people have experienced a peculiar feeling of freedom, of the world being open before them. This is the feeling that is captured by phrases like "the freedom of the open road" and "free spirits." It is the freedom of rock-and-roll lyrics and the freedom of taking flight. This vertiginous feeling is associated with the ideas that my life could go in many different directions and that there is an infinite range of things that I could become. It arises in concert with a wide range of human experiences, including the experiences of artistic creation, play, fun, ennui, existential anxiety, resistance to authority, and, above all, spontaneity. Such experiences are central to our ordinary talk about "freedom," and yet they are often absent from contemporary philosophical theories of freedom, which focus instead on the more deliberate, intentional phenomena of voluntary action rooted in rational deliberation and choice. In this dissertation, I inquire into the nature of this familiar experience of freedom, which I call "spontaneous freedom," and into its role in the good life. We experience spontaneous freedom when we experience our actions and ideas as arising out of ourselves and yet as not settled by our own preexisting plans and decisions and consciously endorsed practical identities or those of other agents.

In Chapter One, I develop a phenomenological profile of spontaneous freedom through a study of characters from stories and films by Virginia Woolf, Saki, Akira Kurosawa, and Aman Sethi. This turn to literature provides a basis for a phenomenological study of spontaneous freedom as it is experienced in a wide range of settings and by characters with

varied dispositions. Abstracting from these literary examples, I argue that we experience spontaneous freedom when we experience our actions as arising out of ourselves but also as not fixed in advance, either by the decisions of other agents or by our own preexisting plans or decisions.

In Chapter Two, I make a case for the value of this experience of spontaneous freedom, arguing that experiences of spontaneous freedom provide the transcendent pleasure of feeling free, the experience of purposeless beauty in creative art, and a partial relief from existential anxiety associated with the inevitability of death.

In Chapter Three, I consider the implications of valuing experiences of spontaneous freedom for contemporary moral theory. Some moral philosophers, such as Christine Korsgaard, have emphasized the value of creating well-ordered selves, actively constituted through rational deliberation. Such "integrity theories" are attractive because they provide an account of agency according to which ideal moral agents are guaranteed to endorse their actions and beliefs and to honor their promises and agreements. But I argue that integrity theories also forbid moral agents to seek out experiences of spontaneous freedom: such agents must antecedently and reflectively endorse one's actions, while spontaneous freedom requires experiencing one's action as not antecedently fixed by one's own decisions or anyone else's.

In Chapter Four, I consider the implications of my account of spontaneous freedom for politics. Many people think that when the state submits to democratic control, ensures basic liberal rights, and provides access to the material prerequisites to autonomous choice, it provides all the freedom that its subjects could want. A state might preserve the freedom of its subjects when it makes their lives predictable, so long as their lives reflect their own choices. But a community that provides for this liberal variety of freedom does not yet provide its

citizens with all the freedom for which people yearn. When public and private institutions arrange people's circumstances in ways that make the courses of their lives feel predictable, they may come to view their futures as settled by other agents' decisions. This in turn makes it difficult for them to regard their futures as open in the way that is characteristic of experiences of spontaneous freedom.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I consider how social institutions and activities can enable or promote experiences of spontaneous freedom through a consideration of the value of playing games. I argue that playing games can provide the opportunity for at least partial and limited, though still valuable, experiences of spontaneous freedom.

My account of spontaneous freedom is part of a broader philosophical inquiry into the nature of agency. Most contemporary philosophers who study agency and personhood aim to develop theories that are well suited to understanding and vindicating moral rights and duties. In my view, the task of articulating non-consequentialist theories of agency and personhood has been taken over by moral philosophers who regard the vindication of moral responsibility as the sole *raison d'être* of theories of agency. This "land grab" by moral philosophy has generated views of agency that provide excellent accounts of duty and responsibility as the relate to action but that are impoverished in their disregard of aesthetic experience. According to these views, moral responsibility and autonomy are the main course of human life while aesthetic experience is, at best, the after-dinner cocktail. In addition to making aesthetic experience marginal to action, moral philosophers have made aesthetic experience marginal to personhood itself by conceiving of personhood as consisting exclusively in our rational and moral capacities. In my view, this is astonishing, considering how much of human life

essentially concerns non-moral aesthetic experiences: what is interesting, fun, cool, or beautiful.

If we instead treat aesthetic experience, and particularly experiences of creativity and novelty, as central to good human lives, we will construct very different theories of agency than those of philosophers focused principally on moral rights and duties. Contemplating the structure of aesthetic experiences like admiring a new acquaintance's sense of fashion, cooking a stew, playing a game, or appreciating a bit of graffiti, should lead us to adopt a pluralistic view of agency and personhood. A fuller explanation of the phenomenological nature of experiences of spontaneous freedom, their value, and their veridicality conditions, as I will develop in this dissertation, provides one entry point into such a pluralistic and aesthetically informed theory of agency.

§ 2. The Phenomenology of Freedom

Unlike feelings of pain or warmth, the airy experience of spontaneous freedom is vague, hard to pin down, and not physiologically localized. Like the mood of boredom, the experience of spontaneous freedom "seems to preclude elaborate description" and so might appear inhospitable to theorization, but like boredom, the feeling of freedom is also a point of view, meaning that one sees the world and the possibilities in one's own life in a distinctive way when one "feels free" (cf. Phillips 1993, 68). It is related to beliefs of a certain kind about the relationship between the present that I now inhabit and the future. This complexity and this point-of-view-ness of the experience provide points of entry for theorizing. In this section, I describe the methodology that I use in this dissertation to study freedom first-personally.

Edmund Husserl proposes studying experience through the transcendental phenomenological practice of *epoché*, whereby phenomenologists "parenthesize" existential

questions about what objects of experience actually exist in the objective world and questions about how we could acquire knowledge of things in the objective world (Husserl 1960, 20-1). By taking conscious life "just as what it quite immediately gives itself, as itself, to be" it is possible to find intentionality "in those familiar forms which, like everything actual in the surrounding world, find their expression in language" (Husserl 1970, 233). In order to articulate a theory of what subjectivity is, Husserlian phenomenologists focus on human subjects' straightforward world-experiences and refrain from "the co-performance of the validity that the perceiving person performs" (Husserl 1970, 237). This means that, while part of the subject's experience of, say, perceiving a cat is regarding the cat as truly existing, the phenomenologist withholds judgment about the actual existence of the cat, focusing instead on the subject's inner experience. The intentionality that is revealed by this practice of *epoché* is the manner in which subjective experience is directed toward the world within the experience of the human subject. What the experience of spontaneous freedom that I aim to describe is *about* may be revealed by considering, inside this *epoché*, what the experience is directed toward.

Consider a few rudimentary descriptions of experiences I might have that strike me as instances of the airy experience that I am after: "I feel that the world is open before me." "I feel like I have escaped from precisely what I am." "I feel that my life could go in any number of directions." "I feel like I have escaped from my shackles." "I feel that the range of experiences I might have is limitless." "I feel that I am a bird flying wherever it will." These simple first-personal characterizations of experiences provide a ground for a rudimentary phenomenological inquiry. First, the sentences describe the experience first-personally. What the experience is about proceeds from me. It is something that I have first-personally (Smith

2013, § 2). Second, the sentences describing the experience use the language of "feeling," and it would be difficult to substitute verbs of sensory perception, action, intention, or knowledge for "feel." At most, metaphorical substitutions might be possible, e.g., "I see that my life could go in any number of directions." Third, the objects of the expressions indicate that the content of the experience involves the world as a whole or my place in the world as a whole, e.g., my experiences in the world and the paths that my life might take in the world. Further, the objects of the expressions concern the future. The experience characterized is one that is about the future, but it is also about the appearance of the future to the present, how the possibilities that are part of the future feel to me now. While experiences of spontaneous freedom may be about very general objects, like the world and the future, it is also notable that they *are* about objects. The experiences are not mere sensations, like feelings of warmth or pain. This aboutness of the experience of spontaneous freedom makes it suitable for philosophical-phenomenological investigation, because the experience has intentional content (in that it *intends* toward being spontaneously free) and can be characterized in theoretical terms by abstracting from the meaning of the experience.

There are limitations to the use of phenomenological methodology to study the feeling of freedom. For Husserl, the purpose of the *epoché* is to allow for the study of the essence of subjectivity (Husserl 1960). In Husserl's phenomenological project, the phenomenologist strips away those "individual representations, individual feelings, [and] individual acts" that fit within the *epoché* in order to produce an account of the *consciousness* that the human subject has of itself as a consciousness and of the world (Husserl 1970, 251). Ultimately, this study of the essence of subjectivity provides the foundation for awareness of other persons and of intersubjective experiences. In exploring the phenomenology of the experience of spontaneous

freedom without first developing a comprehensive phenomenological psychology, I am left with no assurance that the phenomena that I describe from my own experience will be replicated in the experience of any other person. However, while some readers may never have had the experience I have described, I suspect that many have and have used similar language to describe the experience.

§ 3. The Feeling of Freedom and Ideational Content

To recap: sometimes I have a peculiar airy feeling that the world and my life lie open before me. I think that many other people have, at one time or another, had similar experiences, and I aim to produce a theoretical characterization of them. To do so, I pick out occasions when I have had this experience, bracket off considerations about the *veridicality* of the experience in order to describe the experience of spontaneous freedom itself, and provide linguistic formulations of what that experience is like. This may be a fine methodological starting place, but a question remains about how I can pin down an experience that is as seemingly nebulous as an "airy feeling." Phenomenological psychology might help characterize experiences like seeing a boat, or being aware of myself as a consciousness, but can its focus on the intentionality of experiences provide a useful characterization of a feeling that is so hard to pin down? What grounds could I have for regarding all of the diverse expressions that appear to describe the experience of spontaneous freedom as actually concerning the same sort of experience?

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud sets out to investigate an "oceanic feeling" of unity with all things in order to investigate whether this feeling is at the root of religion (Freud 2010, 24). After Freud published *The Future of an Illusion*, a friend wrote a letter to Freud in which the friend claimed to have experienced a "peculiar feeling," confirmed by

many other people, that is “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, ‘oceanic’” and is “a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith” (Freud 2010, 24). The friend hypothesized that this feeling is the source of the religious energy that religious institutions draw on. Freud found that the views of his friend caused “no small difficulty,” for Freud considered the hypothesis that this feeling was at the root of religious feeling to be worthy of investigation, but Freud could not “discover this ‘oceanic’ feeling” in himself (Freud 2010, 24). How, Freud wondered, can I investigate a feeling that I have not experienced myself when “[i]t is not easy to deal scientifically with feelings”? (Freud 2010, 24)

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to speak directly about the feeling. One might investigate a feeling’s “physiological signs,” but in the case of a feeling like the “oceanic feeling” such an approach will fail because it is not physiologically locatable and it is *about* something (Freud 2010, 25). When an investigation of a feeling’s physiological signs is not possible, Freud concludes that nothing is left “but to fall back on the ideational content which is most readily associated with the feeling” (Freud 2010, 25). From Freud’s discussion of the “oceanic feeling” in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the “ideational content” of a feeling appears to be the language that we attach to the feeling in communicating about it interpersonally or in theorizing about it for ourselves. The “ideational content” of a feeling is not identical to the feeling, and it does not fully exhaust what the feeling is. Freud can use phrases like “oneness with the universe” to characterize the “oceanic feeling” (Freud 2010, 36), but such a description should not be understood as describing the feeling directly. Instead, it is a phrase that is often called to mind by the feeling, or an expression that characteristically accompanies experiencing the feeling. At its best, it is something like a partial definite description of the feeling that might help to pin it down so that we can study it effectively. The ideational content of a feeling

might include a wide range of descriptions: a sensation of eternity, an oceanic feeling, a feeling of oneness with the universe, a feeling that we cannot fall out of this world, and so forth.

Looking to the ideational content of a first-personal experience can help to establish that the experience is not a quirk of my own psychology, but is a common feature of human life. If the language that I use to describe my own experience of spontaneous freedom aligns with expressions that other people use, there is good reason to believe that we are having the same experience.

Freud's focus on examining the ideational content associated with a feeling helps to address the limitations in Husserl's phenomenological methodology as applied to the theoretical examination of an apparently nebulous first-personal experience. In investigating the experience of spontaneous freedom, I can apply phenomenological methods to the first-personal experience seriously, but rather than attempting to apply these methods to feelings that are immediately, introspectively accessible, I can apply them to linguistic expressions that correspond to the experience that forms the object of my study. The experience *itself* is part of my mental life, residing behind the linguistic representations of it. By exploring the ideational content that both I and others associate with that experience, I can realistically hope to provide a characterization of the experience that is not an idiosyncratic artifact of my own individual psychology but that corresponds to an experience that others have had as well.

A phenomenological exploration of the first-personal experience of spontaneous freedom might aspire to contribute to a scientific, phenomenological account of subjectivity, insofar as the experience of spontaneous freedom is itself an aspect of the essential nature of subjectivity. I am optimistic that such a connection between spontaneous freedom and the essential nature of subjectivity might be articulated, in that the possibility of spontaneous

freedom “occasions the sense of emancipation that allows the future to differ from the past” (Gingerich 2006, 330). This sense of emancipation, or potential emancipation, from past decisions is, I suspect, at least part of what constitutes the radical freedom of transcendental subjectivity. However, I set aside an exploration of the relationship between the fundamental nature of subjectivity and spontaneous freedom in order first to focus on articulating the phenomenological content of spontaneous freedom.

CHAPTER ONE

SPONTANEOUS FREEDOM

"Well, if you want to sing out, sing out / And if you want to be free, be free / 'Cause there's a million things to be / You know that there are." – Cat Stevens, "If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out"

"We love our lovin' / But not like we love our freedom." – Joni Mitchell, "Help Me"

§ 0. Abstract

Spontaneous freedom, the sort of freedom evoked by phrases like "freedom of the open road," "free as a bird," and "free spirits," is central to ordinary talk about "freedom." However, spontaneous freedom is absent from many contemporary moral philosophers' accounts of freedom, which are concerned primarily to identify the sort of freedom that is a prerequisite for full-fledged moral responsibility or autonomy. Drawing from a range of literary cases, I undertake a phenomenological study of spontaneous freedom. I argue that to experience of spontaneous freedom is to experience one's action as not settled in advance by anyone else's conscious, reflective decisions or even by one's own conscious, reflective decisions. This sort of freedom, while intuitively attractive and valuable, is denigrated or ignored by commonly held theories of freedom of the sort required for moral agency. Such theories should be revised to better acknowledge the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom and the costs of precluding it.

§ 1. Introduction

Many people have experienced a peculiar airy feeling of freedom, of the world being open before them. This feeling of *spontaneous freedom* is captured by phrases like "the freedom of the open road" and "free spirits," and, to quote Phillip Larkin, "free bloody birds" going "down the long slide / To happiness, endlessly" (Larkin 2004, 129). This feeling is associated with the ideas that my life could go in many different directions and that there is an infinite range of things that I could become.

While spontaneous freedom is central to our ordinary talk about freedom, contemporary moral philosophers who write about freedom typically disregard or disparage it, focusing instead on the sort of freedom that is a prerequisite for moral responsibility or

autonomy.[1] On these views of freedom, the question of whether or not a person is "free" hinges on the truth of metaphysical theses about causation, on the fundamental nature of the mind, or on the political circumstances that shape a person's life. In contrast, the conditions that make it apt to call someone a "free spirit" have to do with whether the person behaves whimsically or spontaneously or how the person engages in play. I argue that, in focusing on the sort of freedom that goes hand in hand with moral responsibility, some prominent moral philosophers have developed deliberative theories of freedom that prohibit fully free moral agents from seeking out experiences of spontaneous freedom: such agents must act in a manner that they antecedently, reflectively endorse, while experiencing spontaneous freedom requires regarding one's activity as not antecedently fixed by one's own decisions or anyone else's. The intense experiences of freedom characteristic of moments in which people see themselves as free spirits are typically transitory, in contrast to the sort of experience that is a precondition for agency or responsibility, which is a much more prosaic and pervasive experience that a person has whenever they take an action for which they can aptly be blamed or praised.

Other philosophers have attended to spontaneous freedom to a greater extent, such as libertarian theorists of free will who are concerned with "the desire for freshness, novelty, genuine creation—in short, an open rather than a closed universe" (Barrett 1958, 31). However, while such approaches have generated robust theories of creativity, they have largely

[1] Moral philosophers often regard freedom either as a relationship between a person and the world, where freedom is about whether a person has the power to cause events (Sartorio 2012) or the power to control one's actions (Fischer 2012), or as a relationship among people, where freedom is about the absence of political domination (Pettit 1996) or about individual agents' ability to make choices under conditions that provide at least the minimum resources to exercise choice effectively (Feinberg 1971; Dworkin 1972; Raz 1986). Other moral philosophers regard freedom as something that involves the internal structure of a person or the configuration of a person's mind or attitudes (Frankfurt 1988; Korsgaard 1996). All of these approaches describe forms of freedom that should always or almost always be present for attributions of moral responsibility to be apt or for political justice to obtain.

overlooked both the first-personal experience of spontaneity and the connections between spontaneous freedom and the freedom of full-fledged agency.[2]

In this Chapter, I argue that spontaneous freedom is an important variety of freedom. We yearn to experience spontaneous freedom because it provides us with a power of creativity, a sense of individuality, or an experience of independence from even our own plans and conscious decisions. Many people want this sort of freedom badly enough to remake their lives, both individually and collectively, to make room for greater spontaneity. I begin by describing what it is like, first-personally, for a range of literary characters to experience spontaneous freedom. I then abstract from these cases to develop a phenomenological profile of the experience. I identify the core characteristics of subjective experiences of spontaneous freedom, distinguishing it from cognate phenomena, and describe the ways in which people value spontaneous freedom and how their valuations depend on the contexts in which they experience it. I then show how theories that see freedom as constituted exclusively by conscious, reflective guidance of one's actions rule out the experience of spontaneous freedom. Accounting for the richness of human experience requires amending these theories of freedom.

§ 2. The Experience of Spontaneous Freedom

At its core, the experience of spontaneous freedom is the experience of our activities and ideas as arising out of ourselves, without being fully fixed either by the decisions of other agents or by our own existing plans or decisions. Spontaneous freedom thus gives rise to the

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[2] Maria Kronfeldner, for instance, has developed a theory of creativity that is compatible with a naturalistic metaphysics but argues that "metaphysical freedom and creativity [and with it spontaneity] —should simply be kept apart" (Kronfeldner 2009, 592). Patrick Suppes, on the other hand, connects freedom and openness, proposing a phenomenological measure of freedom as uncertainty about the future (Suppes 1995, 187). But Suppes is concerned with an experience that may not involve any deep sense of openness about the future of one's own life. For Suppes, any amount of uncertainty about, for instance, what consumers will purchase in a market "guarantees that freedom remains" in the market (Suppes 1997, 83).

feeling that one's life is open, rather than closed. A corollary of this characterization of spontaneous freedom is that to experience spontaneous freedom, we must take ourselves to outstrip our conscious, reflective, deliberative natures. To experience spontaneous freedom is not to engage in a species of action, but to regard our activities in a certain way.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* provides a striking example of spontaneous freedom. Peter Walsh, who has been living in India, arrives in London to arrange a divorce for Daisy Simmons, his married lover who he plans to marry. Shortly after he arrives in London, Peter strolls through the city and, as he stands in Trafalgar Square, has a remarkable experience:

> And just because nobody yet knew he was in London, except Clarissa, and the earth, after the voyage, still seemed an island to him, the strangeness of standing alone, alive, unknown, at half-past eleven in Trafalgar Square overcame him. What is it? Where am I? And why, after all, does one do it? he thought, the divorce seeming all moonshine. And down his mind went flat as a marsh, and three great emotions bowled over him; understanding; a vast philanthropy; and finally, as if the result of the others, an irrepressible, exquisite delight; as if inside his brain by another hand strings were pulled, shutters moved, and he, having nothing to do with it, yet stood at the opening of endless avenues, down which if he chose he might wander. He had not felt so young for years.
>
> He had escaped! was utterly free — as happens in the downfall of habit when the mind, like an unguarded flame, bows and bends and seems about to blow from its holding. I haven't felt so young for years! thought Peter, escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was, and feeling like a child who runs out of doors, and sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window (Woolf 2005, 51).

At the heart of Peter's experience of "utter freedom" is a sense of openness and possibility. There are "endless avenues" open before Peter; he feels that these avenues are not closed off even by his own history, desires, personality, and character, for he feels freed even "from being precisely what he was."

While Peter's experience of non-fixedness arises largely from his own introspective tendencies, the same sudden sense of openness can also be occasioned by external

circumstances. An external shock might lead one to regard the future of one's life as more open than one had felt. In Akira Kurosawa's film, *Ikiru*, the protagonist, Watanabe, lives a monotonous, bureaucratic life in which he shows up every day to his job running a municipal agency that never does anything (Kurosawa 2010). When Watanabe discovers that he has terminal stomach cancer, he is shocked into reevaluating his plans for his life, seeking out diverse new experiences, hunting out neighborhoods in Tokyo and social scenes that he has never previously encountered, and overhauling his sclerotic office. While in one respect Watanabe sees his future as more fixed—he knows that he will die of cancer before long—he sees the possibilities within his remaining life as vastly expanded.

The fact that an experience arises primarily from external circumstances does not preclude a character from embracing those external circumstances. In Saki's short story, "The Schartz-Metterklume Method," Lady Carlotta gets stranded at a small railway station when she misses her train (Saki 1996, 63-64). As Lady Carlotta sits at the station figuring out what to do, she is approached by "an imposingly attired lady" who says to her, "in a tone that admitted of very little argument," "You must be Miss Hope, the governess I've come to meet," to which Lady Carlotta says to herself, "Very well, if I must, I must" (Saki 1996, 64). With that, Lady Carlotta (briefly) takes up the position of governess to two boys enthusiastically and humorously, much to the consternation of the boys' aristocratic parents. In taking up the role of a governess, Lady Carlotta finds an opportunity for spontaneity in something that comes to her from the outside but that she does not see as forced upon her. Lady Carlotta does not take the imposingly attired lady's declaration as an imposition, instead treating the lady's "must" as a pun that answers her question about what to do, having been stranded at a railway station.[3] In contrast to Lady

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[3] Thanks to Robin Muller for helping to clarify my treatment of the case of Lady Carlotta on this point.

Carlotta, a traveller who got off the train already having decided to follow the first instructions that she received would not experience spontaneous freedom in following them, although she might have experienced it in her earlier, whimsical decision to follow the first set of instructions to come along.

Lady Carlotta's lighthearted embrace of her unexpected circumstances is enabled by material and social resources that allow her to play at being governess for a day without putting her livelihood or health at risk. But even those in much more precarious circumstances might cultivate the experience of spontaneous freedom as a strategy for dealing with anxiety about the future. For instance, in *A Free Man*, Aman Sethi tells the non-fictional story of Mohammad Ashraf, an impoverished day laborer in India who works on short-term construction jobs. Ashraf typically works for a few weeks or months at a time on dangerous construction projects, then takes his earnings (which he does not have a place to store, because he does not have a bank account) and spends them on food and alcohol until he runs out or all of his money gets stolen. Then, he finds work again, or perhaps hops on a train to a different city to look for work there. Ashraf has a well-developed sense of *azadi*, or freedom: he regards himself as "a free man" because he has no obligations to family or institutions, so he can pick up and leave wherever he is living at a moment's notice. At one point Ashraf tells Sethi, "Tomorrow I could well be in a train halfway across the country; the day after, I can return. This is a freedom that comes only from solitude" (Sethi 2011, 53). Ashraf finds a kind of satisfaction in his *azadi*, explaining to Sethi that he prefers to be a day laborer, rather than holding a permanent job, because he never has to answer to a boss for more than a day at a time (Sethi 2011, 20-21). Ashraf's experience of spontaneous freedom is developed and expressed strategically, in order to allow him to find a degree of pleasure in circumstances in

which he is a victim of political oppression and severe socioeconomic inequality. This is not to suggest that oppression does not interfere with Ashraf's welfare, or that his poverty makes him free. Rather, Ashraf demonstrates that a yearning for spontaneous freedom is a widespread feature of the human experience, even in the face of severe poverty and oppression, not just something experienced by the wealthy when all of their other needs have already been met.

§ 3. The Structure of Spontaneous Freedom

Having described a range of manifestations of spontaneous freedom, I now develop a phenomenological profile of the experience.[4] In doing so, I abstract from the cases that I have presented to describe the generic structure of the experience of spontaneous freedom. I situate the experience relative to other cognate feelings, moods, and attitudes and then describe the typical content and circumstances of the experience, how the experience varies in different contexts, what resources are needed to have the experience and to enjoy rather than dread it, and why people seek out such experiences.

A phenomenological approach is attractive because it can help us to understand a form of freedom that is important to people's lived experiences and that people might seek out, individually or collectively. In constructing this phenomenological profile, I draw on Sigmund Freud's technique for studying feelings. At the outset of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud sets out to investigate the "oceanic feeling" of unity with all things that a religious friend had described, but which Freud himself had never experienced (Freud 2010, 24). How can we theorize a feeling that is "a purely subjective fact"? Freud suggests looking to "the ideational

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[4] My phenomenological approach of freedom follows on a recent turn toward phenomenology in the philosophy of free will (Pink 2009, § 2). However, other philosophers who study freedom phenomenologically are primarily concerned to describe experiences distinct from those of "free spirits," focusing instead, like moral philosophers interested in freedom, on deliberation and choice (Strawson 2010; Nahmias, Morris, Nadelhoffer & Turner 2004).

content which is most readily associated with the feeling," which is expressed by the language that we attach to the feeling in communicating about it (Freud 2010, 25). The ideational content is not identical to the feeling itself and does not fully exhaust what the feeling is. Freud's friend can use a phrase like "oneness with the universe" to describe the oceanic feeling, but such a description does not capture everything about the feeling. Instead, it is an expression that evokes or characteristically accompanies experiencing the feeling, in the way that expressions like "free as a bird" or "footloose and fancy free" evoke the experience of spontaneous freedom.

In the phenomenological account of spontaneous freedom that I present here, I parenthesize considerations about the *veridicality* of the experience in order to focus on its *content*.[5] Like many experiences (the experience of falling in love; the experience of seeing a sequoia), the experience of spontaneous freedom may be more valuable when it is veridical (cf. Nozick 1971, 45). But to know when the veridicality conditions of the experience are satisfied, we first need an account of what those conditions are. Exploring the phenomenological contours and ideational content of the experience will both reveal the veridicality conditions of spontaneous freedom and illuminate the nature of the experience itself.

(i) The experience of spontaneous freedom is part of a family of related experiences of openness.

I begin my account by distinguishing experiences of spontaneous freedom from other similar phenomena. Like Freud's oceanic feeling, the airy experience of spontaneous freedom is part of a collection of related experiences, moods, and attitudes. This family of experiences of openness encompasses (non-exhaustively) the experience of spontaneous freedom that I have described; experiences of relaxation and amusement; fun and excitement; feelings of relief at not having to do things that we want to avoid or at escaping obligations; feelings of refuge that

[5] In the Introduction, I provide a fuller methodological account of the relationship of the approach that I take here to Husserlian phenomenology.

we might find in privacy or remove from the world; the sense of a beginning when we set out on new projects or adventures; and the rush of creativity that we feel when we make artistic objects like paintings, poems, songs, or zines. This family of experiences of openness also includes more negative experiences, such as experiences of fear or anxiety about the unknown and the mood of boredom or ennui when we are uncertain about what we should be interested in or care about. Experiences in the family of openness have intentional content: they are *about* or *directed at* features of the self or the world, and this content is at least partially independent of the experiences' affective profiles (Husserl 1960, 46). The members of the family of experiences of openness share the sense that what is going to happen in the world is not fixed in advance, or, even if it is fixed from some perspective, it does not appear fixed from the perspective of the person having the experience. Sometimes this sense of non-fixedness is purely negative, such as when someone comes home from work, relieved that they are not required to do anything else to earn their wages for the day; at other times it is more positive, as when one sets off on an adventure of indefinite destination and duration.

