THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

TRUTHFULNESS: AN EXAMINATION OF BERNARD WILLIAMS' VIRTUES OF TRUTH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

JOHN U. NEF COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL THOUGHT

AND

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

SKOMANTAS POCIUS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MARCH 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I reflect on the past seven and a half years, I am struck by the meandering road I have traveled on. It has had its share of surprises, and I did not foresee finding myself where I am now. But I am happy both with the path taken and the destination reached.

These years would not have been possible without the Committee on Social Thought and the University of Chicago: they brought me to the United States, a country that has welcomed me and whose appeal—warts and all—it is hard to resist, and generously provided financial support and the space for learning and thinking. My time in Social Thought has been intriguing, and it has taught me valuable life lessons—some of which have found their way into this work. I am thankful to my dissertation committee, Professors Jonathan Lear, Robert Pippin, and Heinrich Meier. They took a largely hands-off approach, leaving me with the liberty to work things out acceptably myself—with all the disquietude that freedom brings. A special thanks to Jonathan for the seminars that helped me understand psychoanalysis, the reason I came to Chicago, and to Professor Meier for his generosity which allowed me to live in Munich and witness the intellectual life of the Carl von Siemens Stiftung. I am also obliged to Professor Tarcov for his humanness; he provided support in what was a difficult moment, backed my temporary entry into the political world of Washington, DC, and was the catalyst for an invitation to give a lecture at Carthage College on Nietzsche and psychic health.

What I have cherished the most during my many years of education has been the chance to converse, sometimes philosophize, with thoughtful, intelligent, and interesting interlocutors

and friends. Such discussions—whether verbal fencing or genuine attempts at understanding—are one of life's greatest joys. I am grateful to all those who have joined me in conversation.

My time in Chicago has been shaped by many important and wonderful people. I am particularly grateful to the Gurevičius family: my aunt, uncle, and cousins, who helped me settle in the rather lonely first years and who have been a presence since. To my close friends—Jason, William, Rafael, the poker group, the genteel gentlemen of DC, the psychoanalysis reading group in Munich. And to John—for surviving destruction, and for lettting me rediscover Winnie the Pooh and parts of myself.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family, without whom I would not have become who I am. Ačiū Jums mylimieji seneliai—Močiute Bronė, Močiute Danutė, Bočiau, Seneli Jurgi—už vasaras, palaikymą, ir įdiegtą meilę savo šaliai. Esu dėkingas, Jurgi, už metus augtus kartu—įskaitant mūsų kovas. Ačiū, Tėti, už pirmuosiuos minties žingsnius, metus kurie lėmė beveik viską ir kurie manyje visados išliks. Ačiū, Mama, kad buvai, mus auginai, ir tiek už mus atidavei.

INTRODUCTION

Post-Truth and Truthfulness

It is an old idea that we should cherish the truth. Plato reports that at his trial Socrates said, "as long as I breathe and am able to, I will not stop philosophizing, and I will exhort you and explain this to whomever of you I happen upon… 'are you not ashamed that… you neither care for nor think about prudence, and truth, and how your soul will be the best possible?"[1] Aristotle writes of "maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honor truth above our friends," and he remarks that "falsehood is… mean and culpable, and truth noble and worthy of praise."[2] If philosophy is the love of wisdom, and wisdom involves distinguishing truth from falsehood, then philosophy loves truth.

But philosophy is not alone in thinking truth important. Respect for the truth has been preached by religion; according to the Bible, Jesus told "the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will

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1. Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, trans. Thomas G. West, in Thomas G. West, *Plato's "Apology of Socrates": An Interpretation, with a New Translation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 29d–e.
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, rev. J. O. Urmson, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1096a13–16, 1127a28–30. At the end of the work, while discussing the contemplative life, Aristotle indicates that the contemplation of truth is "the best," "the pleasantest," and "the most self-sufficient" (ibid, 1177a20–1177b1; bk. 10, chap. 7).

make you free,'" and he said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."[3] It has also been proclaimed

by science; to quote one strident defender, "science, the consummation of the Renaissance and the

apotheosis of the human intellect, is on the track of ultimate truth, and no attempt to discredit it

will deflect it from this noble task."[4] Cultivating the respect for truth can also be seen as a key aim

of liberal education, the education most characteristic of our Western civilization.[5]

In recent years, however, the judgment has emerged that we live in a "post-truth" era. In

2016, the term was chosen as the word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries, which defined it as

"relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public

opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[6] Some have spoken fervidly of an ongoing

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3. John 8:31–32 and 14:6 (New Revised Standard Version).