The experience of spontaneous freedom is distinguished from experiences of relief and relaxation in being centrally about the future of one's life. This sets the experience of spontaneous freedom apart from experiences of relief and relaxation, which are more about our present experience of being freed from a past or ongoing burden or duty, like the experience of someone whose children have gone to bed and who is relieved to be done with childcare for the day. Relief and relaxation are historical, in that they arise from a contrast between the state one presently inhabits and an earlier state, while experiencing spontaneous freedom need not involve any contrast between one's prior and current states.

(ii) The experience of spontaneous freedom is connected, at least metaphorically, with the proprioceptive experience of moving freely through space.

Spontaneous freedom is closely connected to proprioceptive experiences. The experience of spontaneous freedom involves an occurrent awareness of one's relationship to oneself and the world, which is connected, at least metaphorically, with sensations of uninhibited bodily movement through space. For instance, Peter describes his experience of freedom using spatial analogies (the images of the earth seeming "an island," of a mind bowing and bending, and of the child who "runs out of doors"). This suggests that the experience of spontaneous freedom may be susceptible to empirical investigation by psychologists.[6] It does not, however, suggest that the feeling of freedom is a brute fact, as the feeling of freedom involves contestable interpretations of bodily sensations.

(iii) The experience of spontaneous freedom involves the sense that what will happen with our lives in the future is not fixed in advance.

The experience of spontaneous freedom involves the sense that what will happen with our lives in the future is not fixed in advance. Experiencing spontaneous freedom involves feeling that the future course of one's life is fully fixed neither by the external world nor by our own preexisting commitments and beliefs. This characteristic is common to Peter, who feels that endless avenues are open before him; Watanabe, whose plans and routines are thrown out of joint by his cancer; Ashraf, whose material position precludes him from making good predictions about how his life will go; and Lady Carlotta, who sees a claim made by someone else ("You must be the governess") as an opportunity for improvisation. If we think we already

[6] I do not think that such an investigation is presently part of the research agenda of psychologists, although some psychologists have undertaken substantial studies of *agency*, including people's beliefs that they "can affect their own lives, initiate changes on their own, and achieve some degree of control over the course of their experiences" (Adler 2012, 374). A notable exception is Malcolm Westcott, who provides an expansive account of the psychology of many different forms of freedom (Westcott 1988).

know the exact shape of our lives five years from now, we cannot experience spontaneous freedom about them.[7] We might be content, we might look forward to good things that we anticipate will be part of our lives, and we might feel responsible for how things will go, but we cannot have the sensation of limitless avenues stretching out before us, down any of which we might travel. Experiencing spontaneous freedom requires a sense of mystery about what the future holds.[8]

The experience *as of* acting in a manner that has not been fixed in advance sets the experience of spontaneous freedom apart from the related experience of acting from habit. When I act habitually, my action can display a sort of freedom from deliberation: I get up in the morning and make coffee, going through the motions of grinding the beans and pouring the water without reflecting on or planning out my movements. In doing so, my action is not directly brought about by my conscious plans or intentions. Experiences of spontaneous freedom share with habitual action that they are not directly brought about by conscious plans or intentions. But, they have the further feature that part of the experience of spontaneous freedom is positively experiencing my own action as not settled by my prior decisions. When I make coffee out of habit, I do not regard my activity as *unsettled* by my prior decisions—I simply do not think about the source of my action. Insofar as habit is traceable to the accretion of prior decisions, if I were to contemplate the the relationship between my coffee-making and

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[7] All that is *required* to experience spontaneous freedom is a horizon of future possibility that can be fixed in indefinitely many ways. Characters like Thelma and Louise can experience spontaneous freedom even when death is immanent as their car plunges off a cliff insofar as *some* horizon of possibility remains available to their subjective standpoints. I am grateful to Ronald McIntyre for raising this point.

[8] We may, however, attain this sense of mystery without eliminating all of our expectations about the future of our lives. For instance, we might instead temporarily suspend our expectations for a few hours, as Peter seems to do. Such a temporary suspension need not involve altering our credences about what will happen but might simply require suspending our judgments that they will turn out this way or that (cf. Friedman 2017).

my prior decisions, I would regard my habitual action as more or less settled by decisions that I made in the past, like decisions to purchase a certain type of coffee grinder and a certain type of coffeemaker and to start drinking coffee. When Peter feels free, in contrast, he positively regards his action as *not* antecedently settled. The experience of spontaneous freedom is, therefore, distinct from the experience of habit: while both involve freedom from deliberation, only spontaneous freedom involves an experience *as of being free from antecedent deliberative control* of one's actions.[9] While experiences of spontaneous freedom need only be non-habitual, they often go further and actively break with habit, for breaking with habit is one of the surest mechanisms by which we can confirm for ourselves that we have the power to act in unprecedented ways.

The feeling that one's action is unfixed by prior decisions can be disrupted both by features of the external world and by features of our own psychology. For instance, it would be odd for someone to feel that what their future holds is not fixed in advance if they were held down by ropes or glued to their chair. As Rogers Albritton notes, if I am stuck to my seat as the auditorium empties, saying, "'Well, I'll just stay here in the balcony, then, that's what I'll do' isn't even an expression of *amor fati*. It's just fatuous" (Albritton 1985, 246). Interference by the external world is particularly likely when the source of constraint is other agents, rather than "nature" or "the universe": coercion and oppression by other people feel constrictive in ways that the natural world does not. Pressure from other agents that precludes the experience of

[9] Unlike habitual action, virtuous action can give rise to experiences of spontaneous freedom. A benevolent person might, for instance, spontaneously help out someone in need. The benevolent person's gift might appear predictable to a third-person observer who knows that the giver is benevolent. But the gift is set apart from my habitual coffee-making in that the benevolent person can actively regard their giving as *unfixed* by prior decisions. I owe this point to John Drummond.

spontaneous freedom can take more subtle forms, too. Social expectations, subtle signals from friends, and so forth might be just as effective as glue at precluding a sense of openness.

Our own beliefs about our duties and commitments can also preclude the experience of spontaneous freedom, particularly when they become salient to our decision-making about the future of our lives and when we feel conflict among them; believing ourselves relieved from duties that normally impinge upon us often occasions an experience of spontaneous freedom. Peter's experience of spontaneous freedom is enabled by his temporary detachment from duties and connections to other people. Clarissa is the only person who knows that Peter is in London. He does not have dinner obligations and is not yet expected to make and keep appointments with old friends. This detachment from duties helps to make it possible for Peter to attend to "the strangeness of standing alone, alive, unknown, at half-past eleven in Trafalgar Square." Standing alone, alive, unknown is *strange* for Peter because he cannot easily fit it into his existing understanding of the world, provoking him to reflect on his life in an ironic mood, shaking himself out of his habitual ways of thinking and living: "What is it? Where am I? And why, after all, does one do it?" Peter's escape involves the potential for a radical reevaluation of his understanding of the world and of his own projects and plans.[10]

Just as the experience can be *precluded* by internal or external circumstances, it can also be *occasioned* by either internal or external occurrences. We might come to develop new understandings of who we are, what our plans are, and what our futures hold just by reflecting on the concepts we already have, critically examining them, and exploring their relationship to

[10] It is not only our beliefs about particular obligations that restrict how we can act but also more general commitments that we hold. For instance, subscribing to a directive view of morality that required that we follow a single course of action to promote the good might leave us with no "breathing room" to feel that the future of our lives was not fixed (Shiffrin 1991, 249). The specificity of such requirements matters to whether we feel "held down" by them.

one another. We might accomplish this, for instance, by meditation or prayer. But the sense of non-fixedness can also be occasioned by external circumstances. As with Watanabe, external shocks might lead us to see the futures of our lives as less fixed than we previously had felt. Or we might feel that our futures are opened up by conversations that lead us to doubt our existing plans, and we might enter into relationships with other people that lead us down avenues that we did not, by ourselves, know how to traverse (see Dover n.d.).

Moreover, a sufficiently resistant psychology might prevent a person from experiencing a sense of non-fixedness no matter how great the external shocks that they encounter. In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab seeks out the White Whale with such a deep singleness of purpose that no amount of bad omens, shipboard surprises, and conversations with other sailors can dissuade him from his monomania (Melville 1851, 219). While other sailors on his ship find adventure and new vistas in a whaling cruise, Ahab is incapable of entertaining doubts about what his future holds. Experiencing spontaneous freedom requires the right combination of internal and external constraints and impetuses to produce a sense of non-fixedness. As Maria Kronfeldner argues, creativity requires partial freedom from the influences of the external world, including from other people, as well as partial freedom "from the influence of previous knowledge, and from the routine methods, rules and plans based on this knowledge" (Kronfeldner 2009, 591). Thus, experiences of spontaneous freedom require both external freedom—the sense that what will happen with our lives in the future is not fixed by other people—and internal freedom—the sense that what will happen with our lives in the

future is not fixed by features of ourselves, including plans, intentions, or previously made decisions that are transparently available to our conscious reflection.[11]

(iv) The experience of spontaneous freedom involves an attitude of non-instrumentality.

Experiencing spontaneous freedom also involves a perception of non-instrumentality about the activity that occasions the experience. When Peter's mind goes down "flat as a marsh" he feels temporarily detached from his instrumental reason for being in London, which is to secure the divorce. At that moment, the divorce seems "all moonshine," and for a few minutes, Peter stands in Trafalgar Square with no orienting purpose for his presence in London. As he stands in Trafalgar Square, Peter's activity is not hierarchically subordinated to some further instrumental aim. Peter's detachment from duties to other people and his own ongoing plans allows his mind to seem "about to blow from its holding."

When we experience ourselves as spontaneously free, we feel that what we are doing is optional, rather than required by some further end. What matters in this respect is whether we *regard* what we will do as required, rather than whether it is *really* required. The instrumental pursuit of any activity precludes a sense of optionality about that particular activity insofar as the agent instrumentally pursues the activity in service of some product. For someone who is committed to hosting good parties and takes part of hosting good parties to be reducing allergens before guests arrive, vacuuming up the cat hair in the apartment will not appear *optional* because that person undertakes it instrumentally in furtherance of a commitment to parties. To the extent that someone can regard instrumental vacuuming as optional, it must be because some features of the activity are not required by the end to which the vacuuming is

[11] This is not to suggest that activity that occasions the experience of spontaneous freedom cannot be explained or metaphysically determined by one's own features—what matters is whether our activity is fixed by our consciously accessible features.

attached (perhaps they can dance while vacuuming without compromising the projects with which it is connected, although then it would be the dancing, not the vacuuming, that was optional) or because a derivative sense of optionality comes from regarding their commitment to throwing parties itself as non-instrumental.[12]

This sense of non-instrumentality requires something stronger than *not regarding* some activity as *instrumental.* We must positively *regard* what we do as *non-instrumental* to have the full-fledged experience of spontaneous freedom. Merely not regarding what we do as instrumental might suffice for the related experiences of relief or refuge, but not for the feeling that Peter has when his afternoon in London lies completely open. To experience spontaneous freedom, we must be aware of the non-instrumentality of our activities, though we need not explicitly conceptualize the feeling as one of non-instrumentality or freedom.

(v) The experience of spontaneous freedom is not an experience of anxiety or fear of the unknown.

As the case of Lady Carlotta illustrates, embracing an experience of spontaneous freedom requires the absence of fear and helplessness, but does not require explicit, conscious endorsement of what happens in one's life. It can instead be a matter of how we respond to unplanned and unforeseen circumstances that provoke new ways of thinking about our futures. Part of the experience of spontaneous freedom might be feeling that we have a choice about which of the avenues open before us we will travel down. But we might also have a positive experience of spontaneous freedom by seeing our futures as largely a matter of chance or the natural environment that we inhabit. The experience of the changes to one's body arising from an unplanned pregnancy illustrates the contrast between circumstances that can occasion spontaneous freedom and those that simply give rise to alienation: the bodily changes

[12] For a discussion of how experiences of instrumentality can interact with experiences of non-instrumentality, see Chapter Five.

arising from an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy may be alienating, while an unplanned yet welcomed pregnancy may lead to bodily changes being experienced as exciting, or intriguing (Lundquist 2008).

One way that we might experience spontaneous freedom without fear or anxiety is by "appropriating" sources of activity other than our deliberative, planning capacities to ourselves, where the contrast to "appropriating" is fearing, feeling anxious, or resisting the external impulse or motivation.[13] Like an alternate version of Lady Carlotta who makes up her mind in advance to try and become a governess when she gets off her train, when we act because of commitments that we have consciously endorsed, we experience our actions as settled in advance. The alternative to acting on the basis of reflectively endorsed plans is to act on the basis of some impulse or motivation that we have not reflected on and endorsed but that—in order to have the full experience of spontaneous freedom—we nevertheless regard as ours.

Peter's sensation of exquisite delight distinguishes his experience from one of choice. Peter feels that his future lies open before him, such that he could wander down any of innumerable avenues *if he so chose*. But this feeling of openness is not, itself, the product of Peter's choice or something Peter could experience at will, and you can have all of the freedom of choice that you want without being a free spirit. It is as if "by another hand" strings were pulled inside Peter and "he, having nothing to do with it" stood before endless avenues. If his escape is the product of Peter's choice, it is not produced directly by a choice to be utterly free but indirectly by a choice to be receptive to the strangeness of the world (or to make himself

[13] Appropriation as I conceive it here is thus unlike Harry Frankfurt's notion of identification, in that, unlike identification, appropriation need not involve any *decision* to appropriate something (Frankfurt 1988, 168). My notion of appropriation is more like Rahel Jaeggi's conception of appropriation, which involves "having access to or command over oneself in the world" where the form of command that one has over oneself is understood in the sense of having command of a language (Jaeggi 2014, 37).

the sort of person who could be receptive to it). In contrast to the experience of choice, Peter's experience of freedom involves feeling that he encompasses more than his conscious, deliberative nature.

I have argued that the experience of spontaneous freedom is part of a family of related experiences of openness, but it is set apart from other such experiences in that it is connected with proprioceptive experiences of free bodily movement, it involves the sense that what will happen with the future of our lives is not fixed in advances, it involves an attitude of non-instrumentality, and it is not an experience of anxiety or fear of the unknown. I will now describe how, and in what contexts, people value and seek out experiences of spontaneous freedom.

(vi) People often value and seek out experiences of spontaneous freedom.

People seek experiences of spontaneous freedom for a variety of reasons, including to avoid monotony and boredom and to attain excitement, as when Lady Carlotta confounds the boredom of the train station by whimsically accepting the pronouncement that she must be the new governess. People value and seek out some varieties of spontaneous freedom more than others. We might have a tepid experience of spontaneous freedom in surveying the endless avenues of breakfast cereals that lie open to us, but, unless we are inane, the experiences of spontaneous freedom that we have when we make art or practice politics will shine more brightly than the freedom of the supermarket.

One reason that people seek experiences of spontaneous freedom is that such experiences can provide a feeling of relief at finding ourselves not to be exhausted by our rational, deliberative natures. When I experience spontaneous freedom, I am freed from experiencing my action as the product of my prior choices, and I can experience this freedom

as a sort of relief from being caught up in the activities of planning, reasoning, and deliberating. When Peter escapes "from being precisely what he was," he can "go with the flow" for a few minutes or a few hours, rather than thinking through every action he takes. This sort of relief can be occasioned by the freedom from deliberation characteristic of both experiences of habitual action and experiences of spontaneous freedom.

But another reason that people seek out spontaneous freedom is not associated with experiences of habit but only with experiences of spontaneous freedom.[14] People seek out spontaneous freedom because it provides them with the experience of feeling that they are among the sources of originality in the world. A basic human drive is the disposition to regard oneself as a source of creativity.[15] When opportunities for creativity are severely restricted, this disposition can take on contorted or even destructive forms, causing us to act out like bored teenagers in a strict disciplinarian school. The experience of spontaneous freedom is part of what it is for us to see ourselves as sources of novelty and creativity. Feeling that our decisions and activities were all fixed in advance would frustrate our ability to experience ourselves as creative. To the extent that feeling ourselves to be creative motivates us to exercise our powers of creativity, the absence of experiences of spontaneous freedom can undermine the full exercise of a power that may be as deeply important to being human as the capacity for rational deliberation. Even if the pleasure of feeling ourselves to be creative were not needed to motivate us to exercise our creative powers, without experiencing spontaneous freedom, we could never feel ourselves to succeed at creating novelty.[16]

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[14] Thanks to Martin Schwab for helping me to clarify this point.

[15] Here, my view is close to that of Hannah Arendt, for whom human action always involves "the capacity of beginning something anew" (Arendt 1998, 9).

[16] I provide a full account of the relationship between spontaneous freedom and artistic creativity in Chapter Two.

The experience of spontaneous freedom comes in varying intensities, can have a broader or narrower scope, and is associated with a range of different affects and values.

The experience of spontaneous freedom varies in scope and intensity and accompanies a wide range of affects and values. At some moments in our lives, we might have experiences of freedom so profound that vastly different paths stretch out in front of us heading in radically different directions, all of which appear to us now as equally eligible and likely. Someone might feel that they could just go off and live in the woods for a few years on a whim or they could settle down and start a family. They might have this feeling less intensely at other moments in their life, for instance, when they have already set off on an adventure or project and, while they can entertain the idea of going off and living in the woods for a few years on a whim, it does not seem likely or practically possible for them in the moment. Similarly, the experience of spontaneous freedom can have a broader or narrower scope. We can experience a sense of freedom with respect to a broader or more diverse set of alternatives (What should I do with my summer? How will I organize my political life and live together with other people? What aesthetic projects will I pursue in the coming decade?) or from within a narrowly circumscribed collection of paths until the experience dwindles down to nothing, or nothing of value (Will I become a lawyer or an accountant? At the fork in the trail, will I go up the ridge or down the canyon? Will I have a beer or a glass of wine?).

Spontaneous freedom is also associated with a range of affects and values. It is often associated with positive affective states, like Peter's exquisite delight. But there are also instances of the experience of spontaneous freedom as solemn or vertiginous. We might think of Jean-Paul Sartre's case of a young man in the Second World War deciding whether to stay home with his bereaved mother or to go to England to join the Free French Forces (Sartre 2007,

30-31). The young man might experience spontaneous freedom in feeling that it is not settled how his life will go and regarding what he will do as discretionary (if he sees his obligations to his mother and to resisting the Nazis as incommensurable and equally weighty), yet still feel that it is an anguished one. Spontaneous freedom might also be disconcerting if it is occasioned by activities that strain our ethical and political commitments, provoke us to reflect on values to which our self-image is closely tied, or that simply run up against the encumbrances of ordinary life. Some figure like Gauguin might experience spontaneous freedom when he abandons his family and heads to Tahiti for the sake of his art, but might at the same time feel conflict between the activity with which the experience is associated and commitments to his family that still tug at him (Williams 1981, 22-23). For others, obligations like a lunch appointment or needing to pick the kids up from school might keep one from feeling spontaneously free.

(vii) Material, social, and psychological resources are required both to experience spontaneous freedom and to value and take pleasure in it.

The affective states associated with experiences of spontaneous freedom vary not only with the nature of the activity that one is engaged in—whether one faces deep existential choices or an unstructured afternoon in London—but also with the background resources at one's disposal. Just as certain material resources must be in place for agents to achieve the freedom of deliberative autonomy, so too certain material, social, and psychological resources are required both to have the experience of spontaneous freedom at all and to experience it as an occasion for delight.[17] Peter, for instance, has a background awareness as he stands in Trafalgar Square that his resources will enable him to move on from an experience of complete escape to other experiences of greater connectedness. He has money, has lived in London,

[17] For an account of the material conditions required to achieve the freedom of autonomy see Love 2018.

knows how to read and interpret the signs, events, and people that he encounters in the city, has some free time, and has friends who he can seek out, after a few hours. These resources enable Peter to experience his freedom joyfully rather than fearfully, as we might expect if Peter were plopped down in the heart of an unknown city with no resources or connections. Peter's resources also suggest that there is some sense in which the limitlessness of possibility that he experiences while standing in Trafalgar Square is an illusion. It might seem to Peter that he can wander down any avenue he chooses, but from the reader's perspective it seems likely that he will end up filing Daisy's divorce papers, seeing some old friends, and eventually heading back to India. But this external perspective does not make Peter's *experience* of freedom less significant for him in the moment that he feels like a child, running out of doors.[18]

The case of Ashraf who, even in dire poverty, strategically shapes his life to find moments of *azadi*, suggests that spontaneous freedom can, at times, be found even in terrible political and material circumstances, although Ashraf might experience only the pleasure of unburdening himself and feeling that he outstrips his rational nature, rather than the pleasure of actively creating. Ashraf's case shares with the cases of Peter, Lady Carlotta, and Watanabe that, in some sense, he has "nothing to lose." Ashraf has nothing to lose because he does not have anything to begin with, Watanable because he already knows that he will die soon, and Peter and Lady Carlotta because they are sufficiently well-off that a few days of spontaneity are highly unlikely to negatively affect their long-term well being.[19] However, experiences of spontaneous freedom are typically more robust, expansive, and joyous for characters like Peter

[18] This suggests that people may value and seek out even non-veridical experiences of spontaneous freedom even though, all else equal, veridical experiences of spontaneous freedom may be more valuable than non-veridical ones.

[19] It is because they provide a setting in which players can act in a "low stakes" environment that games can provide a partial experience of spontaneous freedom to their players, as I argue in Chapter Five.

and Lady Carlotta than for characters like Ashraf whose experience of spontaneous freedom is narrowed by impoverishment.

Insofar as spontaneous freedom turns out to be a politically important sort of freedom, the state has a reason to ensure that everyone can experience spontaneous freedom, at least for a time. Ashraf's case suggests that the state might do this is by meeting citizens' material needs, whether through robust welfare protections, a universal basic income, or other means, so that more people can experience spontaneous freedom in the joyous and expansive manner that is available to Peter.[20] Experiences of spontaneous freedom might also be enabled by governments or private institutions that guarantee employees' access to vacation time and holidays that allow for a suspension of ordinary routines. All of these provisions would, in some respect, make it easier for people to feel that they have "nothing to loose" in pursuing experiences of spontaneous freedom by reducing the risks of, for example, taking a week-long road trip.

It is not merely material deprivation and political inequality that can undermine the experience of spontaneous freedom but also racism, sexism, and ideology. For instance, none of the literary characters whose experiences I have described have children to take care of. Peter can pop over to London from India for a few weeks and spend a chunk of time wandering the city, with no obligations. Daisy Simmons, who Peter plans to marry, likely could not do the same: she has two young children to care for (Woolf 2005, 44). Daisy's circumstances indicate the dependence of experiences of spontaneity and the possibility of valuing them on political and social circumstances. In the contemporary world, most people find themselves in circumstances closer to Daisy's than to Peter's: between work and caring responsibilities, few

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[20] In Chapter Four I consider what political conditions would need to be in place in order to provide widespread access to experiences of spontaneous freedom.

people can experience spontaneous freedom for more than a few hours at a time, if at all. In addition to better provision for material needs, more substantial and equitable access to experiences of spontaneous freedom may require widespread social support for childcare, so that parents' spontaneity need not come at the cost of harm to their children, and may require resisting gendered double standards that celebrate spontaneity in men rather than women.

While gender oppression leads to unequal access to spontaneous freedom, spontaneous freedom can also interrupt and undermine gender oppression. For instance, in Audre Lorde's view, the erotic—which, like spontaneous freedom, is "a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings" that "cannot be felt secondhand"—is suppressed by the "male world" but also provides "a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation" and "can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world" (Lorde 1984, 54, 59). The erotic involves an experience of one's activity as arising from a non-conscious, non-reflectively endorsed source. The erotic can be counter-ideological, just as experiences of spontaneous freedom can be counter-habitual: the spontaneity of the erotic destabilizes the ideologies of sex oppression and racial oppression because the unmediated feeling of the erotic refuses to follow the predictable scripts laid down by the white patriarchal tradition, which restricts experiences of the erotic to formulaic sexual rituals. For Lorde, the erotic charge comes in part from the unpredictability of the "chaos of our strongest feelings." Celebrating the erotic can thus nourish resistance to oppression and lead women to demand greater power. In this way, experiences of spontaneous freedom can undermine architectures of oppression.

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I have argued that the experience of spontaneous freedom is an experience of regarding our activities as arising from ourselves but also as not fixed in advance, whether by our own consciously-endorsed plans or prior decisions or those of other people.[21] Such experiences are marked both by an attitude of non-instrumentality and by the appropriation of one's activity to oneself. People seek out experiences of this sort, because they give us a sense of our own powers of creativity and unburden us from the feeling that we are precisely who we are. While seeking out these experiences is a near universal feature of human life, people are, generally speaking, better able to attain and value experiences of spontaneous freedom when they have sufficient social, material, and psychological resources at their disposal.

§ 4. Spontaneity, Responsibility, and Freedom

The freedom of spontaneity differs from the freedom of morally responsible agency. While moral philosophers offer a wide range of interpretations of the freedom of agency, one commonly held interpretation of this form of freedom is the *deliberative view*. On this view, freedom is constituted by or grounded in acting from reflective, consciously endorsed choice.[22]

One variant of the deliberative view is the *evaluative endorsement view*, which receives a prominent articulation in Gary Watson's "Free Agency." Watson argues that in order for someone to be a free agent, his actions must "flow from his evaluational system," where his "evaluational system" consists in "those principles and ends which he—in a cool and non-self-deceptive moment—articulates as definitive of the good, fulfilling, and defensible life" (Watson 1975, 215-16). The values that make up such a conception of the good are those "more or less

[21] In Chapter Three, I argue that acting from one's reflectively endorsed practical identities can also interfere with the experience of spontaneous freedom.

[22] While the view that I call the "deliberative view" here regards deliberation as a conscious, reflective activity, other views see deliberation as a less-than-conscious activity, embedded in our perception or in how we respond to "overviews" that we encounter (cf. Heidegger 1996, H.359; Crowell 2013, 290).

long-term aims and principles that we are willing to defend" (Watson 1975, 215). A free agent's motivations "harmonize" with his evaluational system, such that the values that determine the agent's all-things-considered judgments about what is best to do also determine his actions (Watson 1975, 215). On the evaluative endorsement view, acting freely requires that I manage and regulate my desires and appetites from the legitimate, authoritative standpoint of my evaluational system.[23]

Another variant of the deliberative view is Susan Wolf's *reason view*, which holds that freedom is just whatever is required for attributions of moral responsibility (Wolf 1990, 4). Wolf argues that to be free, an agent must be able to do the right thing for the right reason, which requires both the ability to know what "the True and the Good" require and the ability to convert knowledge of the True and the Good into action guided by my conception of the True and the Good (Wolf 1990, 87-88). For my drinking a cup of coffee to count as my action, and as a free action, I must be in a position "to know, appreciate, and act on the reasons for and against drinking it" (Wolf 1990, 91). On the reason view, then, acting freely requires that my actions reflect a choice made in light of my knowledge of Truth and Goodness.[24]

Even Humean pictures of freedom that require much less conscious deliberation than the evaluative endorsement and reason views tend to disparage or disregard spontaneous

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[23] Watson himself has substantially qualified his support for the evaluative endorsement view advanced in "Free Agency" on the ground that it is overly "rationalistic": a human life involves forms of valuing other than judging to be good (Watson 1987, 150; Watson 2005, 91).

[24] Many other contemporary accounts of freedom and agency are variants of the deliberative view. Michael Bratman emphasizes the role of planning and the consistency, coherence, and stability of one's intentions over time in enabling autonomous agency (Bratman 2007, 198, 206). For Christine Korsgaard, freedom arises from the deliberative perspective, which enables us to see our desires as providing suggestions for action that we can choose to accept or reject (Korsgaard 1996, 96). (I provide a full account of the conflict between my picture of spontaneous freedom and Korsgaard's theory of agency in Chapter Three.) What all views in this family share is the claim that one acts freely if and only if one acts in a manner that one has antecedently endorsed through some process of deliberation or reflection.

freedom. Harry Frankfurt, for instance, writes, "the liberty with which deliberation interferes is not that of the autonomous agent but that of someone who blindly follows impulse—in other words, of the wanton. A person who is deliberating about what to do is seeking an alternative to 'doing what comes naturally.' His aim is to replace the liberty of anarchic impulsive behavior with the autonomy of being under his own control" (Frankfurt 1988, 175). For Frankfurt, "[b]lind, rollicking spontaneity is not exactly the hallmark of our species" (Frankfurt 2006, 1).

Such disparagement of the liberty of "anarchic impulse" reflects a deep tension between spontaneous freedom and deliberative freedom. To be deliberatively free, according to both the evaluative endorsement view and the reason view, agents must act from their conscious identities, plans, commitments, or intentions. Deliberatively free agents cannot experience spontaneous freedom because the experience of spontaneous freedom arises precisely from activity whose source we do not trace to any of our particular conscious identities, plans, commitments, or intentions.[25] Spontaneous activity (that is, activity in the course of which we experience spontaneous freedom) is, therefore, unprincipled insofar as no principle to which a spontaneous actor is consciously committed adequately explains why they behave as they do.[26]

Because deliberative freedom requires that I act from my consciously endorsed intentions, plans, or commitments while spontaneous freedom requires that I do not antecedently fix my activity through my reflective capacities, the two forms of freedom are

[25] When we experience spontaneous freedom, we do not trace our activity to our any of our particular consciously endorsed identities, plans, or decisions because part of the phenomenology of spontaneous freedom is that in experiencing it we actively experience our actions as unsettled. Spontaneously free activity can *accord with* conscious identities, plans, and decisions, but it cannot be consciously motivated by such conscious identities, plans, and decisions. This leaves open the possibility that, from a third-personal perspective, my action might appear to be settled by my background identities.

[26] Although spontaneous activity is unprincipled in this respect, it is not merely random, for mere randomness does not reflect the complexity of particular persons while spontaneous activity exhibits the actor's unique way of seeing the world. Spontaneous activity might, therefore, express what Nick Riggle calls "personal style": a way of living a life that expresses one's ideals (Riggle 2015, 729).

incompatible with one another.[27] I cannot, in the same activity and at the same time, be deliberatively free and experience spontaneous freedom. The incompatibility between deliberative freedom and the experience of spontaneous freedom reflects different goods associated with each type of freedom. Deliberative freedom guarantees that we will identify with our actions: according to the deliberative view of freedom, actions are "ours" only when we consciously, reflectively endorse them. Agents who deliberatively guide their actions necessarily see their lives as their own, since they reflectively endorse those plans or desires that move them to action.

In contrast, the appeal of spontaneous freedom comes from its making our lives more open than they would be in the absence of spontaneity. Such openness provides a distinctive pleasure of freedom from constraint for those who experience it, whether once in a while or regularly over the course of their lives. Experiences of spontaneous freedom allow us to feel that we are sources of novelty and freshness; to rejoice in the fact that we encompass more depth than our conscious, reflective natures contain; and to trust that we can draw upon that depth while remaining, in some sense, ourselves. Partisans of deliberative freedom might contend that without an autonomous agent constituted through conscious deliberation, there is

[27] There are other variants of deliberative freedom with which spontaneous freedom is compatible. First, if deliberative freedom is a feature of the metaphysics, rather than the phenomenology, of an action, an action could be both deliberatively free and experienced as spontaneously free. For instance, if what it takes for an action to be principled were that the action objectively accorded with a principle or with reason, or that an agent could, counterfactually, endorse a principle that explained the action if they were to contemplate it, then principled actions could be experiences of spontaneous freedom. Likewise, spontaneously free actions can *in fact* reflect the True and the Good, although they cannot be consciously motivated by the agent's conception of the True and the Good. Second, if an action can be deliberatively free even when the principles that explain it are self-effacing, an action could be both principled and spontaneously free. For instance, an agent who endorsed a higher-order permission to be spontaneously free and, in accordance with this principle, freed their actions from deliberative guidance would both experience spontaneous freedom and, in some respect, be principled. Finally, on any view of deliberative freedom, spontaneity inside one's deliberation is perfectly fine—it is one's action or behavior that must be settled by one's prior deliberation, not one's deliberation itself. Thanks to Barbara Herman and Seana Shiffrin for raising this point.

no coherent self left that could be spontaneously free or experience spontaneous freedom (cf. Korsgaard 2009). But such an objection is not a compelling reply to the phenomenological account that I have provided. I have described characters who, from their own first-personal perspective have in fact experienced spontaneous freedom. In the absence of deliberative autonomy of the sort that rules out spontaneous freedom, a self like Peter Walsh or Lady Carlotta can yet experience spontaneous freedom perfectly intelligibly.[28]

We can imagine two different sorts of lives, each worthwhile in different ways: one of a Planner, who fashions a life along a single arc culminating in triumphs made possible by the careful accumulation of wisdom and cultivation of passion, another of a Free Spirit, who follows the open road wherever it leads, thinking: "heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all free poems also" (Whitman 1881, 122). The Planner is a character who leads a life of deliberation, reflecting on the True and the Good and then acting from her thought-out decisions, while the Free Spirit is a character who leads a life of spontaneity, frequently departing from her preconceived plans to embrace whatever the world offers in the moment.

Spontaneous freedom and deliberative freedom thus embody different values, and we have reasons to want both sorts of freedom. I do not contend that the value of spontaneous freedom is superior to that of deliberative freedom, or that the conflict between the two forms of freedom provides us with reason to reject deliberative freedom. Rather, I have shown that a conflict exists between the two types of freedom and their associated values. Moral philosophers who believe that deliberative freedom is the only sort of freedom worth wanting should recognize the conflict and adopt a more pluralistic view of freedom that acknowledges the costs of precluding spontaneous freedom for well-constituted moral agents.

[28] Thanks to Caitlin Dolan for helping me to formulate this point.

§ 5. Conclusion

I have identified an experience about the future of one's own life that many people have at one point or another in their lives, that others seek out, and that is often described using the vocabulary of freedom in our ordinary language. I have developed a phenomenological profile of this experience of spontaneous freedom, situating it in the context of other cognate experiences, feelings, and attitudes, and describing the social and psychological conditions that make it possible to experience spontaneous freedom and to find delight, rather than anxiety, in it. This experience centrally involves regarding the future of one's life as not fixed in advance either by other people's plans or decisions or by one's own. Many people are willing to renovate their lives, going to great lengths for a brief taste of spontaneity. Moral theory should acknowledge the yearning that many of us have for spontaneous freedom in order to do full justice to the human aspiration for freedom.

CHAPTER TWO

SPONTANEITY'S VALUE

§ 0. Abstract

What is the value of spontaneous freedom? In this Chapter, I respond to the objection to spontaneous freedom that whatever value it has comes only from the fact that some people desire it. I argue that the desire for spontaneous freedom is a worthwhile desire to have because experiencing spontaneous freedom is necessary to create art that qualifies as "genius" and "beautiful" on Kant's view. I then argue that, in addition to having value in virtue of the role that it plays in the creation of original art, the experience of spontaneous freedom is valuable because it provides us with the opportunity to see our lives as open rather than closed and it helps us face existential suffering.

§ 1. Introduction

As I have argued in Chapter One, we experience spontaneous freedom when we experience our lives as not fixed in advance either by other people's plans or decisions or by one's own plans and decisions. Many people seek out experiences of spontaneous freedom, often going to great lengths to have a taste of it. But we might wonder: is spontaneous freedom worth experiencing mostly just because we happen to desire it, as we might desire to travel to new countries or drink good wine? If the primary explanation of the value of spontaneous freedom is that it is greatly desired, an account of spontaneous freedom might not have much to add to philosophical accounts of value theory. However, in this Chapter, I argue that experiences of spontaneous freedom realize deeper and more substantial values. Particularly, I will argue that experiences of spontaneous freedom are necessary (but not sufficient) for important forms of artistic creativity, such as the production of artworks of "genius," the only sort of artworks that Kant regarded as truly beautiful. Beyond this, experiences of spontaneous freedom provide both a confirmation of our own capacity for creativity and a consolation to existential suffering by prompting us to identify with the non-conscious, non-deliberative parts

of ourselves. In light of its connection to these values, we should regard spontaneous freedom as a sort of freedom well worth wanting.

§ 2. Kant's Theory of Genius

The value of experiencing spontaneous freedom comes, in part, from its role in the creation of, a certain sort of art, which is the art that Kantian aestheticians call beautiful art, or art of "genius." Genius might seem like an odd place to turn for an explanation of the value of spontaneous freedom. Writing in the *New Yorker* recently, Alex Ross declared that the idea of "genius" is an artifact "of the Romantic religion of art, implying a superior race of demigods who loom above ordinary life" and is "rooted in the cult of the male artist—the dishevelled Beethovenian loner who conquers an indifferent world" (Ross 2017). But there are several reasons to think that Kant's characterization of genius might be more helpful than it at first appears. First, while the adoration of genius characteristic of European Romantic thought treated genius as a general phenomenon associated with "great men," scientists, philosophers, and artists, Kant regarded genius as a confined and specific phenomenon connected exclusively with the creation of fine art in a manner that "went very much against the tenor of the times" (McMahon 2013, 97). Second, while Kant thought that genius was rare because "the genius is a favorite of nature" (Kant 2000, 5:318), nothing about Kant's view requires thinking that genius is such an uncommon phenomenon. Genius might also be occasioned by many artifacts and activities that we do not ordinarily think of as "fine art." I will contend that Kantian genius can be well understood as the spirit of spontaneity that wells up and expresses itself through the wide range of human activities that we undertake merely for the sake of the beauty of appearance and that make us feel more at home in the world.

In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant describes beautiful aesthetic art as "a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication" (Kant 2000, 5:306). Such art that "pleases in the mere judging" does not please "in sensation" (by causing pleasurable, non-cognitive feelings) or "through a concept" (by allowing people to pleasurably judge that it falls under some concept) but by occasioning "non-conceptual thought" and eliciting perception of an aesthetic idea that leads the mind to think of a manifold of related representations in the imagination (Kant 2000, 5:306). (Concepts, in this context, are rules or patterns used by the understanding to process the contents of the imagination (Cohen 2002, 2).)

For Kant, beautiful art that promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication "must be aware that it is art, and not nature; yet the purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature" (Kant 2000, 5:306). Beautiful art must be "aware" that it is art—meaning that it must elicit a response from its audience as something made—because part of the distinctive pleasure of art is its capacity to generate the realization that humans are among nature's beauty-makers. At the same time,"beautiful art must be *regarded* as nature, although of course one is aware of it as art" (Kant 2000, 5:307). The judging of art as beautiful depends on it *appearing* as natural (and as something that emerges from some part of nature that lies beyond our current explanatory powers) rather than on its metaphysical status as natural or made. Beautiful art must seem to be as free from rules as are mere product of nature—meaning that it must arise from something independent and outside of conceptual thought—because natural beauty pleases in the mere judging by appearing to us as something not created according to a rule. Art that is aware of its status as art but that also appears unconstrained by arbitrary rules gives

rise to a “feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive powers” (Kant 2000, 5:306). On Kant’s picture, beautiful art can generate such a feeling of freedom only because it elicits thought without using concepts. Such art pleases “in the mere judging” rather than in the making of particular judgments, like judging that A is an instance B, or in judging only through sensory feelings, like an immediate reaction to a sound. The feeling of freedom generated by beautiful art grounds the pleasure “in the mere judging” that is “universally communicable though without being grounded on concepts” (Kant 2000, 5:306).

In contrast to “mechanical art,” which is created for remuneration or as propaganda, and agreeable art, which provides immediately pleasurable sensations, like an aurally pleasing set of tones or a visually pleasing set of colors, beautiful art pleases by making us think, but not simply using our existing stock of concepts. This is why truly beautiful art must be doubly free for Kant: “it must not be a matter of remuneration, a labor whose magnitude can be judged, enforced, or paid for in accordance with a determinate standard; but also, while the mind is certainly occupied, it must feel itself to be satisfied and stimulated (independently of remuneration) without looking beyond to another end” (Kant 2000, 5:321). Beautiful art cannot be judged by a determinate standard because beauty outstrips our understanding and so outstrips the determinate standards that we might use to judge or pay for it. At the same time, beautiful art must make the mind feel itself satisfied and stimulated without looking beyond to another end, because if the mind looks to something else, it fails to take pleasure in the *mere* judging, and because if the mind looks to something else, it fails to experience beautiful art as something that is undertaken just for its own sake.

Here Kant’s account faces a difficulty: if beautiful art must be generated by artists exercising a capacity for choice that grounds itself in reason but must also appear to be a

product of nature (e.g., not a product of conceptual thought) "without showing any sign that the rule has hovered before the eyes of the arts and fettered his mental powers" (Kant 2000, 5:307), how can human artists, possessing faculties of (conceptual) understanding and (non-conceptual) imagination make beautiful art?

Kant's answer lies in *genius*. Kant defines genius as "the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art. Since the talent, as an inborn productive faculty of the artist, itself belongs to nature, this could also be expressed thus: Genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art" (Kant 2000, 5:307). Given this definition of genius, beautiful art *must* be art of genius, a claim for which Kant provides the following argument:

> The concept of beautiful art … does not allow the judgment concerning the beauty of its product to be derived from any sort of rule that has a concept for its determining ground, and thus has as its ground a concept of how it is possible. Thus beautiful art cannot itself think up the rule in accordance with which it is to bring its product into being. Yet since without a preceding rule a product can never be called art, nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art, i.e., beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius (Kant 2000, 5:307).

Beautiful art must be regarded as a product of nature because, in order to please in the mere judging, it must not seem to be intentional. If beautiful art appeared to aim at the production of a determinate object, then it would please through the concepts that fit the determinate object it produced rather than in the mere judging. Because genius is the manifestation of nature in an artist, genius is the avenue through which beautiful art might be produced. Kant further argues that genius that allows for the creation of beautiful art and that allows the manifestation of nature in an artist must have four characteristics.

First, Kant regards genius as a talent characterized by originality that allows an artist to produce "that for which no determinate rule can be given" rather than " a predisposition or

skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule" (Kant 2000, 5:307). For this reason, "originality" must be genius's "primary characteristic" and genius is "entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation" (Kant 2000, 5:308). Genius is thus neither imitative nor rule following.

Second, genius is exemplary for Kant. Kant notes that "there can also be original nonsense," but believes that this must certainly be something different from genius because original nonsense fails to cultivate the mental powers for sociable communication and fails to provoke the universally communicable pleasure of the feeling of freedom (Kant 2000, 5:308). Therefore, genius's "products must at the same time be models, i.e., exemplary" and "while not themselves the result of imitation," works of genius "must yet serve others … as a standard or a rule for judging" (Kant 2000, 5:308). To do this, beautiful art must contain something "mechanical" that is elaborated by an academically trained talent and that "can be grasped and followed according to rules" (Kant 2000, 5:310). More specifically, it is only by acquiring taste through the practice of making aesthetic judgments about art and nature that an artist can give the academic correctness that works of art need to be beautiful works of art. Taste "is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished" (Kant 2000, 5:313).

Third, genius cannot, for Kant, "describe itself" and cannot "indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being," for if it could do so, it would lack the capacity to give rise to non-conceptual cognition about a manifold of representations associated with an aesthetic idea (Kant 2000, 5:308). Because genius "gives the rule as nature," an artist producing a genius artwork "does not know himself how the ideas for it come to him, and also does not have it in his power to think up such things at will or according to plan, and to communicate to others precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products" (Kant 2000, 5:308).

Asking a “genius” poet writing in free verse why they put a line break in one place rather than a slightly different place cannot elicit an answer, at least not a satisfactory one, because there is no principled formula for the composition of poems that exhibit genius. A poet might write using structured forms, but a sestina cannot occasion a judgment of its beauty without a concept as its determining ground merely in virtue of following the technical rules for the construction of a sestina. We might be pleased in judging that the poem is, indeed, a sestina—that it lives up to the formal rules (thirty-nine lines, seven stanzas, etc.)—but the pleasure of such a judgment “has a concept”—the concept of what a sestina is—as its determining ground. The pleasure accorded by artistic genius lies instead with artists’ transformations of experience “in accordance with the principles that lie higher than reason…” (Kant 2000, 5:314).

Fourth, Kant sees genius as limited in scope: “[B]y means of genius nature does not prescribe the rule to science but to art, and even to the latter only insofar as it is to be beautiful art” (Kant 2000, 5:308). Science is an activity associated with the faculty of understanding, undertaken using concepts and tractable to theoretical and linguistic explanation. Science does not give rise to the “feeling of freedom” about the play of one’s cognitive powers that beautiful art provides, and so is not aptly described as involving genius.

These four features of genius demonstrate that, for Kant, genius is not only different from learning (which is “nothing but imitation”) but also different from originality and invention in science. Newton does not qualify as a genius in Kant’s view because “no matter how great a mind it took” to discover the principles of his natural philosophy, “Newton could make all the steps that he had to take, from the first elements of geometry to his great and profound discoveries, entirely intuitive not only to himself but also to everyone else, and thus set them out for posterity quite determinately” (Kant 2000, 5:308-309). Everything that Newton

expounded upon "can be learned" (Kant 2000, 5:308). In contrast to Newton's scientific brilliance, generated from a great and powerful understanding, "one cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be" because "no Homer or Wieland can indicate how his ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought, arise and come together in his head, because he himself does not know it and thus cannot teach it to anyone else either" (Kant 2000, 5:308-09). When artists cannot explain why they constructed their poems or sculptures as they did, this reflects their tendency to regard their creative choices as not exhausted by their own determinate concepts and reflects an engagement with their own ideals or their own immediate experience of the world in a manner that cannot fully be captured in their existing conceptual repertoires. Kantian genius is the talent that breaks free from the conceptual apparatus and the structure or form in which our concepts are arranged (Gould 1982, 182). This contrasts with science, which makes use of the concepts available in human language to theoretically capture and communicate about features of the nature world.

At the same time, products of genius expand the set of concepts available to us for dividing up the world. Art is not a chaotic event that breaks up and defeats the understanding. Rather, the use of imagination in the creation of works of artistic genius makes rational ideas, such as the ideas of invisible beings and eternity, "sensible beyond the limits of experience…" (Kant 2000, 5:314). The genius imagination does not merely point out that all that there is to a rational idea like "the kingdom of hell" is not captured in reason but makes it possible to sense and experience some of the part of the idea that outstrips understanding.

When the imagination is truly creative, and therefore is of the variety of imagination manifested in works of genius, the stimulation of thought provided by imaginative

representation is not completely detached from the concepts associated with and inadequate to the idea. Rather, the abundance of thinking occasioned by the imaginative representations "aesthetically enlarges the concept in an unbounded way..." (Kant 2000, 5:315). The creative imagination surpasses the fittingness of concepts for its ideas, but in doing so it enhances and expands the fittingness of conceptual thought for imaginative ideas. The genius imagination produces representations associated with a given concept that connect the unbounded inner intuitions occasioned by an imaginative idea with the concept but that also "provide, beyond that concord with a concept, unsought, extensive undeveloped material for the understanding..." (Kant 2000, 5:317). In this fashion, genius makes that part of the boundless thought that is occasioned by representations of the imagination communicable. The "spirit" that is present in works of genius is a talent that "express[es] what is unnamable in the mental state in the case of a certain representation and make[s] it universally communicable..." (Kant 2000, 5:317). Real artistic genius allows for the creation of art that occasions a relationship between the unlimited thought of the imagination that is not determined by concepts and the conceptual thought of the understanding.

Genius artists cannot provide principled explanations of why they made all of the artistic choices that they made even to themselves. It follows from this point that genius artists cannot—at the outset of their creation of beautiful art—aim to produce the specific work that ultimately results from their labors. If they could do so, there would be some "rule" for their creation that anyone could learn. Such non-genius activity might be *connected* with genuine artistic genius. If an artist creates a beautiful woodblock that must be mechanically applied to paper to produce finished works of art, the use of the woodblock to create prints is part of the labor of creating artworks but is not properly understood as the locus of *genius*. It also follows

that beautiful art cannot be produced algorithmically, where, for instance, the placement of each blotch of paint on a canvas is settled in advance by an aim for the painting together with a set of specific rules for achieving that aim. Genius has no end other than the production of pleasure and, specifically, of the pleasure of non-conceptual cognition of an aesthetic idea. Genius makes possible the special experience of purposelessness associated with beautiful art and it allows for an undetermined exploration of the possibilities of being human.

Where does this discussion of genius leave us? For Kant, genius is not conceptual, scientific, or imitative. Genius is original. It provides a source of artistic material that is located beyond the understanding. And while genius is "nature," it is also connected to the human artist who exercises it and so "steps beyond nature" in such a manner that apprehending its products can provoke the realization that we humans are among nature's beauty makers. When an artist creates genius art, *the artist* produces the art, but it is *nature*—something external to the artist—that "gives the rule" to it. Genius involves the power of identification with sources of action distinct from our agential capacity for reflective guidance of our actions.

It might be objected to Kant's theory of genius that it makes beautiful art too rare. A common experience of art school is that an art student feels caught up in the throes of genius, creates what they take to be their masterpiece and, after creating their masterpiece, comes to realize that their work is, actually, entirely derivative.[1] Does this suggest that it is only the rarest of art that can express the capacity of novelty? It does not, for several reasons.

First, we need to distinguish a pleasure that comes from our capacity to reframe our understanding of the world for ourselves from the capacity of humanity *as a whole* to reframe how it understands and sees the world. Once we make this distinction, we can see that what

[1] I owe this example to Gabe Greenberg.

happens in the critique of the art student's paining is not that their painting is revealed not to exhibit the capacity for novelty, but rather that the exercise of that capacity was restricted to their individual or subjective understanding of the world. This can be replicated on a larger stage: perhaps an entire community of artists comes up with a new style of art that is new to them only to later find out that it only recapitulates what has already been done by others. This community of artists may succeed in renovating *their own* understanding of the world, but fail to do so at the grand scale of humanity as a whole.

Second, we should recognize the distinction between the reframing of a genius artist's understanding that is reflected in the artist's works and the capacity of artworks to elicit new understandings in their audiences. An adolescent poet might discover a form of expression that is, from their subjective standpoint, absolutely new, but that strikes any audience that their poems happen to find as wholly unoriginal. For Kant, part of the "universal communicability" of genius artworks is their capacity to elicit in their audience the same sort of unbounded, non-conceptual thinking that accompanies their creation. Even if we do not want to ride along with Kant all the way to universality, we might think that genius art must have the capacity to make a claim upon some audience, demanding that members of *some* audience revamp their ways of thinking and dividing up the world (cf. Moran 2012, 308). The adolescent poet's poems might fail the test of genius if they do not demand of their audience, whoever happens to compose it, that they come to think and see the world in new ways.[2]

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[2] Of course, there are audiences, and then there are audiences. Stanley Fish tells a story of a college poetry class given a list of last names but told that the random selection was a religious poem. In engaging with the random selection of last names, the class came up with thoughtful, well-argued readings that expanded, in some sense, their understanding of religious poetry. Fish concludes that "paying a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities" (Fish 1980, 326). We need not think that the qualities of artistic artifacts play no role in their reception to acknowledge that the capacities and dispositions that an audience brings to an aesthetic encounter might have just as much (or more) to do with art's capacity to elicit new ways of thinking.

Perhaps little art, if any, can provoke a transformation of understanding at the scale of "humanity." But it would, perhaps, be odd for art to aspire to transform all of human conceptual thought. Even the "highest" of art collected by the most elite of art museums typically works in one particular artistic tradition, aspiring at most for a localized transformation of how we see. Beautiful Kantian art can provide its audience with an undetermined exploration of what it means to be human whenever it allows a particular audience to "break out" of its existing patterns of conceptual thought, even if it does not have the same effect for all audiences. This reading of Kant on genius can avoid making genius rare, but it need not treat genius as ubiquitous either: insofar as art must be able to elicit an experience in its audience parallel to the experience of the artist who creates it, not every creative act that accompanies an artist learning to see things in a new way will qualify as beautiful art.[3] Beautiful art must call for its audience to think of a manifold of representations that go beyond conceptual thought, although it can call forth this response in more local or more universal contexts.

§ 3. Genius and Spontaneity

Having detailed Kant's theory of genius and beauty in art, I am now in position to describe the connection between spontaneous freedom, genius, and beautiful art. Artistic creativity depends on experiences of spontaneous freedom, and part of what makes spontaneous freedom a sort of freedom worth wanting is that such experiences make possible the creation of the sort of art that Kant envisions in his account of genius. Spontaneous freedom is required for the creation of art that is genius because in order to create

[3] How great a role the audience of art plays in determining whether the art elicits such thoughts will do much to determine how ubiquitous genius art is. If all that it takes is an arbitrary list of names presented as a poem, instances of genius art might be all around us, although, in this case, it might be more apt to locate genius in the interpretive capacities of audiences.

unprecedented art, I must take myself not to be merely following a plan, which is also the central feature of spontaneous freedom.[4] If I take myself to be following a plan, either I am not actually following a plan, in which case I am deluded and I am not creating art in a causally appropriate way for it to be art of genius—I am merely a "mad" genius—or else I am merely a "Newton," following the determinate plan that I take myself to be following when I create my art, creating art that can be fully explained rather than creating truly unprecedented art.

The experience of spontaneous freedom is not *sufficient* for the creation of beautiful art, because genius must also be exemplary and beautiful art must give expression to genius. There are two respects in which such genius art is itself valuable. First, when spontaneous freedom takes a form that is exemplary and is brought together with expression, it gives rise to products of art that elicit in their audiences a partial experience of spontaneous freedom. An encounter with genius art partially recreates the exercise of the capacity for novelty in its audience, by giving rise to thoughts that its audience has not already had and that outstrip language. Beautiful art elicits in its audiences an experience with the same phenomenological character as the experience of the artist who creates it. Second, in apprehending exemplary, genius art, we find not only a capacity in ourselves, individually, to learn to see or represent in a new way but an inter-subjective capacity to express new ways of conceiving of things. Beautiful art is valuable, in part, because it validates our apprehension that we, collectively—as humanity or as

[4] Spontaneously creating art is often experienced as a struggle, and often as a struggle with challenges posed by previous art. This reveals a distinction between spontaneous freedom and joy: experiences of spontaneous freedom are associated with a wide range of affective profiles and need not be regarded as joyous as we have them. They must, however, involve the experience of our action as unsettled by our prior plans. Thanks to Barbara Herman for raising this point.

a more localized society—have the capacity to recreate our understanding of the world anew.[5] One way in which the experience of spontaneous freedom is valuable, then, is that it makes possible the creation of beautiful art which both spreads the experience of spontaneous freedom more widely and objectively confirms our powers of novelty and creativity.