4. Peter Atkins, "Science as Truth," *History of the Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (May 1995): 97–102. Incidentally, Atkins considers "it to be a defensible proposition that no philosopher has helped to elucidate nature; philosophy is but the refinement of hindrance" (ibid., 100).

5. See the appendix, where I review the long-standing debate over whether the proper goal of liberal education is the pursuit of truth or something else.

6. "Word of the Year 2016," Oxford Languages, accessed January 23, 2020, https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/. That same year, the Association for the German Language selected the closely related "postfaktisch" as its word of the year ("GfdS wählt »postfaktisch« zum Wort des Jahres 2016," the website of Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache, published December 9, 2016, https://gfds.de/wort-des-jahres-2016/). According to Oxford Languages, the term "post-truth" can be traced back to the 1992 essay "A Government of Lies" by Steve Tesich (*Nation*, January 6, 1992). Tesich writes that "in a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world" (ibid., 13). It was in relation to the handling of the Iraq war by the George W. Bush administration, however, that the term post-truth came into greater public awareness, for instance in Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2004), esp. 13 (where Keyes also uses the term "post-truthfulness"), and Eric Alterman, *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences* (New York: Viking, 2004), 305. Still, it is only more recently that the judgment that we live in a post-truth era has become commonplace. See e.g. Jonathan Freedland, "Post-truth politicians such as Donald Trump and Boris Johnson are no joke," *Guardian* [International], May 13, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/13/boris-johnson-donald-trump-post-truth-politician; Daniel W. Drezner, "Why the post-truth political era might be around for a while," *Washington Post*, June 16, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/06/16/why-the-post-truth-political-era-might-be-around-for-a-while/; Amulya Gopalakrishnan, "Life in post-truth times: What we share with the Brexit campaign and Trump," *Times of India*, June 30, 2016, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/to-name-and-address/everything-but-the-truth-what-we-share-with-the-brexit-campaign-and-trump/; Christina Pazzanese, "Politics in a 'post-truth' age," *Harvard Gazette*, July 14, 2016, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2016/07/politics-in-a-post-truth-age/; "Art of the Lie," *Economist*, September 10, 2016, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2016/09/10/art-of-the-lie; "Yes I'd lie to you," *Economist*, September 10, 2016, https://www.economist.com/briefing/2016/09/10/yes-id-lie-to-you; Jane Suiter, "Post-truth Politics," *Political Insight* 7, no. 3 (December 2016), 25; James Ball, *Post-Truth: How Bullshit Conquered the World* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2017); Matthew D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight*

"war on truth."[7] The problem of post-truth is not simply that of deception, but that individuals and society have stopped caring much about the truth: whereas the deceiver and the truth-teller are both concerned with what is true, one to hide it and the other to report it, our current era of post-truth is not.[8] As one strident denunciation contends, "the truth has become so devalued that what was once the gold standard of political debate is a worthless currency."[9] Disregard for truth in private, public, and political life is not wholly new, but the suggestion is that something has qualitatively changed with the Iraq War, the rise of internet and social media, and the recent political events and setbacks, particularly in the form of Brexit and Donald Trump.[10]

Back (London: Ebury Press, 2017); Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018). Julian Baggini writes, more cautiously, that "talk of a 'post-truth' society is premature and misguided," while suggesting that we might be "at a temporary post-truth moment, a kind of cultural convulsion born of a despair that will give way in time to measured hope." Baggini, *A Short History of Truth: Consolations for a Post-Truth World* (London: Quercus, 2017), 6, 9, see also 6–10. For a different, Christian, perspective on the causes and solutions of the post-truth phenomenon see Abdu H. Murray, *Saving Truth: Finding Meaning and Clarity in a Post-Truth World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018).