§ 4. Genius, Spontaneous Freedom, and the Pleasure of Novelty

In addition to showing how experiences of spontaneous freedom are instrumentally valuable—in that they make possible the production of beautiful, creative art—the connection between spontaneous freedom and genius also helps to illuminate the intrinsic value of experiences of spontaneous freedom, even when they are not connected with expression or exemplarity. When we experience spontaneous freedom, we see ourselves as having a capacity to act in ways that are not anticipated in our own deliberative plans or those of other people

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[5] In my view, the category of "art" might be stretched quite broadly to include all sorts of "exemplary" artifacts and performances, whether explicitly intended as art or not. Consider, for instance, the case of William Cimillo. One day in 1947 Cimillo, a bus driver who had driven the same route through the Bronx for the Surface Transportation System of New York for seventeen years, got into his bus and, instead of driving north to the Bronx as usual, turned south, switching the destination sign on his bus from "Subway" to "Special." Cimillo kept driving south through Washington, where he saw the White House for the first time in his life, and on to Florida where he took a midnight swim. In a later interview, Cimillo said, "Just get way from everything. That's what I wanted to do" (This American Life 2014, Prologue). Cimillo was ultimately arrested in Florida and charged with grand larceny, but there was a tremendous outpouring of public support for him. One Michigan newspaper wrote, "Across the nation today, thousands of office workers and laborers went to their humdrum jobs with hearts a little lighter, because of what William L. Cimillo did to escape the same kind of boredom that fills their ordered lives" (This American Life 2014, Act One). Other New York City bus drivers organized a fund-raiser to pay for Cimillo's legal fees, the charges against him were dropped, and the New York City bus system gave him back his job. On his first day back on his route, hundreds of people lined up to try to board his bus (This American Life 2014, Act One). The most interesting feature of Cimillo's story is the public's reaction, which suggests a distinction between the experience of spontaneous freedom and other experiences that we happen to desire. When we hear about a stranger planning a vacation to Hawaii, we do not, typically, vicariously experience their pleasure in their Hawaiian vacation, though we might envy them. But when strangers learned of Cimillo's adventure, they felt a sense of possibility and a feeling that their own lives could head in new and surprising directions. The distinction between the Hawaiian vacation and Cimillo's joy ride is that Cimillo's adventure was exemplary—it impressed a sense of possibility on audiences across the United States—and, in this respect, it realized the same value for its audience as do other genius artworks.

(and this is true even of the subjective experience of the adolescent poet, whose poems have no power to elicit the experience in anyone else). If out activity has been fixed by our past decisions, we do not have the experience of presently originating how we act. Experiences of spontaneous freedom can banish the feeling of being "stuck in a rut" when it seems impossible to get out of plans or forms of life that I or another agent have already set in motion.[6]

More expansively, experiences of spontaneous freedom also allow us to see in humanity the capacity to do or become something that we, collectively, have not already planned out. When I see that I or anyone else have the power to act in a manner that does not simply play out an existing plan, then we are not trapped by our history. Spontaneous freedom by itself, even disconnected from expression and exemplarity, has some of the value that creative art has, in providing the possibility for an undetermined exploration of how to live one's life. This is not to deny that there is a great deal of variety among the experiences of spontaneous freedom available to us. One's activity can diverge from one's preexisting plans to a greater or lesser degree, and one's activity can diverge from preexisting plans set in place by others, as well as those set by ourselves. The greater the divergence of one's spontaneous activity, the more it satisfies our need to see ourselves as sources of creativity and novelty.

The value of enabling us to see ourselves as sources of creativity and novelty that experiences of spontaneous freedom realize differs from many other sorts of intrinsic value. On many conceptions of value, the best things are static and unchanging. For Plato, "the best things are least liable to alteration or change" (Plato 2004, 380e2). On some conceptions of value as unchanging, for a thing to have a value, it must participate in an unchanging form or

[6] My view here draws from Elijah Millgram's view that there are some important values in practical reason that can only be realized when one's practical ends are not fixed over time (Millgram 2004, 185) and with a view in development by Samantha Matherne about the values that can be realized in a dynamic aesthetic life in contrast to a static aesthetic life (Matherne 2018).

must satisfy objective criteria that are fixed across time by reason or by a moral law. Instances of change are good, on such views, when they move us closer to satisfying unchanging requirements or participating in unchanging forms, even if we can never fully reach them.

The value achieved by the capacity for novelty realized in spontaneous freedom and in genius art, by contrast, is dynamic. Its value does not come from moving us closer to understanding the truth of the values that we are attached to. Instead, its value derives from our recognition of an ability individually and collectively to find divergences between the world and our linguistic and conceptual resources for understanding, representing, and acting upon the things that make up the world and their relations to one another. This value must be repeated again and again. It can be attained only for a brief period of time during which the revelation of a new structure of things seems fresh to us. It is also dynamic in that it requires us to move away from our present modes of expressing and acting upon the world. In Whitman's words, "You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house, / though you built it, or though it has been built for you" (Whitman 1881, 128). The intrinsic value of spontaneous freedom is realized by abandoning one's well-worn understanding of the world, even if such a departure is not calculated to bring us closer to the true or the good. Its value resides instead in confirming, by transforming how we see and understand the world, that our understanding and our plans themselves contain an unlimited manifold of possibilities.[7]

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[7] At this point, the question might be raised as to whether experiences of spontaneous freedom must be veridical in order for them to have the intrinsic value that I have described here. Generally, experiences of the capacity for novelty are of greater value if we in fact have the capacity to act in a way that is not settled in advance by any agent's decisions than if we do not have such a capacity. There are many experiences, like falling in love or seeing a sequoia for the first time, that are better if they are veridical. This is not true of all experiences, but this experience is better if it is veridical in that we want to have the *actual* experience of seeing new features of the world. If we wanted merely to have the experience, and we were able to represent it to ourselves as a mere experience, we would either come to form beliefs for the wrong kinds of reasons or be unable to regard ourselves as actually seeing the world in a new light.

§ 5. Spontaneity and Reconciliation

It might be objected that the account of the value of spontaneous freedom that I have provided is narcissistic, or individualistic, because of its connection to artistic genius. But nothing about my account rules out the possibility of originating new ways of seeing or thinking in concert with other people. In fact, one of the best ways of coming up with new ways of seeing the world might involve conversations with other people, in which we are pushed away from our own, individually settled beliefs and prejudices. This is also because, on my view, experiences of spontaneity cannot be had at will, just as art cannot be created at will for Kant, reflecting Kant's view that beautiful art must be "*regarded* as nature" (Kant 2000, 5:307). Because spontaneous freedom cannot be experienced at will but must instead be experienced as a form of nature working through me, I can see spontaneous freedom as mine and also not-mine, as belonging to me but also to the world or the natural order. In this sense, the pleasure that is provided by experiences of spontaneous freedom can provide a sort of awareness of the porousness of boundaries between self and world.

While nature and human life mesh together in genius and spontaneous activity, in other domains of life, they grate up against one another. For instance, life often appears absurd when we think about the inevitability of death and how irrelevant our daily concerns are from the perspective of the universe. For Thomas Nagel, this sense of absurdity arises from our capacity to move back and forth between the internal point of view of agents and the external point of view of disinterested observers. "We see ourselves from outside, and all the contingency and specificity of our aims and pursuits become clear. Yet when we take this view and recognize what we do as arbitrary, it does not disengage us from life, and there lies our absurdity" (Nagel 1979, 15). My experience of myself as metaphysically distinct from the world, with discrete

boundaries between me and the things outside, enables me to stand back from my own life and experience the limitedness of it (its brevity, its "pointlessness") as a threat to my ability to see the world as a whole as justified.

The experience of spontaneous freedom, and the relationship between ourselves and nature that it reflects, provides a form of consolation to this existential suffering. The nature of this reconciliation is elucidated by Nietzsche's theory of the function of tragedy (and this feature of the pleasure provided by spontaneous freedom also illuminates a surprising connection between Nietzsche's view of the function of art and Kant's view of genius).

In Nietzsche's view,"Dionysiac" experiences can console the audiences of tragedy to suffering. In Attic Tragedy, Nietzsche thinks that classical Greeks underwent an experience of identifying with a satyric Chorus that provided a "succession of discharges" of a vision representing "the breaking asunder of the individual and its becoming one with primal being itself" (Nietzsche 1999, § 8). Experiences of tragedy consoled the Greeks to the suffering associated with death by imparting a wisdom that individual people are, in some respect, not really individuals but instead part of a single and eternal living being.

The Dionysiac insight consoles by offering an alternative perspective on the world than that which is available from our empirical experience of the world as individuals. The wisdom provided by Dionysiac experiences that "living being" is one and eternal and that we are part of the one living being is achieved through temporary experiences of tragedy. Tragedy allows the experience of Dionysiac wisdom to be limited to "brief moments" and allows its audience to go on as individuals, carrying Dionysiac wisdom with them rather than dissolving their subjectivity permanently into primal being, loosing their psychic unity altogether (Nietzsche 1999, § 17). Thus, when tragedy succeeds in classical Athens, it provides its audience with an

experience of the temporary dissolution of selfhood that can then be reintegrated into their existing psychology.

Experiences of spontaneous freedom can likewise console us to existential suffering by leading us to identify ourselves with sources of the self outside of our conscious, cognitive faculties and so to regard the conflict between our evaluations of the meaningfulness of life and the meaningfulness of the day-to-day things we care about as less pressing. When someone experiences spontaneous freedom, experiencing their activities and ideas as arising out of themselves and yet as not fully determined by either other agents or by their own preexisting commitments and beliefs, they temporarily identify themselves with a source of action distinct from their conscious, evaluative standpoint. Experiences of spontaneous freedom lead one to temporarily identify "nature" or deep and unstructured commitments or beliefs that are distinct from one's capacity for rational agency as the source of one's activity.

Like tragedy, spontaneous freedom also involves an experience of individuation—drawing boundaries around what counts as "my" experience—when I identify activities and ideas that arise from "the universe itself" as "mine." This corresponds to the experience of artists feeling that their creations are, in some sense, *their own*, even when they feel that their creation came from a force external to their conscious self, like "God" or "a muse." It also corresponds to the integration of Dionysiac wisdom into individuated lives following the conclusions of tragedies in Nietzsche's theory. By retrospectively making an activity mine, I can connect "myself" to the wisdom of an experience that seems to arise from a unified nature with which I cannot fully identify without dissolving myself. In doing so, I can, sometimes, at least temporarily, console myself to the suffering of life. (Additionally, as hearing the chorus provides a Dionysiac experience to the audiences of Attic tragedies, observing the spontaneity

of other people with whom one identifies might also provide an experience of conciliation with the suffering of individuation.)

Spontaneous freedom and genius both, then, achieve a further value, beyond satisfying a drive to create and beyond making creative art possible: in connecting us to nature or non-conceptual thought as a source of our agency, genius and spontaneous freedom reconcile us to a sort of existential suffering that arises from a deep conflict between human meaning and the impersonality of the natural world. In addition to its great psychological value, such conciliation may also conduce to avoiding the arrogance of thinking oneself ahistorical and to cultivating the virtue of humility about one's own situated-ness as an agent. That genius, as well as spontaneous freedom, can serve this function, suggests a surprising connection between Nietzsche's view of tragedy and Kant's view of genius: both genius and tragedy can help us to see how we might become other than what we understand ourselves now to be and how we might find pleasure, rather than terror, in that experience.

§ 6. Conclusion

I have argued that the experience of spontaneous freedom is valuable not merely because people desire it but because it makes possible the creation of one sort of valuable art. Understanding the role that spontaneous freedom plays in enabling the creations of artistic genius reveals further respects in which the experience of spontaneous freedom is valuable by itself: it provides us with a sense of possibility and novelty, both individually and as part of humanity, and it helps to reconcile us to existential suffering by leading us to identify with the non-conscious, non-deliberative parts of ourselves.

CHAPTER THREE

INTEGRITY AND SPONTANEITY

"Caught—the bubble / in the spirit level, / a creature divided; / and the compass needle / wobbling and wavering, / undecided. / Freed—the broken / thermometer's mercury / running away; / and the rainbow-bird / from the narrow bevel / of the empty mirror, / flying wherever / it feels like, gay!" – Elizabeth Bishop, "Sonnet"

"I would write on the lintels of the door-post, Whim. *I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation." – Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"*

§ 0. Abstract

Phenomenologically, experiencing myself as spontaneously free involves regarding the future of my life as settled by neither internal, reflectively endorsed features of me nor the decisions of other agents. Theories of the self that require that I constitute myself through rational deliberation and planning in order to exist as a self preclude experiences of spontaneous freedom. In this Chapter, I argue that while such "integrity" theories of the self, in their most stringent forms, have a variety of attractive features, their attractiveness depends on constructing a sort of self that cannot experience and value spontaneous freedom. I further contend that transcendental arguments that purport to show that simply by philosophizing about the self we are committed to a stringent integrity theory are uncompelling because of our ability to talk with and about spontaneous actors without difficulty. The value of spontaneous freedom ultimately gives us reason to adopt a less rationalized, more embodied theory of the self than that implicitly advanced by stringent versions of integrity theory.

§ 1. Introduction

Major strains in moral philosophy extol the importance of integrity and coherence for agency, claiming that for a person to function effectively as a rational agent, or even to qualify as a rational agent, the person must exhibit integrity and must be coherent to themselves and others. Some stringent versions of *integrity theory* maintain that successful selves are selves whose heteronymous, foreign elements have either been weeded out or subjugated. A prominent variety of integrity theory is advanced by Christine Korsgaard, who maintains that successful agency requires s*elf-constitution* through reflective endorsement of—and action in accordance with—*practical identities* that provide laws to guide agents' choices and actions. On

Korsgaard's view, I appropriately relate to myself by self-constituting through my rational capacities.

The "self-constitution" theory promulgated by Korsgaard produces an account of agency according to which moral agents who successfully self-constitute are guaranteed to endorse their actions and beliefs, can make promises and agreements that they keep out of more than a *modus vivendi*, and commit themselves to a Kantian morality. However, in spite of these attractions, the demands of integrity theory of the stringent variety advocated by Korsgaard—that agents make themselves coherent and expel foreign elements that undermine self-coherence—preclude agents from experiencing *spontaneous freedom*—the experience of feeling that one's actions are settled in advance neither by one's own conscious, deliberative plans and decisions or those of other agents.

In this Chapter, I describe integrity theory and explain why its ethical view of the self is, at first glance, attractive. I then show that integrity theory is incompatible with the experience of spontaneous freedom. I argue that Korsgaard's theory accommodates a great deal of creativity but ultimately precludes some of the central features of spontaneous freedom—features that are part of why spontaneous freedom is worth wanting. I argue for this claim by describing experiences of artistic creativity, game playing, and fun, and showing how these experiences require the core components of spontaneous freedom that are incompatible with integrity theory. I argue that one cannot experience spontaneous freedom when one's actions are settled in advance by one's consciously and reflectively endorsed practical identities. The incompatibility between spontaneous freedom and integrity theories of the self is not just a surface-level tension but a deep and intractable conflict about the nature of the self that turns on the question: can I identify myself with my subconscious, non-deliberative features or not?

§ 2. The Integrated Self

In *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*, Korsgaard sets out to show that, in order to lead a good life, one must achieve a high level of integrity as an agent. A good life is one that is unified and whole. Living a life of integrity, for Korsgaard, involves engaging in an activity of self-constitution and succeeding in the "struggle for psychic unity, the struggle to be, in the face of psychic complexity, a single unified agent" (Korsgaard 2009, 7). Being a single unified agent requires acting in such a way that one's actions arise from "the person as a whole" rather than issuing from "forces working in or on an agent" (Korsgaard 2009, 133-34). Actions that arise from the whole person stand apart from those that do not in their "necessitation" by one of the practical identities of a unified agent, which "include such things as roles and relationships, citizenship, memberships in ethnic or religious groups, causes, vocations, professions, and offices" (Korsgaard 2009, 20). These practical identities all provide "absolute inviolable laws" to guide an agent's choices (Korsgaard 2009, 23). For instance, one person might help another person out because she is his mother, and the practical identity of "mother" provides the person with action-guiding principles along the lines of "help your children accomplish their goals when you can" (Korsgaard 2009, 21-22).[1] A good action "is one that both achieves and springs from the integrity of the person who performs it" (Korsgaard 2009, 25).

Achieving integrity further requires agents to resolve conflicts among their practical identities when the principles or laws provided by those identities come into conflict, as a failure to do so would inevitably result in failing to live up to the standards provided by one or

[1] To achieve integrity, an agent must have at least one practical identity, because without some practical identity "you will lose your grip on yourself as having any reason to live and act at all" (Korsgaard 1996, 121).

more of one's practical identities (Korsgaard 2009, 25). Agents cannot simply combine their various practical identities in any manner that they like. Integrity requires agents to will that the principles or laws generated by *each* of their practical identities apply to *all* similar cases of willing that the agent will encounter in the present or the future. This is because an agent who wills particularistically—treating a reason as applicable only to the case at hand—fails to act as a single agent (Korsgaard 2009, 72-76). "Universal willing" can be "provisionally universal" for Korsgaard, which means that the generality of a universal reason may not be fully determined. If I will to get up as soon as my alarm clock goes off in the morning, I might satisfy the requirements of universal willing if, tomorrow morning when I hear my alarm go off, I hit the snooze button because I decide in that moment that I should not get up as soon as my alarm goes off when I have not slept for at least six hours. On the other hand, I would will particularistically if, when I heard my alarm go off, I hit the snooze button because I merely wanted (e.g., had an occurrent desire) to stay in bed a while longer. In this case, I would be willing for reasons that conflict with the reasons for which I willed my wake-up-with-the-alarm norm.[2]

Korsgaard argues that this account of what it is to be a good *agent* is also the correct account of what it is to be a good *human*. As human beings are "reflective animals" who seek reasons that tell us what to do and how to live (Korsgaard 2009, 115-16), we are "*condemned* to choice and action" (Korsgaard 2009, 1). Insofar as you aim to have reasons for how you act and live, you are committed to seeking universally applicable reasons for how you, as a single and unified individual, act and live. Any creature whose mind has "reflective awareness of its

[2] This example is meant only to illuminate the distinction between universal and particularistic willing. Korsgaard might well regard it as obtuse, or even irrational, to will universally "to get up as soon as my alarm clock goes off," for such a willing is so granular and disconnected from my deeper interest that it would be bizarre to universally will this particular maxim.

mental state" is committed to seeking integrity, seeking to unify themselves by living up to their own standards (Korsgaard 2009, 15-16), so being a good agent is the only thing that is choiceworthy for a person (Korsgaard 2009, 177). Thus, for Korsgaard, living a successful human life consists in being a successful agent, being an agent requires being unified as a single thing, and achieving unity consists in achieving integrity in self-constitution through action.

A successful human agent is neither a "Good Dog," who "always does what he ought to do spontaneously and with tail-wagging cheerfulness and enthusiasm," nor a "Reformed Miserable Sinner," who constantly experiences unruly and discordant desires and impulses that he "must constantly repress … in order to conform to the demands of duty" (Korsgaard 2009, 3). However, the Reformed Miserable Sinner picture is closer to the mark, for Korsgaard, than is the Good Dog. Like the Reformed Miserable Sinner, Korsgaard's ideal agent represses her unruly desires; the difference is that Korsgaard's successful agent represses threats to her integrity "in order to be one, to be unified, to be whole" rather than "to be good" (Korsgaard 2009, 26). Korsgaard's theory of integrity is a practical ideal for agency, one that we may never live up to fully. When we face threats to our integrity, our challenge is to meet them well.

A recovering alcoholic asked out to a bar by a few friends might exhibit integrity by deciding not to go, not because it would be "bad" to have a drink but because doing so would violate the recovering alcoholic's practical identity as a teetotaler. For Korsgaard, an ongoing, unresolved conflict between practical identities is incompatible with success at self-constitution. The path to integrity, for Korsgaard, is not to allow the uneasy coexistence of two identities providing conflicting guidance. An agent must fit their identities together so that they do not *potentially* conflict, otherwise that agent's capacity for effective (and unified)

action is at the mercy of accident. Someone whose practical identities provide conflicting principles or laws can only contingently live up to their roles until such time as they jettison or revise one or more of their identities to resolve the conflict.

The recovering alcoholic might also achieve integrity with different decisions. Perhaps the best way to follow the principles provided by the practical identities of "teetotaler" and "friend" is to go to the bar and just drink seltzer water, or perhaps the temptations of alcohol have receded sufficiently far that the recovering alcoholic has reason to revisit her identity as a teetotaler—maybe one glass of beer is fine. But as long as the agent reflectively endorses the identify of "teetotaler," the agent is committed to living up to it. For Korsgaard, "so long as you remain committed to a role, and yet fail to meet the obligations it generates, you fail yourself as a human being, as well as failing in that role" (Korsgaard 1996, 121).

To live up to the practical ideal of integrity, according to Korsgaard, such a change in practical identity must be *principled* rather than capricious. An agent might succeed at self-constitution by adopting a practical identity that calls for artistic spontaneity or for fun, but for a good person on Korsgaard's picture, such self-constitution cannot involve shifting one's commitments without reason. "[Y]ou have to will universally, because the reason you act on now, the law you make for yourself now, must be one you can will to act on again later, come what may, unless you come to see that there's a good reason to change it" (Korsgaard 2009, 202-03). This contrasts with the "particularistic will" of a person who "expects to change his mind without a reason"; such a person "lack[s] self-respect" and is not governed by the law of their own will (Korsgaard 2009, 203).

Korsgaard's integrity theory of the self is potentially attractive in that selves that satisfy the demand of self-constitution have several valuable features.

First, people who are well-constituted according to Korsgaard's requirements are guaranteed not to be alienated from themselves, insofar as self-alienation involves the sense that one's life is not their own or that one is unable to move freely in their own life (Jaeggi 2014, 128). The agent who successfully self-constitutes comes to see all of their life as their own, because they reflectively endorse those practical identities that guide their actions and jettison those that cannot fit with their other identities.

Second, success at Korsgaardian self-constitution enables agents to keep promises and agreements out of rational necessity, rather than "contingently." To make promises successfully, Korsgaard thinks, one must be able to make *necessary* that one will live up to the promise in the future. This can be accomplished by those people, and only those people, who make themselves into single agents through self-constitution. "Mere heaps" are unable to make real promises because the part of them that makes the promise might not be the part of them that takes control when it is time to live up to the promise. If I promise my neighbor that I will help paint their house but do so without successfully self-constituting—say, I have an unresolved conflict between my identity as a surfer and my identities as a promise keeper and as a neighbor, whether I keep my "promise" will just depend on which part of my identity is ascendent when the first sunny day comes (Korsgaard 2009, 22). Heteronomous heaps might keep "promises" out of a *modus vivendi*: a contingent peace among their conflicting, unintegrated identities. But such "promise-keeping" does not succeed at "making the contingent necessary." Korsgaardian agents, in contrast, have the ability to keep promises "in the noumenal world" (Korsgaard 2009, 191).[3]

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[3] On Korsgaard's view, successfully self-constituting agents not only have the capacity to make and keep agreements and promises in the noumenal world but also have a substantive commitment to the requirements of interpersonal morality (Korsgaard 2009, 181).

§ 3. Integrity and Spontaneity

Spontaneous freedom involves activity that outstrips a self's conscious principles, identities, and explanations in the sense that the grounds of the spontaneous activity are not their conscious, first-personal reflection and endorsement. Selves that satisfy Korsgaard's demands for successful agency cannot experience spontaneous freedom, because the integrity and self-understanding achieved by such agents requires that their full-fledged actions be ascribable to practical identities that they reflectively endorse. Korsgaard's view requires that practical identities provide us with laws that guide our actions, and "[a] law lays down what is to be done" (Korsgaard 2009, 16). Acting as a successful agent in accord with a practical identity involves an experience of "necessitation," which involves "work and effort" (Korsgaard 2009, 7). Self-constitution happens at the level of conscious, reflective thought, and any actions that satisfy Korsgaard's requirements for agency must be intelligible as the products of practical identities' law-like necessitation. Further, leading a successful human life requires making oneself into an agent who acts in this manner rather than into someone who is divided against themselves. Anyone who satisfies this requirement cannot feel that what will happen with their life is not settled by their conscious, reflectively endorsed practical identities or previously made decisions that are transparently available for conscious reflection.

Experiences of spontaneous freedom make one seem to oneself to be metaphysically unstable because, at least from the first-personal perspective, it is not clear where one starts and where one stops: one acts from impulses or motivations that one takes to be non-identical with one's conscious, reflective standpoint.

Integrity theorists might agree that stringent requirements for agential integrity rule out the possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom, but might argue that integrity still

provides plenty of room for creativity and spontaneity and that whatever is *valuable* about spontaneous freedom is provided for just as well by the forms of creativity and spontaneity that they allow. Korsgaard acknowledges that acts might be undertaken solely for their own sakes, as one might "choose to dance for the sheer joy of dancing" (Korsgaard 2009, 12). I might adopt a practical identity that says that when I am creating art, I should create whatever I am moved to create, not for any instrumental reason but just for the pleasure of spontaneous artistic creation. Korsgaard also provides space for spontaneity in interpretation, argument, and creativity in determining what any particular practical identity requires. One might argue "about whether a particular way of acting is the best way or the only way to go about being, say, a teacher or a citizen" and "one might find a new way of being a friend" (Korsgaard 2009, 21). So, to the extent that I identify as an artist, I might exhibit creativity in working through what it means to be an artist in a particular context.

While the forms of creativity that are accommodated by integrity theory are important and valuable, I will contend in this following section that some of the most paradigmatically valuable experiences of spontaneous freedom cannot be had by selves that satisfy the demands of stringent forms of integrity theory.

§ 4. Art, Fun, and Games

In this section, I argue that the activities of making creative art, playing games, and having fun depend on taking your actions not to be determined by practical identities that provide action-guiding laws. Consider the three following spontaneously free "characters":

First, consider a creative artist who regards their artistic creativity as involving creation that is not guided by any rule or determinate principle.[4] The artist might agree with Kant that

[4] For a fuller account of the relationship between spontaneous freedom and artistic creativity, see Chapter Two.

"one cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be" because no successful creative artist "can indicate how his ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought, arise and come together in his head, because he himself does not know it and thus cannot teach it to anyone else either" (Kant 2000, 5:309). For this artist, artistic creation involves activity that they might experience as the world "flowing" through them, rather than activity guided by principles or laws to which they subscribe. This artist might create in accordance with an imperative that says, "Create!" but the imperative must be so indeterminate that it does not meaningfully specify what the artist should do. Such an artist is committed to thinking that there is some part of the self that they cannot know until it comes to the surface, so that even they might be surprised by who they are and what they will do.

Second, consider a game player.[5] According to Bernard Suits, a game is the "voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles" (Suits 1990, 41). A Suitsian game player regards the activity of playing a game (although not the decisions that one makes within a game while playing it) as not necessitated in advance and as non-instrumentally worthwhile. A common theme of philosophical discussion of games, both those associated with Sutis's attempt to define games and those that adopt more pluralistic views about what counts as a game, is the point that playing games is often or always associated with a feeling of non-obligatoriness. As Roger Caillois argues, if playing were obligatory "it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion" (Caillois 2001, 9). The activities that a game player performs *within* a game's "magic circle"—the space that players inhabit when they play a game—are constrained by the rules of the game and the player's aim of winning the game (Huizinga 1950, 10). When I

[5] For a fuller account of the relationship between games, play, and spontaneous freedom, see Chapter Five.

play chess, my ability to move my rook is constrained by the rules (it cannot move diagonally) and my aim of winning (I cannot move my rook to a square where it can be costlessly captured by my opponent if I am really trying to win). I might play a game of chess in order to spend time with a friend and exercise my spatial reasoning skills. However the activity of *playing* a game is itself necessarily experienced by players as non-obligatory. An activity that is recognizable as "playing a game" is an activity that the game player does not *have* to do, and that the player regards as such. Thus, if I am engaged in an activity that is recognizable as "playing a game," I am engaged in an activity that I do not *have* to do, and that I regard as such. In this respect, an experience of spontaneous freedom is provoked by the playing *of* any activity recognizable as a game. Part of what it is to play a game is to regard the activity of playing the game as itself optional and not required, even by any self-legislated rule or law.

Play understood more broadly than game-play also provides an experience of non-instrumental, voluntary, intrinsically valuable activity (Tasioulas 2004, 244). Consider, third, someone "having fun," where "having fun" is an activity that is, necessarily, undertaken just for its own sake, rather than for any further reason. Johan Huizinga regards "the fun element" as precisely what "characterizes the element of play," suggesting a strong continuity between the practical identity of the game player and the person who has fun (Huizinga 1955, 8). I stipulatively take "fun" to be non-rule constituted play activity (i.e., play that is not a game). "Fun" is different than intrinsically valuable activity and often involves the activation of interest or attention in new directions that are not specified antecedently to the activity of "fun." Fun involves "being in the moment," finding the moment in which one sees oneself satisfying or pleasing, and much of the time involves feeling excited anticipation arising from

uncertainty about what, exactly, one will do next.[6] Fun involves the free movement of interest or attention and depends heavily on the attitudes of the participants. Although it is difficult to describe specific examples of fun out of context—fun is often something for which "you had to be there"—many activities like making up a game, having a conversation, flirting, making dinner can be fun or not fun depending on the attitudes of the participants. In contrast to the activity of game playing, fun is not rule-governed. Someone having fun often regards the next place they will turn their attention, the next thing they will do, as not specified in advance by any rule. This non-specification gives fun its characteristic feeling of excitement.[7]

If we think of "character" as a "formal device that collects every example of a kind of person," (Kunin 2009, 291), the experiences associated with artistic creativity, playing games, and having fun might be understood as instances of character types, or recognizable "kinds" of person that an individual might be, for some temporal period, if not for the entirety of their life.[8] We have all encountered persons for whom spontaneity or fun is central to who they are.

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[6] The *Oxford English Dictionary* reports that the etymology of "fun" can be traced back to the early modern "fon," which has the senses of "to act the fool" and "to make a fool of." Fon can be traced further back to the Middle English "fonnen," which means, according to the *Middle English Dictionary*, a fool, a dupe, or a buffoon, and which was not used earlier than the late Fourteenth Century. Additionally, the earliest recorded uses of "fun" have the sense of "a cheat or trick; a joke; a practical joke." It is not until the late Eighteenth Century that uses of "fun" crop up that do not include a sense of "making fun" or tricking. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "fun," accessed May 8, 2018, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/75467; *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. "fonnen," accessed June 4, 2018, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED16634.

[7] I do not mean to claim that every experience of fun *must* involve spontaneity. One might experience fun in a different sense through engagement and total immersion in an activity without distraction, as when one is completely absorbed in reading a book. The sort of fun that involves the non-rule-governed fixation of attention is a particularly piquant form of fun because this feature seems to account for the boisterousness associated with fun in ordinary language. Thanks to Seana Shiffrin for raising this point.

[8] A life made up *entirely* of playing games—at least in a world characterized by the injustices that characterize our own world rather than the sort of utopia in which Suits imagines playing games would be the only thing for us to do (Suits 1990, 168)—would feel empty or shallow. This is both because the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom should not be thought of as the only value that gives meaning to a life and because the sort of spontaneous freedom provided by playing games is more restricted than that provided by artistic creativity or non-rule-bound fun.

A person might inhabit one of these character types for only a portion of their life, leaving it behind when other practical identities become more salient to them, although leaving behind the character type might not mean abandoning the associated practical identities. The formerly "wild artist" who now spends all of their time working as a lawyer and performing childcare might still hold on to the practical identity of "artist," and might experience their inability to satisfy that identity in addition to the identities of "professional" and "parent" as a source of frustration or suffering.

Korsgaard might wish to regard the "spontaneous artist," "game player" and "fun lover" as practical identities that a successful agent might integrate into their other practical identities, but I will argue that Korsgaard cannot plausibly do so; her theory ends up suggesting that there is something defective in all three of these spontaneously free character types. For Korsgaard, spontaneity must be suitably cabined so as not to give rise to intra-agential conflict. For Korsgaard, "[I]f you expect to change your mind without a reason, then you are not willing your maxim as a universal law, not even a provisionally universal law…. And if you aren't willing your maxim as a universal law, then you lack self-respect" (Korsgaard 2009, 203). Similarly, "if any possible change in my motivational state would count as a good reason to do something other than what I am doing, then I am not making a decision, but merely observing the workings of the motivational forces within me" (Korsgaard 2009, 79). But this is precisely what an artist who experiences their creativity as "nature flowing through them," does: they understand their agential role as one of observing and recording motivational forces that arise in them without their active participation. Likewise, the game player and fun lover identify with motivational currents that are part of "who they are" but that are not

accessible to conscious reflection. The fun lover has fun by allowing their attention to move from object to object with no explicit, reflective guidance.

Korsgaard might *partially* accommodate the spontaneity of these characters. Perhaps the spontaneous action of the artist can be described at a higher level of abstraction. What is "to be done" is create spontaneously. The particulars of the art that gets created are, perhaps, not part of what needs to be specified by the principles given by practical identities. An artist might create one sort of painting today simply because it "feels like the right combination of images" and create a dramatically different painting tomorrow for the same reason without giving rise to particularistic willing because the artist's willings are temporally limited to the day that they occur, so no conflict between the two willings arises. Such an artist does not expect to change their mind without a good reason. Rather, they create spontaneously today and then again tomorrow. Likewise, Korsgaard might say, what is to be done by the game player is to play games and what is to be done by the fun lover is have fun.

However, such an artist would lack a Korsgaardian practical identity, because such interpretations are too vague to qualify as action-guiding laws or principles; they have been constructed precisely to *avoid* specifying what is to be done by the agent. Korsgaard is clear that successful agents must have *some* practical identity that prescribes what to do. "What is not contingent is that you must be governed by some conception of your practical identity," Korsgaard explains, "[f]or unless you are committed to some conception of your practical identity, you will lose your grip on yourself as having any reason to do one thing rather than another—and with it, your grip on yourself as having any reason to live and act at all" (Korsgaard 1996, 120-21).

Integrity theory cannot allow the artist's spontaneity to interfere with their other practical identities. If the artist has both a practical identity as an artist that involves spontaneous creativity and an identity as a punctual friend who does not show up late for dinner parties, the person's artistic spontaneity cannot be realized in a manner that interferes with their ability to show up on time for a dinner party (and vice versa). The spontaneity that is part of the identity as a creative artist only has as much free play as is permitted by all of the artist's other practical identities. Adopting a practical identity that authorizes spontaneity is compatible with successful self-constitution if the spontaneity is suitably cabined. This is to say that on Korsgaard's view, a well-constituted agent's deliberative, consciously endorsed practical identities authorize all of their actions; thus Korsgaard acknowledges that we can "*choose* to dance for the sheer joy of dancing" rather than that we can *dance* for the joy of dancing (Korsgaard 2009, 12). But much of the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom is associated with temporarily turning off or escaping from these rational control systems for one's actions.

Of course, there are risks to turning off these control systems: when you act spontaneously, you will find yourself doing things that you have not chosen, and you might find yourself doing things that you would not have chosen, had you deliberated. In Korsgaard's view, if the agent's only or most important practical identity involved being spontaneous, they would be "at the mercy of accident" and "almost completely *incapable of effective action*" (Korsgaard 2009, 169) since their actions would not be necessitated by a practical identity. Elevating one's spontaneous dispositions above one's law-giving practical identities would involve failing to live up to the roles given by one's other practical identities because one could only "luck in" to doing what their practical identities required. The artist might

object that their spontaneity is different from "living at random," both because they endorses their spontaneity and because their spontaneity does not involve acting completely at random. Rather, they spontaneously choose among different practical identities that they care about. It is one's unique material and social circumstances and one's psychological states other than plans and decisions that produce spontaneous activity, not the role of a die.[9] But, Korsgaard would point out, this still makes the artist's success *contingent*. It is only *if* their spontaneity does not cause them to careen from activity to activity—which it might—that they can accomplish *anything*.

Even if the artist could avoid agential failure by adopting a practical identity involving spontaneity, achieving Korsgaardian integrity would depend on subordinating their other practical identities at issue to this identity. If they did not subordinate these identities to their identity as someone who is spontaneous, they would still be subject to criticism on the grounds that their identities conflict with one another: their spontaneous identity says they should keep working on the sculpture while their identity as a punctual friend says to put down the chisel. Only by having some procedure that they could will universally, such as a procedure that prioritizes the spontaneous identity above the other potentially conflicting identities while at the same time suitably restricting its scope so that they avoid living "at random," could the artist avoid the internal conflict characteristic of someone who fails to self-integrate and so is a "mere heap."

[9] We might worry that making all of our important decisions with a throw of the die would make them spontaneous but not in the right way. Whether this is so depends on how we might decide using a die. If I decided to set up all of my decisions in sets of six options and to commit myself to whichever course of action the roll of a die indicated, I would not be spontaneously free in my action because my rule-like commitment to doing what the die told me to do would motivate my action. On the other hand, it seems that I could be right to regard my own spontaneity as, in some way, *analogous* to a die roll. Part of the pleasure of experiencing spontaneous freedom is seeing myself as made up all of the natural elements that contingently happen to make me up. Thanks to Barbara Herman for pressing this point.

Korsgaard might claim that possessing conflicting practical identities remains *possible* for humans on her view, even though holding on to conflicting practical identities represents a failure of agency, since integrity is a practical *ideal* for Korsgaard. But Korsgaard's theory of successful agency purports to provide an account of what it is to be a *good human.* This is not to suggest, for instance, that anyone should be legally compelled or coerced to integrate their practical identities. But on Korsgaard's view, being a *good* human is incompatible with experiencing spontaneous freedom insofar as such experiences are incompatible with successful agency, which all humans are committed to pursuing.

I have argued that the incompatibility between integrity theory and the possibility of experiencing and valuing spontaneous freedom arises from an incompatibility between the ethically successful self envisioned by integrity theory and the values realized by experiences of spontaneous freedom.

This incompatibility runs the other way, too. As I have already suggested, selves that can incorporate sources of action that are not suitably authorized by their "constitutions" do not have the power to keep promises "in the noumenal world," for their capacity to keep promises depends on which of their practical identities has the upper hand when their promise comes due. But, pragmatically speaking, heteronymous, spontaneously free selves might keep their word almost as well as integrated selves. In considering the neighbor's request for help painting a fence on the first sunny day, a spontaneous actor might predict what motivational state they will be in when the first sunny day comes. If they predict that they will feel the bonds of neighborly obligation tugging more strongly than the lure of the beach on that day, they might go ahead and "promise" to help paint, knowing that there is some chance that their competing identities will win out on the first sunny day but thinking that the chance is low.

When the first sunny day comes, they will, more likely than not, end up helping their neighbor paint. The neighbor making the quasi-promise might be more likely to actually end up showing up to help paint than the promisor in the noumenal realm, for even the "true" promisor might not show up to help paint if sufficiently morally weightily countervailing considerations come into play. Yet, on Korsgaard's view, the quasi-promisor has not really succeeded at promising, because in making their "promise," they did not rationally necessitate that they would help their neighbor paint. But the quasi-promise that they made is, as far as the neighbor is concerned, almost as good as a promise "in the noumenal world."

There are other less stringent theories of the integrated self that do not take principled action to require that one's choices be determined or narrowly constrained by action-guiding laws endorsed by conscious reflection.[10] These views take complex, principled action to reflect an individual human's depth in a way that could not be contained in a list of rules or in any linguistic formulation. The "principledness" of an agent's actions, on these views, reflects a commitment to working out the conflicts and lacunae that complex agents discover, over time, in themselves. This would count as the sort of "unprincipled resolution" that I have identified as characterizing spontaneous activity, provided that such a theory allow "principled-ness" to encompass even activity arising from one's identification with momentary, non-rational impulses and instincts. Because experiences of spontaneous freedom can arise from epistemic uncertainty, as well as from metaphysical non-determination, the sort of principled integrity that allows or requires a strong form of discretion in acting out one's principles allows

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[10] Ronald Dworkin, for instance, develops an account of integrity that allows for unreflective interpretation of one's values (Dworkin 2011, 101). Steven Crowell provides a Heideggerian theory of reflection of the sort that might integrate an agent as not requiring explicit deliberation (Crowell 2007, 321).

ethically successful agents to experience spontaneous freedom, unlike the view advanced by Korsgaard.[11]

§ 5. Korsgaard's Transcendental Argument

A further argument remains for Korsgaard's stringent version of integrity theory: a transcendental argument that by philosophizing about what successful selves are or what successful agency is, we are already committed to the view that selves must satisfy the demands of integrity. In the remainder of this Chapter, I respond to this argument. I first describe the argument and then argue that it fails by showing that integrity theorists like Korsgaard are committed to regarding even people who fail at self-constitution as intelligible agents in some respects. To reject Korsgaard's transcendental argument, we must adopt a different understanding of the nature of the self than that advanced by Korsgaard. I argue that to account for experiences of spontaneous freedom, it suffices to regard the self as consisting of a first-personal perspective on the world, some form of psychological and physical continuity, and psychological capacities that enable it to identify with sources of action that are distinct from its rational nature.

Korsgaard advances a "transcendental argument" in favor of her self-constitution theory, claiming that by seeking justifications for your actions, you commit yourself to being a single "you," which you can only accomplish by having some practical identity and living up to all of your practical identities (Korsgaard 2009, 1). Otherwise, you are like a disunited city: not one thing, but many. Korsgaard's transcendental argument does not aim to show that it is "desirable" or "worthwhile" to be an integrated agent, but that you are already committed to being an integrated, unified agent, and it is on pain of inconsistency, of a sort, that you must

[11] Ronald Dworkin provides an account of weak and strong forms of discretion (Dworkin 1977, 31-39).

acknowledge that being a good human requires being a good, integrated rational agent. You are a creature "who needs reasons to act and to live.... [I]f you live at random, without integrity or principle, then you will lose your grip on yourself as one who has any reason to live and to act at all" (Korsgaard 1996, 121). If you want to be more than a mere heap, you have to do the hard work of falling apart and pulling yourself back together, which requires that you decide how your identities cohere rather than just flitting from one to another for no reason at all *and* you must be committed to doing so as a single, unified agent, because the very fact that you are interested in having a philosophical conversation about the right way to live shows that you *care* about *what is choiceworthy*. "[B]eing human we must endorse our impulses before we can act on them" (Korsgaard 1996, 122). Because humans are animals who need practical conceptions of their own identities in order to find their actions worth undertaking, humans are committed to taking their practical identities to be "normative," rationally necessitating their actions. "If you had no normative conception of your identity, you could have no reasons for action, and because your consciousness is reflective, you could then not act at all. Since you cannot act without reasons and your humanity is the source of your reasons, you must value your own humanity if you are to act at all" (Korsgaard 1996, 123). If you worry about subordinating your attachment to some practical identities that you care about deeply, there must be a "you" who is attached to those identities, and there can only be a single "you" if you achieve integrity through self-constitution.

My first reply to this transcendental argument is to point out that experiences of spontaneous freedom require temporarily *turning off* the intellectual drive that seeks reasons to act and to live. Experiences of spontaneous freedom involve seeing yourself as unfixed by your deliberative decisions and consciously endorsed practical identities: they involve seeing

yourself as acting in a way that reflects things outside of your rational self. Many practices that people rely on to experience the freedom from deliberative control of their actions that characterizes spontaneous freedom make use of the connection between conscious self-awareness and the physical body. Consider two examples.

First, a long tradition of Buddhist practice attempts to go beyond the experience of "self" or "I" as discrete and self-contained through a practice of meditation "in which is arrested the activity of an individual practitioner's ego-consciousness" (Nagatomo 2017, § 6.3). This experience is brought about, in substantial part, though an adjustment of body (including diet and exercise) and an adjustment of how one breathes. Practices of breathing, combined with the appropriate preparation of the body and the mind, give rise to an experience of "kicking through the bottom of a bucket" and experiencing the self as "a groundless ground that is nothing" (Nagatomo 2017, § 8.2). Action then "carries a sense of *spontaneity*" that surges "from the creative source in the bottomless ground" (Nagatomo 2017, § 8.2).

Second, psychiatrists have developed an interest in studying the use of hallucinogens to treat depression and existential anxiety in patients with late-stage cancer (Grob et al. 2011 [studying psilocybin]; Gasser et al. 2014 [studying lysergic acid diethylamide]; Ross et al. 2016 [studying psilocybin]; Griffiths et al. 2016 [studying psilocybin]; Pollan 2018, 8-11 [summarizing many of the recent psychiatric studies of hallucinogens]). The experiences of users of psilocybin often involve losing track of the boundaries between self and non-self, feeling that they become other people (Grob 2007, 211). Subjects exposed to psilocybin experience a temporary failure of the impulse for individuation. When this experience takes place in the context of supportive psychotherapy or nurturing relationships, subjects can connect this experience of the failure of individuation to their sense of self after the

hallucinogenic session and can come to see themselves as less fully identified with their own rational impulses and so to see death as less of a bad because they feel less distinct from other people than they previously appeared to themselves (Grob 2007, 211).

The breathing practices of meditation and the use of hallucinogens are designed precisely to (temporarily) prevent one from asking questions like, "why should I have the aim of making sense?" Absorbing oneself in art, or a game, or having fun can have a similar effect. Temporarily severing the connection been self-awareness and theoretical intelligence often allows experiences of spontaneous freedom to arise. It is not a puzzle that I can choose to meditate or consume a hallucinogen with the expectation that doing so will lead me not to ask questions like "why should I have the aim of making sense?," for many people in fact do so. Korsgaard takes her transcendental argument to show that since rational action exists, it is possible, and since rational action is possible only if humans find their humanity to be valuable, we human beings must be valuable (Korsgaard 1996, 123-24). But actions that limit the scope of rational action (without entirely eliminating the possibility of it) also exist. When people take such actions, they use their rational natures to choose (and value) something that is distinct from, and in tension with, their rational natures.

A reply to my counter-transcendental argument is available to Korsgaard. Claiming that people take *actions* to temporarily undermine their own rational agency or their tendency to act from a normative conception of their own humanity depends on there existing some single agent to whom such actions can be attributed. How can such an agent exist, other than through self-constitution? Here, Korsgaard might turn to her account of defective action. Consider Korsgaard's story about Jeremy, her example of a "democratic soul."

> Jeremy, a college student, settles down at his desk one evening to study for an examination. Finding himself a little too restless to concentrate, he decides to

> take a walk in the fresh air first. His walk takes him past a nearby bookstore, where the sight of an enticing title draws him in to look at the book. Before he finds it, however, he meets his friend Neil, who invites him to join some of the other kids at the bar next door for a beer. Jeremy decides to have just one, and he goes with Neil to the bar. While waiting for his beer, however, he finds that the loud noise in the bar gives him a headache, and he decides to return home without having the beer. He is now, however, in too much pain to study. So Jeremy doesn't study for his examination, hardly gets a walk, doesn't buy a book, and doesn't drink his beer (Korsgaard 2009, 169).[12]

Notably, Jeremy would be no better off, qua agent, if he *had not* gotten a headache at the bar and had finished his beer with Neil, because, in Korsgaard's view, he would simply have lucked into drinking his beer. For Korsgaard, Jeremy can only succeed as an agent by acting *non-contingently* (Korsgaard 2009, 169).[13]

Jeremy might reply to Korsgaard's argument by saying: "I don't have to be an 'integrated self' to care both about studying and getting drinks with Neil. You told a coherent *story* about me trying to do both of those things! Too bad neither of them worked out, but maybe I'll have better luck next time." The facts that Korsgaard's story about Jeremy makes sense, that most of us, in fact, know (or else are!) "flaky" people like Jeremy, and that sometimes people even try to make themselves *more* like Jeremy (e.g., to be more "laid back" or to "go with the flow" or "chill out") suggest that Korsgaard's transcendental argument tries to

[12] Michael Bratman develops a very similar example, although he allows that a character like Jeremy might at least "accomplish a little bit with respect to each of several incompatible projects as [he] brute-shuffles from one to another" (Bratman 2012, 83).

[13] It is difficult for me to see how the version of Jeremy who succeeded at self-constitution would be any better off than the Jermey who fails at it. The Jeremy who sits at his desk all evening, trying and failing to study, seems no better off than the Jeremy who "hardly gets a walk, doesn't buy a book, and doesn't drink his beer." He seems worse off! At least the Jeremy of Korsgaard's example got a bit of a walk, discovered an interesting new book, and saw his friend Neil. And who is to say that Jeremy would not have gotten a headache from the unsuccessful effort to study? However, since I have already addressed the question of whether agents like Jeremy are really as badly off as Korsgaard makes them out to be, I will set aside this question to focus on Korsgaard's transcendental argument.

accomplish too much. Even if Jeremy cares about what is (rationally) choiceworthy, he might also care about other values not grounded in rationality.

Korsgaard might reply to Jeremy's rejoinder by asking how, unless he succeeds at self-constitution, he could know that he will even be the same person "next time" he tries to study or go for a walk. But Jeremy can point out that he has lots of resources (memory, a name, a driver's license, a body that changes only gradually over time) that allow him to be *somewhat* unified and that make him an intelligible conversational partner even if there is some other rational respect in which he is a "mere heap."[14] Korsgaard asks rhetorically, "How do you interact with someone who is seriously divided against himself? *If you approach [a disunited city] as one city*, Plato says, *you'll be making a big mistake*" (Korsgaard 2009, 185). A city constituted by interest groups that have simply made pragmatic alliances with one another is not best approached as a *city* but instead as a composition of potentially conflicting interest groups that, under the right circumstances, can be torn apart. Korsgaard suggests that you also make a big mistake if you approach a divided person as a person. But even if Plato is right about treating a divided city that you hope to conquer as something other than a city, what is so difficult about talking to a person who both wants to stay out for another drink and also wants to get up at 6:00 tomorrow morning, although those desires conflict? Unlike the disunited city, you cannot talk to the two factions of the divided self separately from one another. The disunited self still has a single brain, only one mouth, and cannot be spatially separated into its constituent factions.

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[14] For an account of a self that encompasses more than its conscious, deliberative nature, see Hubert Dreyfus's reading of Heidegger on intentionality ("[P]henomenological examination shows that in a wide variety of situations human beings relate to the world in an organized purposive manner without the constant accompaniment of a representational state which specifies what the action is aimed at accomplishing" (Dreyfus 1993, 23-28).)

In defending his self-hood in this exchange, Jeremy must rely on a different notion of what a self is than does Korsgaard, regarding the self as something less rational and more embodied. Jeremy might, for example, regard the self as consisting in a single, mental subject occupying a first-personal viewpoint that is psychologically connected to a single physiological body that changes only gradually over time. This picture of the embodied spontaneous self need not claim that the self essentially *is* its body, or that its body cannot change. Some feature of a physical body—a voice, a prosthetic limb—might move from not counting as part of the self's body to counting as part of the body as the self's perspective on the body to which it is connected changes (Elliott 2003, 1-27). The embodied spontaneous self's connection to a single, more or less temporally persistent body enables it to have attitudes toward its own future experiences that regards those experiences as *experiences of* the same self that it is now. Unlike successfully self-constituting Korsgaardian selves, the embodied spontaneous self is not rationally guaranteed to be the same entity in the future that it is now: its remaining a single entity depends on the contingent continuity of the physiological body that it is connected to. But this is all that the embodied spontaneous self needs in order to experience spontaneous freedom.

It might appear that the conflict between Korsgaard's account of defective agency and her transcendental argument could be resolved by jettisoning her account of defective agency. However, this would be a substantial cost for integrity theory. Moreover, it would undermine the overarching project of integrity theory: to provide an account on which people are properly identified with their consciously endorsed rational plans and identities. Korsgaard would, then, be better off giving up her transcendental argument than her account of defective

agency. She could then maintain that Jeremy is a defective agent without claiming that he is thereby a defective *human.*

Why is being a rational agent the only way of successfully being human? Why cannot one shift from identity to identity in an unprincipled manner? Korsgaard's integrity theory maintains that incomplete self-constitution is *defective* rather than effective but partial and regards reliance on instinct or mere inclination as human failures *tout court.* The appeal of Korsgaard's transcendental argument depends on accepting the premise that the essence of human nature is rationality.

If one thinks of rational agency as the essence of humanity or as an ahistorical feature of the experience of subjectivity, one may be drawn to the view that failures of the completeness of rational agency are failures of one's humanity. Whenever a person acts on "a principle of choice which is not reason's own" the soul's unity is "contingent and unstable" (Korsgaard 2009, 175).

But if one thinks that human capabilities, including those capabilities constitutive of agency, have a biological or evolutionary history, and so that there was some point of time in the past at which agential capabilities developed, then one is likely to think that the stability that *any* human soul could have, even one governed by "reasons's own principle," is contingent and unstable. From such a historical perspective, for humans to occasionally inhabit spontaneous practical identities and so to make the non-spontaneous components of their identity "contingent" is no more likely to compromise their agency than is the natural history of those capacities that constitute agency. Likewise, if one thinks that artistic creativity and playfulness are just as essential to humanity as is rationality, spontaneity and its

accompanying identification with non-rational features of the self appears more like a fulfillment of human nature than a digression from it.

§ 6. Conclusion

I have argued that integrity theory cannot accommodate spontaneous freedom nor can it accommodate some of the paradigmatically valuable activities associated with experiences of spontaneous freedom: making and appreciating creative art, playing games, and having fun. At the same time, selves capable of experiencing spontaneity cannot accommodate some of the values that are "baked in" to the integrated Korsgaardian self: the capacity to rationally necessitate one's actions through promises and agreements and the ruling out of self-alienation. Integrated selves can come close to experiencing some of the values associated with spontaneous freedom in the creativity of interpreting principles and practical identities, and selves capable of experiencing spontaneous freedom can come close to achieving the values associated with integrity by, for instance, contingently keeping their word. But neither sort of self can fully achieve the values associated with the other sort. This suggests that the incompatibility between stringent integrity theories of agency and my account of spontaneous freedom is a deep discordance, not a surface level conflict: the values achieved by experiencing spontaneous freedom can conflict with those achieved by self-regulation through one's rational, deliberative perspective.

Integrity theorists such as Korsgaard further argue that the view that successful human lives necessarily involve agential self-constitution is entailed by a transcendental argument: given that we, in fact, ask questions about the best way to live our lives, we should adopt integrity theory's view of the self on pain of inconsistency. I have answered Korsgaard's transcendental argument by offering a series of counter-demonstrations: many people do, in

fact, make themselves into less integrated agents while remaining intelligible interlocutors and subjects of experience. I have not argued definitively that this picture of the spontaneous self is, ultimately, the best picture to adopt, although I incline toward it. Insofar as the Korsgaardian self has the power to keep promises "out of necessity" while the spontaneous self can have fully-formed experiences of artistic creativity, play, and fun, the two pictures of the self serve incommensurable values. Because the two pictures of the self rule each other out, we are left with a potentially indissoluble philosophical problem. We might attempt a pluralistic compromise—for instance, regarding each theory of the self as a describing an important but different aspect of the self—but even such an attempt at compromise would require rejecting Korsgaard's transcendental argument and the demand for rational unity at the heart of stringent integrity theories.