7.   D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back*; New York Times Editorial Board, "The War on Truth Spreads," *New York Times*, December 9, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/09/opinion/media-duterte-maria-ressa.html; Karl Vick, "TIME Person of the Year 2018: The Guardians and the War on Truth," *TIME*, accessed April 24, 2019, http://time.com/person-of-the-year-2018-the-guardians/. The judgment that there is an ongoing war on truth can be found on both sides of the political spectrum—it is naturally the other side that is waging the war. See e.g. Neil Mackay, *War on Truth: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Invasion of Iraq but Your Government Wouldn't Tell You* (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2006); Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, *The War on Truth: 9/11, Disinformation, and the Anatomy of Terrorism* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2005); Hillary Rodham Clinton, "American Democracy Is in Crisis," *Atlantic*, September 16, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/09/american-democracy-is-in-crisis/570394/; Mark Fairley, *The War on Truth: How a Generation Abandoned Reality* (self-pub., CreateSpace, 2016). Some have already even proclaimed the "death of truth"; see Michiko Kakutani, *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).
8.   Harry G. Frankfurt makes and analyzes much this distinction in Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), a book predating, and partly inspiring, the present concern with post-truth (see e.g. Ball, 5–6).
9.   Matthew Norman, "Whoever wins the US presidential election, we've entered a post-truth world—there's no going back now," *Independent* [UK], November 8, 2016, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/us-election-2016-donald-trump-hillary-clinton-who-wins-post-truth-world-no-going-back-a7404826.html.
10. D'Ancona writes, "1968 marked the revolution in personal freedom and the yearning for social progress; 1989 will be remembered for the collapse of totalitarianism; and 2016 was the year that definitively launched the era of 'Post-Truth'" (D'Ancona, *Post-Truth*, 7). For a discussion of the genesis of the so-called post-truth phenomena and a thoughtful, partial dissent from common narratives see Roger Scruton, "Post-truth? It's pure nonsense," *Spectator* [UK], June 10, 2017, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/06/post-truth-its-pure-nonsense/.

The laments over "post-truth politics"[11] reflect indeed a broader anxiety about political developments. As one commentator writes, "the idea of post-truth is not just that truth is being challenged, *but that it is being challenged as a mechanism for asserting political dominance*."[12] More specifically, the demise of truth is tied by many to the threat of illiberalism presently facing the West and the world more generally.[13] It is said that liberal democracy, unlike other regimes, is committed to truth, which enabled its triumph in the 20th century over authoritarianism, tyranny, and regimes founded on lies—most recently the Soviet Union.[14] But as this commitment has waned in the new millennium, the liberal-democratic achievements of peace, prosperity, and equality for all have increasingly come under threat.

According to the diagnosis of post-truth, we live in a world where people increasingly do not care about or value, are not concerned with or interested in the truth. But this verdict is rarely a mere lamentation over something never to be recovered. Generally, the diagnosticians also counsel, or at least intimate, that what is needful today is the rekindling of the sense that truth matters.[15] Behind the concern we can generally discern the determination to impact our course, as well as the assumption that one has the position and power to do so. The diagnoses thus appear to