CHAPTER FOUR

FREEDOM BEYOND CHOICE

§ 0. Abstract

I have argued that spontaneous freedom involves experiencing our activities and ideas as arising out of ourselves yet as fixed neither by the decisions of other agents nor by our own existing plans or decisions. Chapter Three considered the ways in which an agent might undermine their own experience of spontaneous freedom, arguing that the experience of spontaneous freedom is threatened by the demand that one always act from one's own consciously endorsed plans or practical identities. In this Chapter, I consider how the experience of spontaneous freedom can be threatened by other agents. I argue that when the decisions or plans of other agents settle in advance what I will do, my capacity to experience spontaneous freedom is threatened. I further argue that, while this "problem of spontaneous freedom" is analogous to the classical problem of free will, it is more troubling and pressing, because the political decisions that we make can impact the extent to which experiences of spontaneous freedom are possible.

§ 1. Introduction

One version of liberal theory holds that the sort of freedom that is worthwhile is the freedom of every individual to effectively exercise their own choice compatibly with every other individual doing likewise. On this picture, I have all of the freedom that I could want if I am able to effectively exercise my autonomous choice and act in accordance with my choices. In this Chapter, I argue that there is a further sort of politically worthwhile freedom that requires more than the freedom of choice. I will argue that the experience of *spontaneous freedom* is threatened when the decisions or plans of other agents settle in advance what I will do. I will further argue that the threats posed to spontaneous freedom by the decisions of other agents that make what I will do highly probable gives rise to a problem of spontaneous freedom that is structurally similar to the problem of free will but that is more pressing, because the political decisions that we make can impact the problem of spontaneous freedom in a way that they cannot impact the problem of free will.

I will argue that in situations in which I come to regard my choices about how to act as principally settled by the plans and decisions of other agents, I am at least partially deprived of a sort of freedom that is worth wanting. Specifically, I am deprived of spontaneous freedom—the sort of freedom evoked by phrases like "the freedom of the open road" or "free as a bird." As I have argued, the experience of spontaneous freedom involves feeling that one's own activities are not settled in advance, either by one's own conscious, reflectively endorsed practical identities, plans, or decisions or those of other agents. Spontaneous freedom can be threatened even when an agent's freedom of choice is undiminished: I might have all of the psychological capacities that I need to intelligently reflect and decide on a course of action, I might not be coerced, and yet I might still lack spontaneous freedom when my activity is settled in advance by the conscious, deliberative plans and decisions of other agents. I will argue that spontaneous freedom can be undermined both when what I do is, in some respect, under the control of another agent and when another agent's decisions make it probable that I will take or refrain from taking some action.

§ 2. Two Impulses and Two Viewpoints

To see how spontaneous freedom can be threatened when my activity is made predictable by the decisions of other agents, consider the following cases.

Quit or Be Fired: Imagine that I am considering quitting my job: I think about the good and bad features of my job, how much I get paid, how interesting the work is, what my co-workers are like, and what my other employment options would be if I quit. While I canvass these considerations, I think of the decision to stay put or to quit as *my* choice to make. But then, my boss accidentally copies me on an email to human resources, indicating that I will be fired next month. Once I notice this email, it no longer feels like it is *up to me* whether to stay

or leave. My future, insofar as my future is about my job, has already been settled by my boss's decision. After I see the email from my boss, I might decide to quit, rather than waiting to be fired. In that case, I will still have made the decision to resign, and it is possible that this is the decision that I would have made anyway, even if I had never seen the email. But, knowing that my boss was planning on firing me, when I pack up my desk and say goodby to my co-workers, I will not feel that my departure was *free* in the same way that I might have if I had never learned that my boss was planning on firing me. I will feel this sense of unfreedom even if, counterfactually, I would have quit anyway.

Quit or Be Fired is a case where someone else has the power to decisively settle something about how my life will go: if my boss decides to fire me, and I am an at-will employee, I will be out, whatever I want to happen. This is a case where my freedom of choice is compromised by my boss's power to fire me *and* where my ability to experience my decision as free is compromised by my learning of my boss's decision. In other situations, other people's decisions influence the course of my life more subtly and indirectly, not apparently compromising my freedom of choice, but still affecting the probability that I will behave in one way rather than another and diminishing my ability to experience my activity as free.

Marriage Proposal: Imagine that I have been thinking about whether or not to propose marriage to my partner: I think about what is good and bad about our relationship, about my feelings about marriage as an institution, and about what I hope my life will look like a decade from now. And then, one evening, proposing just feels like the right thing to do, and I propose, and my partner accepts. Now I am engaged! I go out for drinks to celebrate with one of my best friends, who happens to be a somewhat cynical demographer. She congratulates me but also points out that she has "seen this coming for a long time." When I ask her why, she points

out that since I am a college-educated American in my early thirties who is in a committed long-term relationship, it was overwhelmingly likely that I would end up married at some point in the next ten years. As she pulls up demographic statistics on her phone to prove her point, it becomes apparent that she is obviously right—other people who fall in the same demographic categories as me are extremely likely to get married when they are in circumstances like mine, and, in fact, it turns out that I will be getting married at precisely the median age for people at my income level, of my race and gender, in the city that I live in.

This conversation with my demographer-friend leads me to feel a sort of estrangement from my decision to propose. Unlike in the case of quit or be fired, it is not the case that I will end up getting married, whether I want to or not, but still, when I look at myself from the outside, from the perspective of a sociologist, my proposing starts looking less like it reflects on me as an individual and more like it reflects the social world that surrounds me, reflecting the decisions made by legislators and bureaucrats over decades and centuries. This realization might bother me: I might start to have an uneasy feeling that my proposing was not really *free* because, in retrospect and from the sociological perspective, it seems overwhelmingly likely.[1]

[1] An intermediate case between *Quit or Be Fired* and *Marriage Proposal* is *Zygote Marriage Proposal.* In this case, after I propose to my partner, I have lunch with a friend who reveals to me that one of my partner's parents is a genius professor, who wanted to create an ideal spouse for their child. When I was a zygote, I was manipulated by the Professor who who was able to exercise "total global control" over my existence, controlling my "entire character, personality, belief system, choices, thoughts, intentions, actions, [and] movements" (Barnes 2015, 561). The Professor set things up so that I would propose to my partner this year and so that I would do so in a manner that seemed to me to be spontaneous and highly personal (cf. Barnes 2015, 571-72). In this case, I can intelligently reflect on my values and desires and act in manner that is not settled in advance by my own prior plans (cf. Mele 2006, 185). Unlike in *Quit or Be Fired*, the Professor does not have the power to directly control what I will do—the Professor cannot decide *for me* whether I will propose. Rather, the control happens further back, in shaping how I will think about how to decide. As in *Quit or Be Fired*, once I learn that I have been subjected to the Professor's total global control, I will feel that my decision to propose is not, in some important respect, free or spontaneous, even though I choose to propose to my partner.

Cases like *Quit or Be Fired* and *Marriage Proposal* illustrate a conflict between two fundamental desires that people have. The first is a desire for creativity, self-expression, and self-determination. We want to be forces in our own lives and in the world, and we want to be able to start afresh and create anew. We want to have the capacity to act in ways that have not already been thought of or planned out, either by ourselves or by other people. The second is a desire to understand, to make sense of the world and ourselves. Part of making sense of ourselves and the world is making sense of ourselves as *part* of the world—applying the same sort of scientific view that we use to understand the world to ourselves.

In *Marriage Proposal*, these desires came into conflict with each other. The first desire, the impulse for novelty and creation, made me want to see my decision to get married as representing a new beginning or an existential choice that expressed my values or personality and as something that happened "in the moment" when it "felt right" rather than something foreordained. The first desire influences me to look at myself and my life from the inside—from the perspective of my own hopes and dreams and my own first-personal perspective on the world. But the second impulse, the drive to try to understand myself and the world around me, prompts me to look at myself from the outside—to reflect on myself as just one person among many and to adopt the techniques and vocabulary of science and social science in understanding and describing who I am.

The two basic dispositions are thus linked to two perspectives that I can take on myself and the world: the impulse to create and to originate novelty is connected to the internal perspective that I take when I think of my decision to get married as *mine* and the impulse to understand is connected to the the external, social scientific perspective that I take when I step into the shoes of the demographer. Usually, it is possible for me to move back and forth

between these two perspectives without much cost or difficulty—in the case of the marriage proposal, I can have the uneasy feeling that the proposal is not really *mine*, but then I can shift back into the first-personal perspective, thinking, "but of course it *was* my decision to propose." In *Marriage Proposal*, the possibility of my experiencing spontaneous freedom is only temporarily undermined for just as long as the social scientific perspective is made particularly salient by my conversation with the demographer. But in other situations, the conflict between the two basic dispositions to understand and create and their associated perspectives can grow intractable. To provide a more vivid sense of the way in which these two impulses can come into conflict, and to show how the experience of spontaneous freedom might become difficult or impossible even in situations in which freedom of choice is better respected than in *Quit or Be Fired*, I will describe the case of someone who feels both of the desires very urgently and who gets stuck in the external perspective as a result of external pressures.

§ 3. Ulrich's Malaise

Ulrich, the protagonist of Robert Musil's novel, *The Man Without Qualities*, is a petit bourgeois 32-year-old Austrian mathematician living in 1913 Vienna. Walking through Vienna on a "deliciously late-spring kind of fall day," a deep malaise settles over Ulrich:

> Ulrich remembered how such a day had looked to him in these same streets ten or fifteen years ago. It had all been twice as glorious then, and yet there had quite definitely been in all that seething desire an aching sense of being taken captive; an uneasy feeling that "Everything I think I am attaining is attaining me".... What sharpens our suspicions are all those prefabricated compartments and forms of life, the ready-made language not only of the tongue but also of sensations and feelings.... At this moment, [Ulrich] wished he were a man without qualities.... Few people in mid-life really know how they got to be what they are.... In their youth, life lay ahead of them like an inexhaustible morning, full of possibilities and emptiness on all sides, but already by noon ... nothing much can change.... Something has done to them what flypaper does to a fly, catching it now by a tiny hair, now hampering a movement, gradually enveloping it until it is covered by a thick coating that only remotely suggests its original shape... (Musil 1996, 134-37).

On the one hand, Ulrich feels the first of the two impulses, the impulse for creativity and novelty, very strongly. He dreads the thought of having to express himself in "ready-made language"; he wants his own, personally authentic truth and beauty rather than just "prefabricated compartments and forms of life." Ulrich recoils from the sense that "nothing much can change" and yearns for the feeling that life lies ahead of him like an "inexhaustible morning." On the other hand, Ulrich's description of his life in Vienna reflects a theorizing impulse to make sense of the world and of himself as part of it. He thinks, in a sociological mindset, that few people really know how they got to be where they are. When Ulrich fears that explanations that do not involve *him* as a person will echo more strongly than personally authentic ones, he suspects that there is a sense in which objective, scientific statements about the world make better sense of his own life than do statements that involve him as an active force in the world.

The malaise that Musil describes so vividly arises from the conflict between the two drives that Ulrich feels: he wants to see himself from the inside as a source of possibility and novelty, as having the capacity to give rise to new, authentic forms of life and languages of feeling, recoiling from the sense that "nothing much can change." But he also cannot turn off the external perspectives that he can take on himself, and when he adopts that external view, he cannot help but see everything that he does as merely another form of captivity: "everything I think I am attaining is attaining me." The more Ulrich struggles to see his life as of his own doing, the more it seems "ready-made." The intractability of this conflict between internal and external perspective leaves Ulrich largely unable to experience spontaneous freedom. Experiencing spontaneous freedom involves feeling that your own actions and ideas are not settled in advance. In Ulrich's terms, in corresponds to the feeling that "life lies ahead

of you like an inexhaustible morning, full of possibilities." When you give rise to something novel and enduring in yourself or in the world, you have a feeling of being among the creative forces of nature: out of you comes something new, something neither determined nor predicted by the circumstances that you inhabit. What matters is not in principle predictability but predictability to some other particular agent with whom you are or could be in some sort of interactive relationship where your predictability results from their plans or decisions, for then your predictability is a marker that they have succeeding in (at least partially) settling your activity in advance through their plans or decisions.

The ascendance of the external view prevents Ulrich from achieving the experience for which he yearns because, from the external point of view, he is just another fly, slowly subsumed under a sticky coating of bourgeois convention. From the internal point of view, it might seem like Ulrich could come up with a "splendid new gesture" or a new "technique of being" that originated a new way of living (Musil 1996, 137). But when he looks at his life coldly and analytically, it seems to Ulrich that any such splendid gesture would be completely predictable, brought about by social determinants accreted over generations. Any technique of being that Ulrich could come up with looks stale and repetitive when seen in its full historical and social context.[2]

Ulrich could resolve his malaise if he were to abandon one of the two impulses. It is only because he holds on to both the drive to be a source of novelty and the drive to understand the world, himself included, that he encounters a problem. Ulrich could maintain

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[2] The experience of spontaneous freedom is threatened indirectly for Ulrich, unlike in *Quit or Be Fired*. In *Quit or Be Fired*, the threat to spontaneous freedom comes from having my activity determined by the decision of a particular other agent. In Ulrich's case, the threat to his spontaneous freedom is what I have called "social determinants," which are the result of the conscious, deliberative plans and decisions of many different agents but may not themselves be planned or endorsed by any particular agent.

the possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom by holding on to romantic beliefs about his own singularity and creative power, while pushing his drive for understanding to the side. Likewise, if everyone around me in my demographic is getting married, I might simply refuse to reflect on what this means for the likelihood of *my* getting married, insisting that is just up to me, as a unique individual, whether I will get married or not. Ulrich, however, cannot stomach such self-deception: he refuses to delude himself by telling himself that he is the exception to the rule. Nor would the conflict between the internal and external views available to Ulrich be a source of anxiety if he were not attached to seeing himself as an authentic individual, capable of coming up with new ways of living. In that case, Ulrich could hold onto his desire for understanding, while giving up his desire for creativity. A character who took up the social scientific perspective on his own life but thought the capacity for creativity or novelty unimportant, thinking, for instance, "Okay, I better get married now, since everyone else is," would not experience spontaneous freedom but also would not experience its absence as a problem. Such a psychological reconfiguration would be tremendously costly for Ulrich, whose identity is tightly intertwined with his idea of "possible realities," his desire to live in a world of pure possibility, and his craving for spontaneous freedom (cf. Musil 1996, 12).[3]

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[3] My diagnosis of Ulrich's malaise differs from that of Barbara Sattler, who argues that Ulrich's problem is that he does not experience any of his actions as necessitated. On Sattler's reading, "Ulrich's awareness of the contingency of our existence and actions grants him, as a positive effect, freedom from conventional expectations of society" but he "also has to compensate for this otherwise paralyzing awareness in order to be able to go on living, to make decisions, and to act with reasons" (Sattler 2014, 96). Sattler's interpretation makes good sense of Ulrich's unsettling sensation of feeling that everything about his life "could just as well have turned out differently" (Musil 1996, 136-137), but it describes the problem incompletely. As Ulrich's formulation of the "principle of insufficient cause" (according to which the only exception to the principle of sufficient reason—the principle that there is some explanatory reason for everything that happens in the universe—"is in our own individual cases") shows, what is truly troubling for Ulrich (and what gets him stuck in the external perspective on his own life) is when it seems to him that there is a good reason for everything that happens *except* in our own "individual cases" (Musil 1996, 140). It is this *contrast* between what happens at the level of planning by the bureaucratic state and the level of social life and what happens at the level of his own individual life that gives rise to Ulrich's anxiety.

§ 4. Ghostly Bureaucracies

Having described Ulrich's malaise that arises from the conflict between his disposition to seek spontaneous freedom and his disposition to understand the world, including himself, scientifically, I fill out in this section what causes the two perspectives to become intractably conflicted for Ulrich. I focus on how governments and private institutions can threaten spontaneous freedom even when they respect freedom of choice.

What pushes Ulrich toward the external view and prevents him from experiencing spontaneous freedom? Why does he get stuck in the external view, rather than retaining the ability to move back and forth between the two perspectives? The most important source of Ulrich's problem is the growth of the bureaucratic state, coupled with the accumulation of social scientific knowledge about individual and collective human behavior. We might find it unsettling for our behavior to be predictable to a sociologist. (Some philosophers reflecting on free will even find it unsettling to contemplate the possibility that their behavior might be predicted in advance by an omniscient being.) But what makes spontaneous freedom unattainable for Ulrich is not just the sense that what he will do is in principle predictable from an Archimedean standpoint, but his sense that what he will do is predictable *because* some other agent is influencing it behind the scenes.

Shortly after his afternoon walk in which he wishes he were a man without qualities, Ulrich sees a police officer watching an argument between a few citizens of Vienna, and comments to himself,

> There is always something ghostly about living constantly in a well-ordered state. You cannot step into the street or drink a glass of water or get on a streetcar without touching the balanced levers of a gigantic apparatus of laws and interrelations, setting them in motion or letting them maintain you in your peaceful existence; one knows hardly any of these levers, which reach deep into the inner workings and, coming out the other side, lose themselves in a

> network whose structure has never yet been unraveled by anyone (Musil 1996, 165-66).

The presence of a "ghostly" bureaucratic state around Ulrich displaces Ulrich's own creative powers from explanations of what he does with explanations that instead concern other people and institutions. This ghostliness arises even though Ulrich's decisions still play a part in what he does. But while Ulrich makes choices, his choices do not appear to him to open up the future of his life or to be the sorts of choices that could be spontaneously free. Ulrich's suspicions of behind-the-scenes planning are further aroused when he is recruited to help organize a campaign by the imperial government to "bring about a powerful demonstration [of patriotism] arising spontaneously out of the midst of the people themselves" (Musil 1996, 148). Becoming involved in this campaign makes it difficult for Ulrich to see any apparently spontaneous expressions of national spirit as truly spontaneously free rather than the product of a bureaucratic plan, and this suspicion amplifies Ulrich's worry that there are only "prefabricated compartments" rather than authentic techniques of being. The behind-the-scenes, ghostly character of bureaucratic planning leads Ulrich to think that even when he engages in deliberation and choice, his life still might not lie open before him, unfixed by other agents' decisions.

While Ulrich's main encounter with bureaucracy is with the state, the activities of non-state actors can give rise to a similar experience of ghostliness. For instance, Amazon might know that it is extremely likely that I will purchase a certain new book before I even know that it is for sale; Netflix might know the probability distribution of what shows I am likely to watch this evening; a cell phone company might know how likely it is that I will swing by a particular coffee shop in the morning. A sober, external observer seeking an explanation of why I bought a copy of the new translation of *The Odyssey* last month might not care much

about *me* in explaining the transaction: more relevant is granular demographic data that shows how likely it was that I would buy the book before I even knew it was for sale. The problem of the apparent inaccessibility of spontaneous freedom, then, is one that can arise not just from the "ghostliness" of the well-ordered state that Ulrich experiences but also the ghostliness of finding one's behaviors shaped by private institutions and bureaucracies.

Ulrich's encounter with the ghostly state leaves him unable to experience spontaneous freedom or nearly so even though he appears fully free in the sense that is required for him to be morally responsible for his actions. Harry Frankfurt argues that when "we are doing what we want to do, … our motivating first-order desire to perform the action is exactly the desire by which we want our action to be motivated, and … there is no conflict in us between this motive and any desire at any higher order," then "we have on that occasion all the freedom for which finite creatures could reasonably hope" (Frankfurt 2006, 15). Not only that, we have "as much freedom as it is possible for us even to conceive" (Frankfurt 2006, 16). Ulrich faces no impediments to doing what he wants to do because of what he wants and no impediments to willing what he wants to will. In this respect, he remains free to choose what to do and remains responsible for what he does. But in spite of this conformity, he nonetheless finds himself unable to experience spontaneous freedom, since everything that he does feels to him to be overdetermined. Ulrich chooses what to do, but what he does is also settled in advance by the plans of others.

Of course, while Ulrich's freedom of choice is not much constrained, the Hapsburg Empire of the early Twentieth Century was not an environment designed to provide equal freedom of choice. It was, rather, an environment pervaded by all sorts of injustices and political, social, and economic inequalities. But, even a state that did provide an environment of

equal freedom of choice might not enable someone like Ulrich to experience much spontaneous freedom. (On the other hand, insofar as many of the impediments to experiencing spontaneous freedom are material and because, as I noted in Chapter One, many of the material preconditions of spontaneous freedom are the same as the material preconditions of autonomous choice, a state that provided for equal freedom of choice would likely remove an even larger impediment to spontaneous freedom than its bureaucratic management caused, at least compared to 1913 Austria.) If such a state relied on the bureaucratic techniques of the state that Ulrich encounters in pursuit of its otherwise legitimate objectives, then even if the state ensured that all of its citizens had as much freedom of choice as Ulrich, the state would still impinge on their possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom.[4]

So, one source of the *problem* of spontaneous freedom—the apparent inaccessibility of experiences of spontaneous freedom when the external point of view becomes dominant—is the structuring of an agent's life or decisions by public and private institutions so that the agent predictably acts in particular ways. Given Ulrich's background disposition to understand himself as part of the world, he cannot experience his own activity as not settled in advance by other people's plans or decisions if his activity appears to him to predictably play out some agency, ministry, or corporation's plan for how his life should go.[5]

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[4] Perhaps the best interpretation of freedom of choice would rule out the bureaucratic techniques of governance that Ulrich finds ghostly, regarding them as a form of manipulation that is incompatible with autonomy. For instance, views of liberalism like John Stuart Mill's that emphasize the importance of lives of "spontaneity and individuality" might regard the ghostliness that Ulrich encounters as an impingement on free choice (Mill 2003, 125). If this interpretation of the freedom of choice is right, then an environment of equal effective freedom of choice might indirectly ensure the possibility of spontaneous freedom. While this may be an attractive interpretation, it relies on a more robust notion of freedom than Frankfurt's. I am grateful to Seana Shiffrin for raising this point.

[5] The problem is amplified when norms of publicity apply to bureaucratic attempts to govern populations—as in the case of most state action but also in many actions by private institutions. If a bureaucracy publicly reveals that it aims to make some behaviors much more probable than others behaviors, an agent who is at all curious is likely to notice the "ghostly presence" of the bureaucracy.

§ 5. Why Does the Experience of Spontaneous Freedom Matter?

I have suggested that the conflict between the social scientific perspective that we can take on ourselves and the subjective perspective that enables us to see ourselves as sources of novelty gives rise to a problem—the problem of spontaneous freedom—that is made urgent by the growth of the human sciences and the powers of public and private governance. The more we come to think that our own lives simply fill out plans that other people or institutions have laid down, the harder it is for us to regard ourselves as spontaneously free. But we might wonder whether this problem is something that we should really worry about, or whether, instead, Frankfurt is right to claim that the freedom of acting as one wants because one wants so to act is all of the freedom that it is possible to desire. Perhaps the examples that I have provided of the problem of spontaneous freedom suggest that we should not be troubled by the inaccessibility of spontaneous freedom, at least when it results from the actions of democratically controlled bureaucracies or corporations with which customers or employees voluntarily do business. This objection is further motivated by the following example.

Urban Planning: A city approves a development plan for a neighborhood designed to incentivize more people to walk by making the sidewalks wider and eliminating a lane of traffic from the street. A friend and I decide to stroll through the neighborhood, and my friend points out the clever urban design decision to me. For a moment, I am struck by doubt: is it really *my* decision to walk through this neighborhood? Of course it is. But, as a result of noticing the bureaucratic planning involved, I might experience a momentary twinge of uncertainty about how much I, personally, had to do with my decision, and about how "unsettled" my strolling through the neighborhood really was. After all, an objective observer who wanted to know why there are more pedestrians in this neighborhood lately than there

were a decade ago would not need to pay much attention to my individual preferences or values in explaining the pattern, since a much more powerful and general explanation is available that does not involve *me* at all. I think that in this case while it is difficult for me to experience my stroll as spontaneously free, this does not seem troubling.

This example suggests that the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom depends on the context in which it is realized. It is only in circumstances in which we do not want to give up on either the impulse to understand the world or the impulse to figure in the world as a source of novelty or creativity that there is a *problem* of spontaneous freedom. Giving up some of my spontaneous freedom in the context of having some of my consumer choices predicted in advance by Amazon, or in the context of deciding whether to walk or drive to the grocery store, might not threaten the *values* that are associated with the experience of spontaneous freedom.

I have argued in Chapter Two that it is valuable to experience spontaneous freedom both because such experiences realize our disposition to create and allow for the generation of novel art and because they provide us with a sensation of relief at realizing that we are not merely our conscious, rational, deliberative natures. These values can be realized by having *some* opportunities to experience spontaneous freedom without needing to experience spontaneous freedom at every moment. Many people yearn for the experience of spontaneous freedom in general but do not yearn for this experience in the context of deciding whether to buy a new copy of *The Odyssey* or deciding whether to walk or drive to the store. Ulrich feels profound anxiety because he feels that there is almost *no* experience of spontaneous freedom left to him at all. *Everything* that he does is better explained by the decisions of other agents. Anyone who leads a life in which all of their outlets for creative activity are better explained by

the plans of other people or institutions than by their own individuality may likewise suffer the anxiety that comes from having a drive for creativity that cannot be sated.

Furthermore, there are certain domains of activity in which it seems especially important to have the experience of spontaneous freedom. Decisions about whether to walk or drive might not fall in such a domain, but consider artistic creation, emotional conversations with people who we want to understand because we love them, or activities that give us a chance to manifest our creativity or express individual style, like putting together a playlist for a party, decorating an apartment, or assembling a wardrobe. In these contexts, thinking that my activity has been made predictable by the decisions of other people cuts me off from an experience of spontaneity that is essential to artistic creativity. If I regard my artistic creation as settled in advance by plans that others have already set in motion, I cannot regard my art as creative, as the birth of a new way of thinking or seeing the world.

The possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom is undercut more severely when my actions are settled by the decisions of specific individuals or institutions than when they are settled by social norms developed over time or by the Heideggerian "they." The sense of unfreedom in *Marriage Proposal* was fleeting partly because my decision was settled in advance by social norms that emerged from the practices of many different individuals, rather than by a bureaucracy specifically aimed at encouraging me to marry.[6] Ulrich experiences social norms as a challenge to his ability to experience spontaneous freedom at all, but this is in significant part because his encounters with the Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy have primed him to see shadowy plans at play in every corner.

[6] This also partially explains why the experience of unfreedom in *Zygote Marriage Proposal* is deeper and more enduring than the corresponding experience of unfreedom in *Marriage Proposal.*

I think that spontaneous freedom is indeed undermined, often significantly, when my action reflects "the way people do things"; I think that I *am* lacking in spontaneous freedom in *Marriage Proposal*, although less so than I am in *Quit or Be Fired*.[7] But others report that they feel no such sense of unfreedom in *Marriage Proposal*. I believe that this difference in intuition reflects a differential willingness to ascribe agential responsibility to "the they" or to large groups of individuals that lack formal procedures for decision-making. Those who are less willing than I am to attribute agential responsibility to such entities are less likely to find *Marriage Proposal* lacking in spontaneous freedom.