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11. The likely first use of the term "post-truth politics" can be found in David Roberts, "Post-truth politics," *Grist*, April 1, 2010, https://grist.org/article/2010-03-30-post-truth-politics/.
12. McIntyre, preface to *Post-Truth*, xiv.
13. See e.g. Suiter, "Post-truth Politics"; New York Times Editorial Board, "The War on Truth Spreads"; Vick, "TIME Person of the Year 2018." None other than Hillary Clinton, the losing candidate in the 2016 United States presidential election, has accused President Trump of "waging war on truth and reason," deplored his "assault on the rule of law," and warned that "our democratic institutions and traditions are under siege" (Clinton, "American Democracy Is in Crisis").
14. This narrative, the assumption that liberal democracy has a privileged relation to truth, and the claim that it was responsible for the demise of the Soviet Union are penetratingly criticized in Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies*, trans. Teresa Adelson (New York: Encounter Books, 2016). The title of Legutko's book is much better translated as "The Triumph of the Common Man." Legutko writes that resistance to communism had "little to do with liberal democracy" and that its impetus lay in "patriotism, a reawakened eternal desire for truth and justice, loyalty to the imponderables of the national tradition, and—a factor of paramount importance—religion" (ibid., 142). See also Skomantas Pocius, "The Demon in Democracy," *Point*, Winter 2019, https://thepointmag.com/politics/the-demon-in-democracy/.
15. Lee McIntyre writes, "As presented in the current debate, the word 'post-truth' is irreducibly normative. It is an expression of concern by those who care about the concept of truth and feel that it is under attack" (McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 6; see also his chap. 7, "Fighting Post-Truth").

contain the hope that things will change, and that we will, once more, concern ourselves with the truth.

But what would it be to live a life in which we genuinely cared about the truth? This question is all too often left unstated and unanswered, and yet an answer to it is crucial if we are to have a sense of what we have supposedly lost—and what we are to regain. Exhortations to make truth important again will not lead far in the absence of clarity on what that involves. Without direction, it is unlikely that the concern for truth will be successfully rekindled—in individuals or society.

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Though the diagnosticians of post-truth rarely put their concern in such terms, it is possible to understand it as a concern over the virtue "truthfulness." The adjective "truthful" is often used more or less synonymously with honesty or open communication, but a moment's reflection on the word itself should disincline us from this habit. Unlike honesty, the word truthfulness points to some further connection to truth, some form of truth-directedness. Whatever exactly truthfulness is, it appears to imply some interest in, concern with, or care for the truth. In the words of the leading 20th century British public intellectual and thinker Bernard Williams, "truthfulness implies a respect for the truth," and it is a matter of people's "qualities… that are displayed in wanting to know the truth, in finding it out, and in telling it to other people."[16] These are precisely the qualities that are said to be the casualties of the post-truth era: today, we are told, people care less and less about acquiring true beliefs and communicating the truth to others. We might venture to say, then, that what is missing and what is needful today is the quality or virtue of truthfulness.

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16. Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 7, 13.

If this is the case, then we must better understand this quality or virtue, what it consists in, and what it would mean for a person to exhibit it. If truthfulness is the one thing needful in the era of post-truth, then the one thing needful is discerning what truthfulness is. And given the fervor with which the verdict of post-truth is passed on our times, such inquiry seems particularly urgent.

This is not to say, of course, that concern with our present situation is the sole reason to undertake it. While truthfulness has been claimed as politically and socially important for today's liberal democracies,[17] it has also been invoked by religion[18] and science.[19] Truthfulness also tends to find its way onto lists of ethical virtues,[20] a fact that suggests its importance for the good human life. Finally, philosophy has held out across centuries the promise of a life of truth, and truthfulness represents a certain relation to and way to live with the truth. Thus, even someone with "a feeling of distance"[21] from the present may well be compelled to investigate what it is to be truthful.

17. Ibid., chap. 9; Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," in *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jeremy Elkins and Andrew Norris, eds., *Truth and Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

18. E.g. Ephesians 4:15 (NRSV); Quran 33:24 and Sahih Muslim 2607. For Buddhism, see Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 115–116.

19. Bruce G. Charlton, "Are you an honest scientist? Truthfulness in science should be an iron law, not a vague aspiration," *Medical Hypotheses* 73, no. 5 (November 2009): 633–5; Steven Shapin, "Trust, Honesty, and the Authority of Science," in *Society's Choices: Social and Ethical Decision Making in Biomedicine*, eds. Ruth E. Bulger, Elizabeth M. Bobby, and Harvey V. Fineberg (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1995); Nicholas Shackel, "Honesty and Science," *Practical Ethics in the News* (blog), *University of Oxford*, published June 26, 2012, http://blog.practicalethics.ox.ac.uk/2012/06/honesty-and-science/.

20. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 1108a10–23, 1127a13–1127b32 (or bk. 4, chap. 7), where truthfulness has a much more limited sense than the one we will discuss, and mainly describes sincerity of speech and conduct in communicating one's merits. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, in *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed., rev. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 204 (sec. 3, pt. 2), 238, (sec. 6, pt. 1), 277 (sec. 9, pt. 1), where "veracity," "honesty," "fidelity," and "truth" are listed among the virtues; see Annette C. Baier, "Why Honesty is a Hard Virtue," in *Reflections On How We Live* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 192–194. Also in Eastern Philosophy, May Sim, "Why Confucius' Ethics is a Virtue Ethics," in *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, eds. Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2015).

21. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 2000), 257 (translation modified).

The broad aim of my investigation, then, is to elucidate the nature of truthfulness and the shape of the truthful life. I propose to do so, more specifically, by starting from and engaging critically with the work of Bernard Williams. *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams' last book to be published during his life, provides the most evocative, lengthy, and discerning contemporary treatment of truthfulness. Taking our bearings from Williams' work allows us, I think, to get clearer on what truthfulness is, and on what the difficulties with the endeavor to live truthfully are.

Though we could strive for a greater understanding of truthfulness in other ways, there are four weighty reasons supporting the choice of Williams' work as the starting point. First, Williams' *Truth and Truthfulness* offers an *analysis* of truthfulness, contemporary examples of which are exceedingly hard to find. While it does not form an entirely cohesive whole or a sustained argument—Williams' mercurial pen, his distaste for systematization, and his desire to convey a broad vision of the subject matter ensure that the chapters pull in different directions—the discussion is valuable for our purposes.

Second, the motivating concern of Williams' inquiry is akin to the impulse behind the diagnoses of post-truth. His overall aim is to offer *an apology* of the ethical importance of truth and truthfulness, to defend them from those whose writing, if not behavior, constitute an implicit attack—"deniers," pragmatists like Richard Rorty but also Saussure-influenced postmodernists.[22] Williams tells us that he is concerned with "the value of truth," and warns us that "to the extent we

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22. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 4–7. The latter, however, are barely mentioned: Jacques Derrida is not mentioned at all, Paul de Man only once in relation to Rousseau-interpretation (ibid., 177). This leads Samuel Fleischacker to complain in his review of the book that "Williams devotes surprisingly little attention to the major figures in the camp of those he calls the deniers. Derrida is not mentioned nor is Stanley Fish or Mark Taylor, and Paul de Man and Bruno Latour appear but in passing." Williams's main target is Rorty, and Williams "proposes to answer pragmatists… on their own ground by explicating the pragmatic function of the notion of truth in a human community." Samuel Fleischacker, review of *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, by Bernard Williams, *Ethics* 114, no. 2 (January 2004): 382.

lose a sense of the value of truth, we shall certainly lose something and may well lose everything."[23] Published in 2002, a year before the start of the Iraq War and before the stark conclusions about our post-truth situation had become commonplace, *Truth and Truthfulness* serves thus as a prophetic testament to the developments since then.

Third, at the heart of Williams' work is a sentiment that remains powerful also today: *the hope* that we can learn or relearn to value truth. Williams ends *Truth and Truthfulness* by announcing "the hope… that the virtues of truth… will keep going," and moreover "that they will keep going in something like the more courageous, intransigent, and socially effective forms that they have acquired over their history," that "some institutions… will both support and express them," and that people will be able "to see the truth and not be broken by it." To be sure, Williams denies the hope that "the truth, enough truth, the whole truth, will itself set us free."[24] He rejects the "dangerous delusions" of "social management as applied to scientific truth" and "fantasies of reconstructing human and social relations in a radically rationalistic spirit." Nevertheless, his is the hope that stands opposed to the "reasonable people… [who] believe, contrary to the ideals of liberalism, that human beings cannot live together effectively… on any culturally ambitious scale, if they understand fully what they are doing." Although to believe these things "is not necessarily foolish… they may not be true," and, Williams writes, "we can still live in the hope… that they are not."[25] Williams' appeal to the second theological virtue in the concluding work of his life, in

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23. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 7.
24. Ibid., 268–269.
25. Ibid., 231–232. Williams first expresses the hope at the end of the key chap. 9, "Truthfulness, Liberalism, and Critique," in which he addresses truthfulness from a political point of view and with political intentions. The fact that he feels compelled to come back to this hope in the final pages of the final chapter, chap. 10, "Making Sense," suggests its significance for him and his account in *Truth and Truthfulness*. It is no doubt an echo of the hope Williams expresses earlier in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*: "the hope for truthfulness… that ethical thought should stand up to reflection, and that its institutions and practices should be capable of becoming transparent." Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 199.

a philosophical account and defense of truthfulness, might be more readily expected from a preacher than a fellow traveler of Nietzsche.[26] It certainly calls to mind John Dewey's and Richard Rorty's contention that the West is a "culture of hope."[27] We will come back to this hope in the conclusion, and see how a better understanding of truthfulness might affect it.

Finally, fourth, I believe that in the present context it is prudent to select a specifically *modern* author. Correctly or not, discussions of post-truth tend to frame the phenomenon as specific to our times and today's people. This is not to say that the study of the past, if only people dedicated themselves to it, would not be beneficial—on the contrary, it might turn out to be the most valuable thing. Nonetheless, it seems to me that if one's aim is to convince people today of the importance of truthfulness through an understanding of the virtue, then beginning from and focusing on a discussion that shares the basic assumptions of those who one aims to change is more efficacious. Concomitantly, to the extent our aim is understanding rather than change, the focus on a contemporary discussion will better enable reflection on the prejudices and points of blindness of the present age.

In the four chapters that constitute the body of this study I plan, then, to cover the following ground. I will begin by examining and critically engaging with Williams' analysis and conception of truthfulness, focusing first on the virtue of Accuracy (chapter 1) and then on Sincerity (chapter 2). Subsequently, I will point out and discuss tensions between these two virtues, a matter Williams leaves untouched (chapter 3). I will also probe Williams' understanding of the value of truthfulness, indicate problems with it, as well as suggest that the ability to suspend one's concern

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26. "According to the philosophers, evil will never cease on earth, whereas according to the Bible the end of the days will bring perfect redemption. Accordingly, the philosopher lives in a state above fear and trembling as well as above hope.… Whereas the believer in the Bible lives in fear and trembling as well as in hope." Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens," lecture, Hillel Foundation at the University of Chicago, October 25, 1950, Chicago, IL, MP3, 39:00, https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/jerusalem-and-athens-oct-25-and-nov-8-1950/.
27. Richard Rorty, "Rationality and Cultural Difference," in *Truth and Progress*, vol. 3 *of Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 197.

with the truth is important for living well (chapter 4). Finally, as promised, in the conclusion I will return with some words on Williams' hope regarding the virtues of truth.

Though this engagement with Williams' thought gets us quite some way, there are important issues we will not be able to explore in depth. In particular, a full-fledged understanding of truthfulness would require a more thorough grasp of the psychological motivations and development that make truthfulness possible, of the way truthfulness fits into social and political existence, and of its role in a life well lived. These three issues are crucial for figuring out what it means to be truthful, what it is to strive to live accordingly, and why we might wish to do so. Human endeavors, however, have their constraints, and before these important topics can be raised, the concept of truthfulness must be brought more clearly into view. That is my objective in what follows.

To summarize, then, my broad aim is to clarify truthfulness. I will do so via a critical discussion of Bernard Williams' work, for the various reasons mentioned. I engage in this inquiry due to the widespread diagnosis of post-truth and the ensuing sense that truthfulness might be particularly needful today, as well as out of an idiosyncratic interest in the topic. Although the investigation will be far from exhaustive, it will take us some way along the task of understanding, and it will offer a better sense of how the lack of concern with truth might be overcome. At the same time, the study will point to certain instabilities within truthfulness, or at least Williams' account of it, which suggest that the virtue or quality does not come easily if it comes at all. My discussion should leave us in a better place to understand truthfulness, to evaluate the hope that the concern for truth will prevail in society, and perhaps even to lead a life in which truth is important.