We might yet wonder whether the experience of spontaneous freedom must be veridical in order to achieve whatever value it has. That is, we might wonder whether all of the value of experiences of spontaneous freedom is provided for if I subjectively experience myself as spontaneously free even if my activity, unbeknownst to me, *is* settled in advance by the plans or decisions of another agent. In "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," Frankfurt contends that the "principle of alternate possibilities," according to which "a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise" is confounded by the example of "Black" and "Jones" (Frankfurt 1988, 1). Black wants Jones to take a certain action and will go to great lengths to get Jones to do it, including by giving Jones a potion that generates "an irresistible inner compulsion to perform the act Black wants performed" (Frankfurt 1988, 7). But Black does not want to show his hand—he would rather not take the drastic steps that he is willing to take. And, as it turns out, Jones, "for reasons of his

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[7] However, the less the social institutions that partially settle how I act are the product of conscious deliberation, the less they interfere with the experience of spontaneous freedom. The norms at issue in *Marriage Proposal* count as an interference with the experience of spontaneous freedom only because they emerge from conscious, deliberative choices of individuals (e.g., the decisions of many individual persons to get married), even if the norms are not themselves consciously and deliberatively chosen.

own," does the act that Black wanted him to do, and Black never shows his hand (Frankfurt 1988, 7). We might imagine that Black wants Jones to write a particular line of poetry—if Jones starts to write down words that differ from those intended by Black, Black will intervene. But, as it happens, Jones writes down precisely those words that Black is hoping for, and no intervention is needed. If, before he started writing, Jones had discovered Black's plan, he would not have been able to sustain the belief that the will that he formed was his own will. But we imagine Black to succeed in his concealment. On Frankfurt's view, Jones is responsible for his action—and free in every sense that he could wish to be free—in spite of Black's lurking, ghostly presence in the background.

If Jones never learns that Black was lurking in the background when Jones decided what to do, was Jones's act lacking in spontaneous freedom even if Jones subjectively experienced it as spontaneously free? Would Jones's experience of his action as unsettled in advance by the plans and decisions of other agents lack some value if his feeling were illusory? While Jones might yet attain the distinctive pleasure of activating and using his creative impulse if his experience of spontaneity were illusory, he could not *accurately* feel himself to be a source of novelty, since what he ends up doing is already planned and intended by Black. If Jones discovered that Black had already planned out what words he wanted Jones to write in his line of poetry, Jones would certainly be warranted in feeling disappointed at discovering that the lines had already been planned by Black. And, even if *Jones* never discovered Black's plan, a third party observing the proceedings could justifiably regard Jones's authorship as less creative than it would have been without Black's presence (although such an objective assessment could not matter for Jones's own subjective assessment of the value of his experience of writing the poem). If Jones's experience of spontaneous freedom is not veridical,

it provides no evidence that Jones contains the unbounded potential for creativity that he might wish to contain. If *no* experiences of spontaneous freedom could be veridical, the world would seem duller, more cardboard, and it might feel that everything had already been set in motion by prior plans.

The way in which manipulations of background conditions of choices like Black's can undermine the possibility of veridically experiencing spontaneous freedom is a matter of degree. Suppose there are many different Joneses, all of whom are writing poems. Black wants at least 2% and no more than 5% of the Joneses to write poems about metempsychosis. When the Joneses write their poems, Black sees that, surprisingly, 5% of them are writing about metempsychosis, and so he never needs to show his hand. If one of the Joneses who wrote about metempsychosis later learned about Black's plot and how it was carried out, could he sustain the (retrospective) belief that his poem expressed an experience of spontaneous freedom?

Members of the the population of Joneses retain a greater possibility for veridical experiences of spontaneous freedom than the Jones of Frankfurt's original case. It *could* be that for any given member of the population of Joneses it was not fixed in advance, either by his own reflectively endorsed plans or by Blacks' decision, whether he write a poem about metempsychosis. The wider the bounds of Black's desired outcome (perhaps he would be happy if anywhere between 1% and 99% of the Joneses wrote about metempsychosis), the less the circumstances of the Joneses' action undermines their capacity to experience, and to veridically experience, spontaneous freedom with respect to writing a poem about one theme or another. The Jonses in the population of poets that Black seeks to manipulate are more

spontaneously free than the Jones in Frankfurt's original example, but less spontaneously free than they would be if Black were not around at all.

The extent to which spontaneous freedom is undermined also varies with the specificity of the plan or decision that settles how someone will act. I have imagined Black planning a very specific action for Jones to take but, in contrast to Jones, Ulrich experiences the pressure of the ghostly bureaucracy and of society as a whole less intensely but in more generalized form. It seems to him that every action he takes is part of some bigger plan that the bureaucratic state has for the management of its population or a way of life that has already been set in motion by the decisions of other people in the past. Ulrich comes to feel that he could not experience spontaneous freedom in any life changing or historically significant decision but only with respect to momentary and trivial happenings in his life, like stoping to look at a church from one vantage point rather than another. Ulrich's ability to have small, localized experiences of spontaneous freedom might remain intact, but his ability to experience "big" events or changes in his life as spontaneously free is seriously undercut.

While often it is not troubling for our spontaneous freedom to be compromised, we at least sometimes want experiences of spontaneous freedom to be available to us. There are also some domains of activity, like aesthetic experiences, in which it is particularly important for us to experience spontaneous freedom and in which the compromising of spontaneous freedom by the intrusion of other agents' plans and decisions is particularly troubling. Furthermore, I have argued that access to experiences of spontaneous freedom is not preserved merely by protecting the freedom of choice. Ulrich's problem is not that he lacks choices. Rather, the issue is that even though he makes choices, his choices all strike him as reflecting the plans or

decisions of other agents, and he is unable to regard these choices as expressing any sort of novelty or creativity on his part.

§ 6. Problems and Alternatives

Can living in a social world be reconciled with spontaneous freedom? Is it even possible to have modern, sophisticated governments and businesses without driving out the possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom? In this section, I will argue that doing so is possible, although every form of social life might restrict the possibility of experiencing spontaneous freedom to some extent. Ensuring that everyone can experience *some* spontaneous freedom, and ensuring ensure that people can experience spontaneous freedom in those domains in which it is particularly valuable, requires appropriately conducive social and political arrangements.

In Chapter One, I argued the experience of spontaneous freedom requires the satisfaction of one's basic material and social needs and requires free time, in the sense of time when one's activity is not subject to the directive demands or requests of other people. Because experiencing spontaneous freedom requires social and material resources, spontaneous freedom is a political issue, and the political arrangements of social life can enhance or inhibit access to the experience of spontaneous freedom. For instance, a state might nurture experiences of spontaneous freedom by providing its citizens with a universal basic income at a level sufficient to satisfy basic material needs and provide some minimum amount of leisure. Providing a universal basic income would make it easier for people to undertake financially risky occupations, like being a surfer or a songwriter, and would also enhance employees' bargaining power relative to employers, enabling more people to behave in ways that are not made highly predictable by employment markets. Such a guarantee would also free recipients

of a basic income from conforming their lives to standards imposed by charities or means-tested public assistance programs, allowing for more creative, less predictable ways of living to emerge. One way that public governments can provide access to more widespread experiences of spontaneous freedom, then, is to make people less dependent on the decisions of other people or institutions to satisfy their basic needs.[8]

Because the experience of spontaneous freedom is undercut both when I feel that my activity is settled in advance by the decisions of other people *and* when my activity is settled in advance by my own conscious plans and decisions, the relationship between social institutions and individual psychology is also important for the experience of spontaneous freedom. Politically, creating conditions that allow for experiences of spontaneous freedom might also require social institutions to satisfy the requirements of justice reasonably well, for in a sufficiently unjust world, many agents might take their commitment to morality to require that many or all of their actions be oriented around the alleviation of social injustice. Social institutions that better satisfy the requirements of justice allow more pursuits to present themselves as eligible for individual agents and allow a greater capacity to experience spontaneous freedom in deciding what one will do with one's life (Scheffler 1994, 139).

Allowing for experiences of spontaneous freedom in particular domains may also require certain political arrangements. The possibility of spontaneous freedom in artistic expression might be undercut by state restrictions on free speech, or by expansive copyright

[8] If politics itself proves to be one of those domains in which the possibility of spontaneous freedom is particularly important, enabling spontaneous freedom might require the development of a Rousseauian state, where the bureaucracy follows the general will, the general will reflects the interest of all the members of a society, and the general will cannot be unalterably fixed even by prior democratic decisions (cf. Rousseau 2002, 170).

laws that allow private actors to police derivative creative activity, for instance.[9] Different arrangements of social and political institutions are likely to promote experiences of spontaneous freedom more in some domains than in others. For instance, in nineteenth century England, Matthew Arnold argued against Nonconformism and in defense of national churches on the grounds that when people do not need to spend their time and energy struggling to define religion for themselves but can simply outsource such questions to an establishment church, they can satisfy the religious side of their own nature while also enjoying “leisure and composure” to satisfy other parts of their nature (Arnold 2006, 12). If Arnold is right, establishing a national church might make experiences of spontaneous freedom more available in poetry but also diminish the opportunities to experience spontaneous freedom in religion.[10] Supplying the conditions for experiences of spontaneous freedom to arise requires both that the basic prerequisites for spontaneous freedom are satisfied and that public and private institutions avoid undercutting the experience of spontaneous freedom generally (as they do in Ulrich’s case) or in those specific domains in which we particularly value spontaneous freedom.

If, as I think, spontaneous freedom can be undermined even by the impersonal force of social norms or “the they,” experiencing spontaneous freedom requires people to be able to see a wide range of experiences, decisions, and forms of life as possible—for if they cannot, the social forms of life that they inherit will preclude the articulation of personally authentic techniques of being. To have the sense that what we are doing is novel, in the fullest sense, we

[9] For an extended discussion of the relationship between restrictions on free speech, copyright law, and individuals’ capacity to participate in democratically shaping culture, see Gingerich forthcoming.

[10] This is not to endorse (or reject) Arnold’s analysis of religion; the point is the differential availability of spontaneous freedom in various domains of life in different political environments.

actually need to expose ourselves to a wide range of possible ways of life because practice and cultivation are what make the formulation of new techniques of being possible. Whether spontaneous freedom can be undermined only by the decisions of specifically identifiable individuals and institutions or can also be undermined by more general social determinants, its provision can be threatened even when one's ability to do what they want because they want to do it is not threatened. Liberal freedom of choice is important and even necessary to allow for experiences of spontaneous freedom, but is not by itself enough to give us all of the freedom that we long for.

§ 7. The Problem of Spontaneous Freedom and the Problem of Free Will

The problem of spontaneous freedom parallels the classic philosophical problem of free will but, because the political decisions that we make can affect the availability of spontaneous freedom, it is also a more pressing problem. In "Moral Luck," Thomas Nagel argues that the problem of free will stems from a conflict between two impulses: an impulse to make sense of the world and an impulse to see oneself as causally efficacious (Nagel 1979, 36). These two impulses give rise to two conflicting perspectives on the world: the "external perspective" that sees people as merely things, cogs in the causal order of the material world, and the conflicting "internal perspective" that sees people as agents who can change the world through their actions. When these two perspectives come into conflict, we see ourselves as beings who could or should be free from the causal order of the universe but who are also part of it. Nagel suggests that this problem of free will is made most urgent by the growth of physics, which makes it more difficult for us to dismiss the external perspective (Nagel 1979, 138).

As I haver argued, the problem of spontaneous freedom also arises from a conflict between two basic drives—the drive to think of oneself as a source of novelty in the world and

the drive to understand which gets turned inward to oneself—that give rise to two conflicting perspectives. While the problem of spontaneous freedom is similar in structure to the problem of free will described by Nagel, in that it arises from a conflict between the internal perspective of an agent and an external scientific perspective, it differs because the problem of spontaneous freedom is made urgent not by the development of physics but by the development of the human sciences and, particularly, by the sciences of bureaucratic governance.

Nagel thinks that the problem of free will has no solution, because the active view of the self is simply incompatible with a scientific view of actions and people (Nagel 1979, 25). To the extent that there is a solution to the problem, it is a philosophical one: coming to think that there is one sort of causation that is involved in nature and a different sort involved in agency. But the problem of spontaneous freedom is different and more urgent, because in the problem of spontaneous freedom, the same kind of causal attribution is involved in the internal, agential perspective and the external, social scientific perspective.[11] The question that provokes anxiety about free will is whether my action is caused by me or by nature. But the question that provokes anxiety about spontaneous freedom is whether my action is antecedently unfixed or whether it is settled in advance by some other *agent*, like the state, or Amazon, or mass society.

Because in the problem of spontaneous freedom the same sort of responsibility and causal attribution are at issue for me and for other agents, philosophical moves to compatibilism cannot sate the anxiety that the problem of spontaneous freedom generates in the same way that they can for the traditional problem of free will. In response to the problem

[11] Here, as in section five, I understand agency broadly to include not only individual persons and institutions with formal decision procedures but also entities with murkier boundaries, like "mass society" or "the they." There is a continuum among attributions of responsibility from less human-agent-like to more human-agent-like sources of action, from nature, to God, to mass society, to institutions, to individuals.

of free will, we can come to think the order of agents and actions as a separate causal order from that of things and events. But we cannot do this for the problem of spontaneous freedom, because the two conflicting varieties of explanation at issue are both about agents.

The problem of spontaneous freedom is also more pressing than the problem of free will, because our decisions affect how much spontaneous freedom we can experience. Our political decisions cannot affect the truth or falsity of determinism, but they can can affect how often my actions are the predictable outcome of a bureaucracy's plans, and we could take steps to make my actions less likely to predictably enact a bureaucracy's plans or to make the experience of spontaneous freedom more widespread. While the problem of spontaneous freedom has a similar structure to the problem of free will, it calls out for political, rather than philosophical, solutions.

§ 8. Conclusion

I have argued that spontaneous freedom is a politically important sort of freedom that can be threatened by public and private actors, even when they protect individuals' freedom of choice. It is not possible—or worthwhile—to eschew the human sciences or modern techniques of social control altogether. But public and private institutions can do more to nurture valuable experiences of spontaneous freedom in two ways. First, by ensuring that there are not large swaths of people's lives in which they are completely cut off from experiencing spontaneous freedom. Second, by avoiding trying to control or manage how people behave in those domains, like artistic creativity, where the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom is at its peak. This should lead us to recognize that we will need to do more than protect the freedom of choice in order to do fuller justice to the human aspiration for freedom.

CHAPTER FIVE

FREEDOM AND THE VALUE OF GAMES[1]

§ 0. Abstract

This Chapter explores how social institutions and activities can enable the experience of spontaneous freedom. It does so by considering the features in virtue of which games are valuable or worthwhile to play. The difficulty view of games holds that the goodness of games lies in their difficulty: by making activities more complex or making them require greater effort, they structure easier activities into more difficult, therefore more worthwhile, activities. I argue that a further feature that makes games valuable to play is their capacity to provide players with at least a limited experience of spontaneous freedom, which they provide both as paradigmatically unnecessary activities and by offering opportunities for relatively unconstrained choice inside the "lusory" world that players inhabit. Because of the "optionality" of play, the ways in which games structure and make predictable the behavior of their players do not undermine the experience of spontaneous freedom in the same way that the varieties of bureaucratic governance described in Chapter Four can.

§ 1. Introduction

Chapter Four examined the ways in which social institutions and norms might preclude experiences of spontaneous freedom. In this Chapter, I explore how social institutions and activities might occasion experiences of spontaneous freedom by focusing on the ways in which games can provide their players with experiences of spontaneous freedom.

What makes playing games—board games, computer games, role playing games and so forth—valuable or worthwhile? Many activities are valuable because they aim at some valuable end or because they are required by duty, but, by their nature, games aim at trivial ends (like capturing all of an opponent's checkers) and are played "for fun" rather than out of duty. So what, if anything, makes playing games a worthwhile activity? The difficulty view of games

[1] The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, published online: January 9, 2018, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00455091.2017.1423224. I am particularly indebted to Thi Nguyen for his contributions to this Chapter, which has grown out of our conversations about the aesthetics of games over the past six years.

argues that the goodness of games lies in their difficulty. Two leading proponents of the difficulty view, Thomas Hurka (2006) and Gwen Bradford (2015), have different views about what makes an activity difficult—for Hurka difficulty is a matter of an activity's complexity, while for Bradford it is a matter of the amount of intense effort that an activity requires. Both, however, think that games are valuable because they structure less difficult activities into more difficult, and therefore more worthwhile activities. A game turns something easy—like putting a ball through a relatively small hoop—into something hard—like scoring a basket in a game of basketball. The difficulty view captures an important feature of how games succeed, but it narrows the standards of success too much. While it is true that we often want the games we play to be hard and feel a sense of achievement when we accomplish something difficult, an important part of the value of games is their ability to provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom. Games provide this experience of spontaneous freedom both as paradigmatically unnecessary activities and by providing opportunities for relatively unconstrained choice inside the lusory world that players inhabit when they play.

I develop my argument through, first, a conceptual analysis of games that relies on Bernard Suits's canonical definition of games and, second, a description of the phenomenology of games that provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom using a variety of formal techniques. I then argue that the difficulty view should be amended to reflect the centrality of the experience of spontaneous freedom to the value of games: while difficulty is a feature of most good games, games can also be good in another dimension understood in terms of the sort of freedom that they offer to players. Finally, I suggest that the experience of spontaneous freedom in playing a game has the potential to provide larger social advantages beyond the benefits that games provide to individual players.

§ 2. The Difficulty View

Why do we admire people who play games well, even though games concern trivial ends? The difficulty view argues that we admire achievements, and that what makes achievements valuable is, in large part, their difficulty. One variant of the difficulty view, advanced by Hurka, regards the difficulty of games as a matter of "how complex or physically challenging they are, or how much skill and ingenuity they require" (Hurka 2006, 221). Another variant, advanced by Bradford, regards difficulty as a matter of how much intense effort an activity requires and how long the intense effort lasts (Bradford 2015, 49). For both variants of the difficulty view, a bad game is one that is insufficiently difficult, like tic-tac-toe, while a good game is one that is hard to succeed at, like chess, and the value of playing games lies in their difficulty. I focus on Hurka's articulation of the difficulty view, rather than Bradford's, because Hurka aims explicitly to account for what makes games valuable, while Bradford aims primarily to explain the nature and value of achievement.

Like many contemporary philosophers of games, Hurka begins with the conceptual framework provided by Bernard Suits, who defines a game as the "voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles" (Suits 1990, 41). Suitsian game players regards their playing of a game (although not their decisions within a game) as not necessitated in advance for, if they saw their playing as predetermined, they could not regard it as voluntary. They also regard their playing of a game as intrinsically worthwhile, because one plays a game for its own sake rather than as an instrument for some further end (Suits 1990, 172).

Hurka largely accepts Suits's definition, but he focuses his argument more narrowly on the particular sort of game-play that Suits argues would constitute the primary activity of a utopia, which is play "for its own sake" (Suits 1990, 144, 166; Hurka 2006, 227). Thus, Hurka

does not focus on games played by professionals. Professionals can play *games*, provided that they accept the rules of a game in order to play it (Suits 1990, 146); however, such professionals are not engaged in the narrower activity of *game-play* unless they are engaged in that activity *for its own sake.*[2]

Hurka also begins with the premises that more difficult activities are more valuable than less difficult ones and that difficulty is primarily a matter of complexity. "More complex means-end relations make for more value in achievement" because such activities are harder to succeed at and require a greater degree of deliberative skill to monitor how sub-activities conduce to the achievement of an overarching goal (Hurka 2006, 224).[3]

Hurka further argues that the exclusive source of games' value is their difficulty, arguing that "when two activities are equally complex and difficult" (their complexity and difficulty being a source of their intrinsic value), an activity that "produces an intrinsically good result" is superior in value to one that does not (Hurka 2006, 233). So, "political activity that liberates an entire nation from oppression" is of greater value (in at least one respect), and is due greater honor and admiration, than winning a chess tournament (Hurka 2006, 233). Overthrowing a tyrant is of greater value than defeating a chess champion because it is both instrumentally better, in that it produces a separate intrinsic good, and intrinsically better on that basis. Hurka argues for this conclusion using Derek Parfit's example of someone who spends her life trying to preserve Venice's canals. On Hurka's view, if, after that person's death,

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[2] Not everyone accepts this view of professionals. For an argument that professional players should have a place in Suits's utopia, see Kolers 2016. Bradford does not directly address the question of professional players but appears to agree with Hurka (Bradford 2015, 184).

[3] Bradford provides a fuller account of why difficult activities are valuable: engaging in difficult activity (for her, activity that requires intense effort) is an exercise of the will, and exercising the "will to power" to overcome resistance or obstacles is a perfectionist capacity, which is intrinsically valuable (Bradford 2015, 120-21).

Venice is preserved as a result of her efforts the person will have achieved something difficult. For this reason, her life will have been better and more valuable than if Venice were destroyed (Hurka 2006, 233).

Hurka claims that there are two grounds for this conclusion. First, realizing the topmost goal in a hierarchy adds value to that hierarchy by making it more complicated. But if we consider activities that are *truly* equivalent in complexity, we are left with Hurka's second ground: "when an activity aimed at a valuable end successfully achieves that end and therefore is instrumentally good, its being instrumentally good is an extra source of intrinsic value" (Hurka 2006, 233). If I work at a difficult activity that has an intrinsically valuable end, like sending the dictator packing, and I achieve that end, my activity is more difficult and valuable than it would have been if I had worked at the same activity and it failed or if I had succeed at an activity that were equally difficult but had a trivial end. Because of the general principle that if something is intrinsically good then "desiring, pursuing, and taking pleasure in it for that property, is also, and separately, intrinsically good" (Hurka 2006, 228), aiming at and achieving an independently valuable end adds to the *intrinsic* value of the activity that aims at this end.

Thus in Hurka's view, (1) games are valuable because they transform less difficult (and complex) activities into more difficult (and complex) activities, (2) more difficult (and complex) games are better than less difficult (and complex) games, and (3) a game (undertaken solely for its intrinsic value) is less valuable than an activity of exactly equivalent difficulty (and complexity) that aims at and achieves an independently valuable end.[4]

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[4] Bradford's view is similar, although she is less concerned to compare games to non-game activities than is Hurka. For Bradford: (1) games are valuable because they transform less difficult activities (that require less intense effort) into more difficult activities (that require more intense effort), (2) more difficult games (that require more intense effort) are better than less difficult games (that require less intense effort), and (3) games gain further value because they pursue an intrinsic good (of effort) for its own sake (Bradford 2015, 182-84).

§ 3. The Openness of Games

The difficulty view is counterintuitive in some respects. Many game scholars find Suits's definition of games unsatisfying because of its strained accounts of game playing by professionals and of games that players are not clearly trying to win, like playing "house" (Nguyen 2017b, 6). Nonetheless, Suits's definition clearly captures some of the most important features of games: their rule-boundedness, voluntariness, and removal from everyday life. Because it provides a promising, if procrustean, approach to understanding games, and because of its prominence in philosophical literature and games studies literature, I accept and work within Suits's definition for the remainder of this Chapter. Like Hurka, I also focus my argument narrowly on game-play undertaken "for its own sake," rather than professional play.

In this section, I argue that—even if one source of games' value lies in their difficulty—another significant source of the value of games is the opportunity that they provide to their players of participating in an activity that is not required by any duty or reason. Although the activity of playing a game does not *aim* directly at this experience, the fact that the practice of game playing allows players to have such an experience adds to the intrinsic value of playing games.[5] My argument proceeds in two parts: first, I argue that the nature of games is such that anything that counts as a "game" must provide its players with some minimal experience of spontaneous freedom in playing the game. Second, I argue that, in practice, many games attract

[5] My view here accords with C. Thi Nguyen's view that playing a game involves entering a special motivational state that is distinct from the ends of playing a game (Nguyen 2017a, 136), as well as with Bradford's view that achievement sometimes requires not aiming directly at the ultimate end of an activity (Bradford 2015, 193 n.17).

players by providing more robust experiences of spontaneous freedom to their players as they play the game.[6]

3.1 Experiences of Spontaneous Freedom

Before I begin my argument, I will briefly explain what I mean by "experiences of spontaneous freedom." Sometimes I have a feeling that the future of my life is open, rather than closed, that the possible paths into the future that stretch out before me are uncountable, and that I could do or become anything. I feel free. As I argue in Chapter One, this experience of spontaneous freedom is part of a family of cognate experiences, feelings, moods, and attitudes, which encompasses the sense that my life is open before me, the attitude that I hold when I regard an activity as "free time" or "leisure" rather than work, a feeling of refuge that I might find in privacy, a feeling of relief at not having to do things that I want to avoid, the sense of a beginning when I set out on an adventure, the excitement of discovery, a mood of spontaneity, and the attitude that I have toward my art when I creatively make aesthetic objects.

At the center of this family of feelings and related cognitive states is the experience of spontaneous freedom that one can have about the future of one's own life not being fixed or determined. The sort of freedom that I am concerned with here differs from the sort of freedom

[6] John Tasioulas develops a related argument against Hurka, arguing that the primary intrinsic good of games does not have to do with achievement but instead with play, which is a basic good, like friendship, enjoyment, and knowledge (Tasioulas 2006, 243). For Tasioulas play is free activity that is separated from ordinary life, ordered by rules and expectations, valued for its own sake, enjoyable, and socially acknowledged as valuable (Tasioulas 2006, 244-47). My account diverges from Tasioulas's in two respects. First, Tasioulas criticizes Hurka's view by rejecting his definition of games (Tasioulas 2006, 237). Unlike Tasioulas, I contend that even if we accept Hurka's definition, his account of games' value is problematically incomplete. Second, Tasioulas's account is designed to show how "a large number of everyday instances of game playing" of games that are not remotely complex or difficult, like bingo and snakes and ladders, might have significant intrinsic value (Tasioulas 2006, 248). My account is designed to provide an adequate foundation for answering evaluative questions about particular games—which games are more valuable and which less so—and does not aim to describe most everyday instances of game playing as valuable. Some games provide greater freedom than other games and, for that reason, are more valuable as games. In my view, games like bingo and snakes and ladders provide—at least for adult players—no or almost no experience of spontaneous freedom.

that is a prerequisite for moral responsibility: the experience of spontaneous freedom is the experience of regarding our activities as arising from ourselves but also as not fixed in advance, whether by our own consciously endorsed practical identities, plans, or prior decisions, or those of other people.

3.2 Freedom and the Concept of a Game

Games provide their players with the experience of spontaneous freedom in two respects. First, as paradigmatically voluntary and unnecessary activities, games provide their players with the experience of undertaking a purely optional activity. As noted above, Suits defines a game as the "voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles" (Suits 1990, 41). There is one sense in which playing a game is always something done for a further reason: to spend time to with friends, to solve a puzzle, to provoke conversation, to stave off boredom, and so forth. But there is another sense in which players accept the rules of a game for the sole purpose of making the game possible. The activities that a player performs *within* a game's "magic circle"—the lusory space that players enter into when they play a game—are subject to constraints in the form of rules that are adhered to just to make the game possible (Huizinga 1950, 10). I might play a game of go in order to spend time with a friend and exercise my spatial reasoning skills. As we play, when I place a stone, I do so in pursuit of the end of accumulating points by capturing my opponent's stones and securing space that my opponent cannot productively invade, which is the end that I adopt to make playing the game possible. I do not independently care about the arrangement of stones on a go board; I care only because I have taken up the pre-lusory aim of securing space on the go board in order to make playing the game possible. (In other words, for me to win, I must secure more space than my opponent does.) If I am really playing the game, then I will not deviate from the rules of go, even if I

think that doing so might better achieve out-of-game values that I care about (Suits 1990, 145). Where I place my stones is not determined by what best allows me to exercise my spatial reasoning skills; rather, it is determined by the rules of go and my aim of winning the game.[7]

In the pure sense of game playing that concerns Hurka and Suits, *playing* games is necessarily experienced by players as non-obligatory: "Game playing must have some external goal one aims at, but the specific features of this goal are irrelevant to the activity's value, which is entirely one of process rather than product, journey rather than destination" (Hurka 2006, 229). This view is also taken by philosophers who reject attempts to precisely define games and adopt more bottom-up approaches to classifying activities as games.[8] As Roger Caillois, a proponent of a pluralistic approach to characterizing games, notes, if playing were obligatory, "it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion" (Caillois 2001, 9). Thus, if I am engaged in an activity that is recognizable as "playing a game," I am engaged in an activity that I do not *have* to do, and that I regard as such (and professional gamers are not "playing a game" in this strict sense unless they are playing, at least in part, "just for fun"). In this respect, an experience of spontaneous freedom arising from the free play of my decision-making powers is characteristically provoked by the playing of any activity recognizable as a game.