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Before undertaking what I have promised, a few more words about Williams' approach in *Truth and Truthfulness* are in order. Though I have noted the broad purpose of his discussion of truthfulness, I would like to offer a brief overview of the specific problem motivating his project, as well as its subject matter, aim, methodology, and certain core features and assumptions.

In modern culture, Williams notes, two prominent ideas are connected yet in tension: "an intense commitment to truthfulness—or, at any rate, a pervasive suspiciousness, a readiness against being fooled," and "an equally pervasive suspicion about truth itself." They are connected since the commitment to truthfulness leads to a process of criticism which in turn leads to a questioning of truth, of whether there is truth and whether it can ever be other than relative or subjective. But this combination of "the demand for truthfulness and the rejection of truth," characteristic of "the deniers" we mentioned earlier, is not stable. If you deny that your skepticism has anything to do with finding out or communicating the truth, then what is the passion for truthfulness a passion for?"[28]

This is the problem that leads Williams to concern himself in *Truth and Truthfulness* with "the value of truth" and, more specifically, "the value of various states and activities associated

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28. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 1–2. Rorty, Williams' most important target, says explicitly that truth is not the goal of inquiry. According to him, "A goal is something you can know that you are getting closer to, or farther away from. But there is no way to know our distance from truth, nor even whether we are closer to it than our ancestors were" (Rorty, introduction to *Truth and Progress*, 3–4). There is, for Rorty, no other criterion of truth than justification, and justification is relative to audience and ranges of truth candidates (ibid., 2, 4). Pragmatists, he explains, are "suspicious of the distinction between justification and truth" (Rorty, "Is Truth a Goal of Inquiry? Donald Davidson versus Crispin Wright," in *Truth and Progress*, 19). We cannot, he claims, answer the question of whether "our practices of justification lead to truth," nor does it matter since "the answer to it would make no difference whatever to our practice (Rorty, introduction to *Truth and Progress*, 4). Rorty's response to the question why anyone should listen to those like him would be that his and others' critiques allow us to offer better justifications for what we believe and do, as well as to progress morally (ibid., 4–5). For Williams, without truth as a norm it is not possible to understand justification: justification (like belief, as we shall see later) is governed by norms of truth without which it does not make sense. Rorty's appeal to moral progress also raises questions: why should we aim at progress and on what basis, if not truth, should we think that Rorty's vision is progress?

with the truth." The "deniers"—those denying the existence or value of truth—either consider such qualities to be without value or, if they recognize them as valuable, deem their value not to reside in any relation to truth; on the other hand, Williams considers them valuable and their value to be explainable in terms of truth. Such qualities are valuable, according to him, precisely because of their relation to truth—valuable as instances of the virtue *truth*fulness. In the absence of a relation to truth, their value becomes doubtful.[29]

The subject of Williams inquiry, then, is truthfulness. His aim in *Truth and Truthfulness* is "to explain the basis of truthfulness as a value," and his target is the "various virtues and practices, and ideas that go with them, that express the concern to tell the truth—in the sense both of telling the truth to other people, and in the first place, telling the true from the false."[30] Williams focus, thus, is squarely on ethics and moral psychology, and he steers clear of metaphysical, historical, and skeptical discussions regarding the nature, meaning, and existence of truth.[31] In fact, Williams does not think there is much to discuss regarding the concept of truth—either in terms of metaphysics or history—since "everybody everywhere already has… the same concept,"[32] and he resists the demand to offer a definition of truth.[33] Instead, Williams asks, assuming there is such a