Games are not the only activities that provide the experience of undertaking a purely optional activity. Play more generally provides an experience of activity that is intrinsically

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[7] I discuss below those games that provide more "space" to their players to make decisions that are not fully determined by the set of the game's rules and the player's objective of winning. Thanks to a member of the Editorial Board of the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* for helping me to clarify my description of go.

[8] For this reason, while I accept Suits's definition of games for the purpose of my argument, I do not think that my argument's success depends on accepting his definition.

and non-instrumentally valued and that is fully voluntary (Tasioulas 2006, 244), as do activities of aesthetic appreciation and creation. Games are a distinctive form of play in that they are undertaken for non-instrumental reasons but also incorporate instrumental activity: players make “moves” like placing a go stone for the instrumental reason that those moves contribute to the end of winning. This distinctive form of play is also distinctively valuable. In our everyday lives, when we exercise our decision-making powers in the context of instrumental activity, it is only rarely that we experience the completion of activity initiated by our decision-making powers because the valuable instrumental ends that we pursue take so long to achieve and are so complicated that it is very hard for us to know when or if we have achieved them. (Consider the activity of “saving Venice’s canals.” Have the canals been “saved”? How could we know? The scope of potential risks to the canals is mind boggling.)

In games, we have the opportunity to see our decisions through to the end of the game, achieving or failing to achieve the lusory goal (winning) and the pre-lusory goal (the state of affairs that counts as winning, like putting my opponent into checkmate in chess) that we set out to achieve not because of their value but just to make the game possible. Games thus provide a distinctive experience of the free exercise of our decision-making powers in instrumental activity that is not provided by life outside of the magic circle: they provide an opportunity to frame our use of practical reason with the attitudes and dispositions characteristic of play. If the category of “games” is co-extensive with the category of play-activity that has an instrumental structure, as Suits believes (Suits 1990, 90), then games also

provide a distinctive experience of the free exercise of our decision-making powers in instrumental activity that other forms of play do not provide.[9]

3.3 Freedom and the Experience of Playing Games

In addition to the experience of spontaneous freedom *of playing* that games provide, many successful games provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom *in playing*. When playing games, I do not invariably experience the actions that I take as part of a game to be unconstrained nor do I experience the possible paths that the game will follow as undetermined. For instance, if I know enough and am good enough at checkers, I might play a game of checkers and feel that every move I make in the game is determined by transparent considerations about which move is optimal, given the objective of winning.[10] I play the game voluntarily and regard my playing of checkers as non-instrumental, but, provided that I am committed to trying to win the game, the possibility space for my in-game decisions is narrowly circumscribed: I must make the single move that seems most likely to result in winning the game. Likewise, “grinding” in computer games, where I repeat the same tasks over and over to advance characters or access new content, does not, in itself, provide me with an experience of spontaneous freedom (although in the space of a game, it might serve an instrumental purpose of making an experience of openness possible once the grinding is complete and my character has “leveled up”).

However, in many or most successful games, I also have an experience of spontaneous freedom as I make decisions *within* the game. For instance, when I play *Pictionary*, I have an

[9] For a perspicacious account of how the distinctive pleasure of games is associated with the opportunity to engage in practical reasoning for its own sake rather than for any instrumental end, see Nguyen, forthcoming.

[10] Checkers is “solved,” in that perfect play by both players leads to a draw (Schaeffer et al. 2007).

experience of spontaneous freedom in deciding how to illustrate words that I want my teammates to guess, because there are many different approaches that I might take to drawing these words and phrases. And if I know how to play checkers but my knowledge of checkers falls far short of understanding its solution, I might also have this experience, because multiple moves or strategies appear "eligible" given my objective of winning. (Although whether I have an experience of spontaneous freedom when I play checkers with imperfect knowledge rather than some cognate experience, like indecision, may depend on other features of my psychology and the context in which I am playing the game. Am I "fooling around" or am I desperately trying to win, frustrated by my inability to discern the optimal move?[11]) Thus, the sense of freedom that I am interested in can arise from epistemic difficulties: my ignorance of the solution to checkers makes it possible for me to experience my decisions about how to move my pieces as relatively unconstrained by instrumental rationality.

Games exploit a variety of formal techniques that provide their players with such experiences of spontaneous freedom. These techniques include structuring the play of the game to provide an openness of the development of narratives, an openness of strategy or decision-making, and an openness of the objective of the game itself. I will address each of these techniques in turn.

First, narrative-rich games, in which much of the experience of playing the game consists in assembling a story from plot elements provided by the game, often provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom about the direction in which the narrative will develop. For instance, games featuring "emergent narratives" in which a player "imagines or 'authors' the story by playing in a world she actively constructs," like *Sim City* and

[11] Thanks to Calvin G. Normore and Stephanie Patridge for raising this point.

Civilization, provide their players the opportunity to shape the storyline of the game in a variety of directions at the player's own discretion (Brand & Knight 2005, 4). Other games, including massively multiplayer online role playing games ("MMORPGs"), provide their players with the opportunity to shape the stories within the game that they participate in by enabling them to control their self-presentation through avatars and characters. Many MMORPGs provide their players with the ability to interact with other players anonymously or pseudonymously, which enables players to present and explore identities (relatively) un-tied to their real-life identities. While such exploration can be misogynistic and racist (Rohwer 2014), some participants experience the opportunity for make-believe as freeing them from out-of-game identities that they wish to escape or that they wish felt less constricting. For instance, sociologists contend that anonymity and pseudonymity in MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft* enable some players to explore non-normative sexuality through erotic role-play by contributing to the insulation of the game from "real life" (Brown 2015, 67). Games need not provide anonymity or pseudonymity for such experiences to arise. As Shannon Mussett has argued, the opportunity for imaginatively shaping an identity and a narrative in role playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* "can allow for players to explore the intricacies of gender and sexuality in creative and potentially radical ways" (Mussett 2014, 189). Narrative openness provided through emergently structured narratives and self-presentation allows games to provide some of their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom about the stories that they participate in and create while playing.

Second, games of sufficient complexity often provide their players with an experience of the openness of strategy or freedom of in-game decision-making. Many successful games provide their players with multiple, equally eligible routes to winning. For instance, "deck

building" games in which players construct decks out of a large number of cards that perform different functions, like *Hearthstone* and *Magic: The Gathering*, provide players with many different ways to put together a deck, each of which is (roughly) equally compatible with the goal of winning the game. Similarly, games like chess and go provide a wide variety of competitive openings that players can choose between; deciding which sort of opening to use in a game of chess will often be driven by considerations about which strategy is most likely to result in winning the game, but because there are often multiple openings that appear about equally competitive to the player, this decision might also reflect considerations about style, or which opening is more fun. (As with decisions in checkers, whether the opportunity that these games provide actually eventuates in an experience of spontaneous freedom depends on the abilities of their players, how much the players know, and the context in which they are playing the game.) Other games provide additional strategic decisions embedded in the game that players can make in a variety of ways each of which or many of which ways are compatible with winning the game. The open texture of play in a game provides players with an experience of spontaneous freedom about their own decisions and about the states of affairs that will obtain in the game until it concludes.

Third, some games provide their players with an experience of openness about the objective (or the "prelusory goal") of the game itself.[12] For instance, "sandbox" games—games that provide players with the ability to move freely through virtual worlds, like *Minecraft*—

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[12] Other games provide a different, more minimal, experience of spontaneous freedom by promoting uncertainty about their outcomes. Virtually all games that it makes sense to play "for fun" provide either an experience of openness about their objectives or an experience of uncertainty about their lusory outcomes. Typically, I am uninterested in playing games in which I know to a certainty that I will win or lose before I begin playing. I might play a game that I know I will lose to help learn the rules, to teach someone else how to play, or to learn how to play better, but more typically, I want to have a chance of winning. At the very least, it is important that I not know in advance exactly how I will lose.

might be played by different players with different objectives and different understandings of what it would mean to “win” the game. In playing such a game, one can have an experience of spontaneous freedom, or of the possibility of deep or ironic reflection, about the activity they are engaged in. A player might determine that they are, or should be, engaging in a fundamentally different activity from the one they were engaged in when they started playing the game. A game’s openness about the goal of playing can provide players with an experience of spontaneous freedom that is broader in scope than the experience of spontaneous freedom about strategic choices because it enables players to freely pick which of a number of strategies they will pursue, given the aim of winning the game by bringing about a particular state of affairs, but also to freely pick what states of affairs they will attempt to bring about in playing the game.

The formal techniques that games exploit demonstrate that many, but not all, successful games provide the experience of spontaneous freedom to their players as they play them. Some players seek out this experience when they decide what game to play, though for other players this experience may simply be a side effect of entering into the lusory space of a game. (Other players might play games *in spite of* this experience if, for instance, they want an activity to occupy their time but wish that they did not have to make any discretionary decisions.)

I understand the experience of spontaneous freedom provoked by successful games as a narrower version of the attitude that artists have toward creative artworks of genius. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant argues that “one cannot learn to write inspired poetry, however exhaustive all the rules for the art of poetry and however excellent the models for it may be” because “no Homer or Wieland can indicate how his ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought, arise and come together in his head, because he himself does

not know it and thus cannot teach it to anyone else either" (Kant 2000, 5:309).[13] When artists cannot fully explain why they constructed their poems or sculptures as they did, this reflects their tendency to regard their art-making decisions as not exhausted by their own determinate concepts but as also reflecting an engagement with their own ideals or their own immediate experience of the world in a manner that cannot fully be captured in their existing conceptual repertoires. Feeling that there is some part of me that is ineffable, that I cannot know until it comes to the surface, so that even I might be surprised by who I am and what I will do, is part of the experience of spontaneous freedom associated with truly creative artworks. Similarly, games that provide for the experience of spontaneous freedom in playing provide the opportunity to play in a manner that cannot be fully explained by the rules of instrumental rationality about how best to win.

While games often provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom, they do so through the strategic use of constraints in the form of rules, which might appear paradoxical, considering the importance of ensuring that my activity is not settled in advance by the decisions of others for spontaneous freedom. Constraints in the form of rules that players follow in order to play a game provide the scaffolding for the more complex experiences of spontaneous freedom that their players can have. I agree with Hurka that part of the value of games is the complexity that they lend to otherwise simpler activities. If I sit down in front of a go board with a pile of stones and no rules to follow, there might be some sense that whatever activity I undertake is more "free" than the activity of playing go, constrained by the game's rules. But while it is conceivable that I might do something complex and interesting with them, more likely than not I will just idly arrange the stones, ending up

[13] For a fuller discussion of the relationship between spontaneous freedom and genius, see Chapter Two.

engaging in a much less complex and interesting activity than I could with the scaffolding of the game's rules. Because both insufficient and excessive complexity can undermine players' ability to be interested in a game, rules seek to calibrate the complexity of a game so that the players neither master the activity with tremendous ease nor find the activity so bafflingly difficult that they are unable to make any headway. The experience of spontaneous freedom that games provide is a valuable experience of spontaneous freedom *within a structure*, where the free play of one's decision-making powers is constrained by rules that make the activity more complex and therefore more intrinsically valuable. Such rules make game playing and the accompanying experience of spontaneous freedom possible while at the same time narrowing the possible scope of this experience.

3.4 Style: An Objection

It may be objected that what is valuable about games, beyond their complexity and difficulty, is not that they provide an *experience* of spontaneous freedom but rather that when playing them their players actually *are* free.[14] Perhaps what is valuable about the openness provided by games is not the psychological experience of feeling that one's decisions are not narrowly constrained when one plays, but the other goods that players can achieve when they are able to make unconstrained decisions. When players are actually free, they are able to play with *individual style*, where their style is an expression of their ideals for how the game should best be played (Riggle 2015, 728).[15] For instance, a player might seek to play a game in a way

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[14] Thanks to C. Thi Nguyen for pushing me to address this objection.

[15] Nick Riggle's account of style as an expression of one's ideals is constructed as a theory of "personal style"—a way of living a life that expresses one's ideals about how to live—that Riggle then extends to "artistic style"—a way of creating art that expresses one's ideals for artistic creation (Riggle 2015, 729). I here extend Riggle's notion of personal style to "ludic style"—a way of playing a game that expresses one's ideals for game-play.

that expresses their ideal of playing elegantly, aggressively, obtusely, or zanily. In playing with style, players have no occurrent sensation of spontaneous freedom, because they are guided by and aim at expressing their ideals. The objection continues, it is this possibility of playing with style, in a way that uniquely reflects the player's individual ideals, that really makes it valuable to play games, rather than the bare experience of spontaneous freedom.

My response to this objection comes in two parts. First, I accept that, in addition to the sensation of freedom that games often make available to their players, the fact of the spontaneous freedom that games provide and those further goods that players are able to accomplish in virtue of having such freedom are also valuable. The further value of the spontaneous freedom that games provide to their players does not diminish the value of the experience of spontaneous freedom that the games that I have described provide to their players.

Second, the experience of spontaneous freedom that I have described does not need to be explicitly and consciously conceptualized as one of freedom by players who experience it. The experience of spontaneous freedom involves occurrent psychological states, which sometimes take the form of an explicit feeling that one is free to act as one picks but which can also take the form of a feeling that *I* and my discretionary powers can make a difference to how things will turn out or an awareness that how things will go is not determined in advance by rules, my instrumental rationality, or external forces. In this broad sense, experiences of spontaneous freedom are compatible with feeling that in playing I am expressing my ludic ideals of how a game should be played, provided that I take myself to have discretion in determining how to act out my ideals. When the experience of spontaneous freedom is understood in this way, this experience is a prerequisite for the expression of style in playing a

game. It is only by having this experience, including some occurrent awareness of the openness of one's circumstances in a game, that a player can uniquely express their ideals through play, for it is only when one is aware that it is possible to do so that it makes sense to shape the circumstances in which one finds oneself to express one's ideals for oneself, as a person or as a game player. The good of "playing with style" is not an end that the experience of spontaneous freedom aims at and achieves, but a good that is made possible by experiences of spontaneous freedom in games that contributes to the intrinsic value of such experiences.[16]

We should think of the value of playing with style not as a rival to the value of experiencing spontaneous freedom in playing, but as a correlative: games whose rules shut out the everyday world of human action and practical rationality both provide players with the distinctive sort of freedom that allows for exercises of style and allow players to experience themselves as spontaneously free.[17] Whether the experience of spontaneous freedom that players have is about the shape of the narrative that they create through the game, the strategic decisions that they make while playing, or the objective of the game, the freedom that games provide in playing gives players the experience that how they play reflects something unique about them as individuals. Some games, like tic-tac-toe and snakes and ladders do not afford any discretionary control to players, and even some games that do provide discretion to players might not allow much room for individual flair. When I play chess, for instance, I see

[16] Those who reject Riggle's view that style involves the expression of one's ideals and think that style is the potentially involuntary reflection of one's personality, traits of mind, and character (Robinson 1985, 229), or who think that one's ludic ideals can be expressed without the exercise of any discretion, will be unmoved by the second part of my reply to the objection. But the first part of my reply still stands.

[17] This claim is a general one: I do not mean to deny that there are some games that provide players with a "phony" experience of spontaneous freedom that does not correspond to really being spontaneously free and some games that provide players with an opportunity to play with style without providing any subjective experience of spontaneous freedom. Thanks to an anonymous referee for the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* for helping me to formulate the connection between "actual" freedom and "experiences" of freedom.

most of the moves that I should make as determined by the situation that I am in, rather than by my own sensibility. The parallel between spontaneous freedom and style thus elucidates the difference between the experience of spontaneous freedom and the cognate experience of discovery. Sometimes I do not antecedently know what move to make, but once I settle on the right move it seems to arise inevitably from my circumstances. Making such discoveries may require creativity but it does not allow for the discretionary expression of my ludic ideals because the move I make is fully dictated by features of my situation. Games that do not allow for the manifestation of style in their play do not provide players with the core experience of spontaneous freedom about how things will go in the game. How best to play to win might be encapsulated in a game's constitutive rules, but how to play with style cannot be.

§ 4. Complexity versus Freedom

I have argued that all games provide their players with an experience of spontaneous freedom that derives from participating in a paradigmatically optional activity that one need not undertake, that many games provide their players with the experience of spontaneous freedom as they play the game, and that players often value this experience.[18] It remains to be seen whether this conflicts with the difficulty view of the value of games. In this section, I argue that appreciating this form of success for games requires modifying Hurka's view. While I share John Tasioulas's worry that the difficulty view's focus on admiration and achievement risks "the invasion of play by the rhetoric of achievement" (Tasioulas 2006, 251, quoting Christopher Lasch), I accept Hurka's view that the value of games is a value of "process rather

[18] As noted at the outset of section three, this claim is confined to the narrow sense of game-play adopted by Hurka and by Suits in his description of utopia. Many professional games with substantial real-life consequences provide their players with, at most, a very limited experience of spontaneous freedom. (Insofar as professional games qualify as real Suitsian games, however, they will provide their players with some limited experience of the spontaneous freedom *of playing* described in § 3.2.)

than product, journey rather than destination” (Hurka 2006, 229). I disagree, however, that this value must come from the *structure* of game-activity, as Hurka proposes. The intrinsic value of the “process” can also come from the *mode* in which the activity of game playing is pursued, and *playing games in such a manner as to provide an experience of spontaneous freedom* is a source of intrinsic value. This source of intrinsic value is not an end aimed at and achieved, like saving Venice’s canals or overthrowing a tyrant; it also is not a feature of the organization of sub-activities into more complicated and difficult activities. Games can have intrinsic value by conducing to the experience of engaging in activities *in such a manner as to generate an experience of spontaneous freedom* without having this as their aim, and so games are valuable in a different dimension than difficulty or complexity.

Hurka’s view conflicts with the view that I have developed here when Hurka contends that “game playing … cannot have the additional intrinsic value that derives from instrumental values” (Hurka 2006, 233). As explained above, for Hurka, games cannot be more valuable than equally complex non-game activities because the nature of games is that they do not aim at any valuable instrumental ends (which, at least when they are achieved, add to an activity’s intrinsic value). For Hurka, the difference between games and non-game activities is that games cannot aim at any external good (because if they did, they would not be undertaken simply for their intrinsic value) and so cannot have as a source of value the aiming at and achievement of valuable ends that contribute to the (intrinsic) value of instrumental, non-game activities. This excludes the possibility that part of the value of games lies in the experience of spontaneous freedom that they provide to their players. By its nature, playing games does not aim directly at producing this experience. However, while players cannot directly *aim* at this experience, a consequence of playing games is that players (at least often) have an experience

of spontaneous freedom. I have argued that one source of games' intrinsic value is the effect that they have on their players' experiences even when they are not undertaken with the immediate aim of generating this effect. Indeed, they generate this effect in part because they are undertaken without *any* immediate instrumental aim. I therefore disagree with Hurka's view that an activity can have intrinsic value *either* because it aims at and achieves good consequences *or* because of its internal structure; I contend that an activity can also be valuable in virtue of the psychological experiences that it generates in its participants without aiming to do so. Games produce such experiences precisely by *not* aiming at some further value.[19]

Thus, less complex games can, in one important respect, be more valuable than more difficult or complex games. Consider the role playing game *The Quiet Year*. In this game, players define the struggles of a post-apocalyptic community by drawing a map and telling stories about it; the action of the game lasts for a year, at the end of which "the Frost Shepherds will come, ending the game," with no further specification of who the Frost Shepherds are or what this rule means (Alder 2013).[20] Most people will, I think, intuitively regard *The Quiet Year* as significantly less difficult than chess, whether because there are fewer "moves" to organize hierarchically to achieve the goal of winning or because it takes less effort to play. However,

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[19] Bradford thinks that "it's not the needlessness that's doing any of the work in making" games into valuable activities (Bradford 2015, 96). For this reason, her view of the value of games should also be amended, for, as I have argued, the needlessness of games is, indeed, part of what makes them valuable activities. However, unlike Hurka, Bradford acknowledges that the value of achievements can be enhanced by factors that are not essential to achievements, including by goods that activities achieve without directly aiming at them (Bradford 2015, 133, 193 n.17). She also acknowledges that there may be other perfectionist capacities beyond those that she focuses on—will, rationality, and physical capacity (Bradford 2015, 149). Thus, while Bradford's version of the difficulty view is vulnerable to the same criticisms as Hurka's version, Bradford's version can be amended more easily to accommodate the value of the experience of spontaneous freedom. Particularly, I think that Bradford could and should recognize spontaneity as a perfectionist capacity, because it is characteristic of humans and worth developing, but I leave aside my argument for this claim for another time.

[20] Thanks to C. Thi Nguyen for introducing me to this game.

The Quiet Year provides an experience of spontaneous freedom that chess does not because it makes use of all three of the formal techniques of promoting an experience of spontaneous freedom that I have described: it enables players to assemble a narrative of their choosing from the plot elements of the game, it provides openness of strategy in formulating what the post-apocalyptic community will do, and it provides players an opportunity to decide for themselves what objective to pursue within the game. On my view, it is a game that is less difficult than chess but that provides a greater experience of spontaneous freedom than chess, and to that extent has more intrinsic value.

Some people, including Hurka might resist this claim, since successfully playing *The Quiet Year* requires assembling a complex narrative, and the complexity of the storytelling that it requires may be just as great as the complexity of chess.[21] If this view is correct, my discussion here shows not that *The Quiet Year* is less difficult than chess but good in a different dimension than difficulty but instead shows that *The Quiet Year*, while as difficult as chess, is also good in a different way. Games' non-instrumental framing of instrumental activity reliably gives rise to a pleasurable and valuable experience of spontaneous freedom. Games are valuable, in part, because of the framing that players engage in while playing them. A game need not be maximally difficult in order to generate a maximally free experience of playing.

Hurka might also reply that he recognizes that playing games "can still contain … the distinctively modern good of achieving a goal regardless of its value" (Hurka 2006, 234).

[21] Bradford persuasively argues that Hurka's view that difficulty arises from complexity should be rejected because there are many complex but non-difficult activities—particularly, communication—which is extremely complicated but does not require intense effort (Bradford 2015, 34). Bradford's account thus provides a better explanation of why *The Quiet Year* is less difficult than chess. (Because Bradford's account of intense effort is agent-relative, we would need to know more about who is playing to conclude that one or the other of the games is more difficult. For a player with extreme social anxiety, *The Quiet Year* might take much more intense effort than chess.)

However, the "distinctively modern" value of game playing has to do not only with achieving a good "regardless of its value" but also with undertaking an activity simply because one has settled on doing so, e.g., playing a games "for the fun of it." Having fun is not the same as just undertaking intrinsically valuable activity—it is undertaking *unnecessary* intrinsically valuable activity. In everyday life, as we instrumentally pursue ends that we value we must attend to the many effects, intended and unintended of our decisions. Our ability to exercise our practical reason is often constrained by the high stakes that attach to our decisions—the risks of harming other people or treating them immorally. "The pressure to do things that really matter, with all the attendant difficulty, risk of failure, and uncertainty involved, can be burdensome" (Scheffler 2013, 57). Will trying to save Venice's canals have unintended effects on housing prices? Will it distract from other, more valuable projects?

In playing a game, we can focus on the distinctive pleasure of unconstrainedly exercising our power to decide what to do, because the downstream effects of our decisions terminate at the edge of the magic circle, at least as long as players do not exhibit the failure characteristic of being a "bad sport," where players do things as part of a game that have effects that cannot be effectively cabined in the space of the game. Games provide an opportunity to exercise our practical powers in a low-stakes environment with relative impunity to their global consequences, freeing us from the anxiety that our decisions will "mess things up" in a big way. Games can be fun and valuable because they provide an experience of purely optional activity, where we always get to exercise our power to set up ends for ourselves when we are not required (even by our own lights) to set up those ends.[22]

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[22] Thanks to Seana Shiffrin for raising this point. Saying that games can be fun and valuable does not suggest that a life made up *entirely* of playing games would be particularly meaningful. For a discussion of the limits on the ability of games to make a whole *life* valuable, see Chapter Three, note eight.

§ 5. Games and Politics

The advantages that arise from the experience of spontaneous freedom afforded by playing games extend beyond the immediate experience of that freedom. Games can provide a limited model of what experiencing the future of one's life as open, rather than closed, is like more generally. In lives where possibilities are closed off, games can model the experience of a freer sense of life. (Their ability to do so depends on who is playing the game and the context in which they play.) Is playing a good game merely a relief from work or tedium or is it something more intrinsically valuable than that? Samuel Scheffler argues that some people take pleasure in playing games because "it can come as a relief to pretend that things matter when they don't" (Scheffler 2013, 57). But in the best moments playing a game can do more than this, reminding its players of how open life can be, even in the ethically imperfect world that they inhabit.

Furthermore, the experience that games provide of arbitrarily exercising one's decision-making powers may serve useful ethical purposes. The experience of spontaneous freedom in games is close to the experience of choice that liberalism makes available to consumers. In Michel Foucault's view, the principal variety of "freedom" provided by European governments to their citizens beginning in the 18th century is the freedom to make decisions as individuals that are not prescribed or dictated by governmental regulations but that, at the level of a population produce predictable and manageable results (Foucault 2008, 59-61). The freedom of liberal capitalism "is much more the spontaneity, the internal and intrinsic mechanisms of economic processes than a juridical freedom of the individual recognized as such" (Foucault 2008, 61). Both games and liberal capitalism provide an opportunity to experience the free play of one's decision-making powers, whether or not that experience corresponds to any

meaningful sense in which the future of one's life is actually open. Thus, Foucault describes the economic capitalism sanctioned by liberalism as "the game of freedom and security" (Foucault 2008, 65). As I argue elsewhere, if laws or regulations are designed to provide such an experience, we might worry that those laws "mask" their own political effects, forestalling political efforts to change them (Gingerich 2016, 102). Games, in contrast provide a site where players can experience the pleasure of spontaneous freedom where it does not matter whether this experience is "real." In games, this experience is provided by rules that players voluntarily adopt for non-instrumental reasons, rather than by laws that are coercively imposed. By providing a context in which what matters is artificial, games allow for the experience of spontaneous freedom connected to instrumental activity without allowing the pleasure of this experience to interfere in our engagement with politics.

§ 6. Conclusion

Hurka locates the value of games in their complexity: for him games are less valuable than equivalently complex non-game activities that aim at and achieve instrumentally valuable ends. I have argued that games paradigmatically provide access to the good of the experience of spontaneous freedom for their players, and that while games do not aim at this good, it is still part of the intrinsic value of the activity of game playing, and so that Hurka's account of the source of games' value must be modified. Following optional rules for non-instrumental reasons provides a distinctive experience of discretionary action free from the constraints of reasons and duties. In this way, games provide their players with an opportunity for at least a partial experience of spontaneous freedom.

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