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29. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 6–7.
30. Ibid., 20. Williams inquiry is "into human concerns with the truth," which centrally involve the virtues of truth. But this does not mean, he notes, that only the virtues of truth should be considered, and so he spends time on other matters related to truth (and the virtues of truth), such as belief, assertion, and communication. Ibid., 61.
31. Apart from pragmatists like Rorty, who collapse the distinction between justification and truth, there are also "postmodern" critics of the notion of truth, skeptical of the claim that there is such a thing as truth at all. I will not enter the debates in question, but rather accept (with common sense) that truth is possible and that we can move towards it (even if it may be very difficult to attain).
32. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 163, see also 271. The variety of "theories of truth" Williams sees as evidence for people's capacity to misrepresent their grasp of the concept (ibid., 163). Williams does think that a history "of theories of truth," "ways to find out the truth," as well as "particular conceptions associated with the virtues of truth" exists (ibid., 271).
33. Ibid., 63. Aristotle defines the true and the false in the following way: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2., 1011b25–27.

thing as truth and we more or less know what it means for something to be true, what are the required qualities of a person (his desires, dispositions, character, actions) such that he is truthful? What are we talking about in talking about truthfulness, given that while truth is a property of judgments, truthfulness is a property of persons?

Apart from clarifying and defending truthfulness as a value, Williams' goal is to show that it is stable under reflection. The notion of reflective stability is an important one in Williams' thought. Though Williams does not define it clearly or thoroughly, it is nonetheless fair to say that a conception or idea counts as stable if it can survive reflective understanding[34] and if we can "make sense of" it—another rather nebulous term—coherently and without contradiction or inconsistency. In the present case, the task is to gain reflective understanding and make sense of truthfulness and its components.[35]

Williams' method of examining truthfulness and explaining its value is *genealogy*.[36] "A genealogy," Williams writes, "is a narrative that tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might be imagined to have come about."[37] Probably the most famous example of a genealogy is Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and Williams clearly takes inspiration from Nietzsche.[38] But the aims of the two

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34. Matthieu Queloz, "Williams's Pragmatic Genealogy and Self-Effacing Functionality," *Philosophers' Imprint* 18, no. 17 (September 2018): 17; Edward Harcourt, introduction to *Morality, Reflection, and Ideology*, ed. Edward Harcourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2. At least in *Morality, Reflection, and Ideology*, the collection of articles edited by Harcourt, "'reflective understanding' was to be taken broadly… to encompass reflection on the metaphysics of morals… on the nature of moral language… reflection on morality which is itself moral… and on the causes and origins of moral thought" (Harcourt, 2).

35. Queloz writes that truthfulness would be "unstable under reflection" if "it tries to combine… two incompatible thoughts" (Queloz, "Williams's Pragmatic Genealogy," 11). Compare this with Rorty's claim that rationality is simply the attempt to make one's beliefs "as coherent, and as perspicuously structured, as possible" (Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in *Truth and Progress*, 171.

36. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 18–19.

37. Ibid., 20.

38. In chap. 1, as he lays out the problem of *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams devotes a whole section to Nietzsche. He also says he intends the association of his genealogy with Nietzsche to be taken seriously. The choice of

thinkers diverge: whereas Nietzschean genealogy exposes values as lacking the foundation and the

worth we think they have, Williams intends his not as an unsettling or destructive but a

"vindicatory" genealogy.[39] That is, his genealogical story "aims to give a decent pedigree to truth

and truthfulness" while making sense of "our most basic commitments" to them.[40] Its aim is to

help us understand the value in question better while respecting it as much as, or perhaps even

more than, before.[41] I cannot assess here Williams' idea of and optimism for a vindicatory

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genealogy as a method is at least partly motivated by the fact that his interlocutors, the deniers, claim an inheritance from Nietzsche. Williams considers the deniers' reading of Nietzsche to be mistaken, not least since Nietzsche shows great concern with truth and truthfulness throughout his writings. Williams thinks that though Nietzsche was alive to the concerns of the deniers, he was in fact opposed to them, and would consider "the indifference to truthfulness which they encourage" a feature of nihilism. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 13–18.

  Curiously, however, Williams pays little attention to some of Nietzsche's most poignant insights despite their relevance to his topic. Nietzsche was keenly aware of the tension between possessing or trying to possess the truth and sharing it with others. It is hard to read him without being struck by his depictions of writing as wearing a mask and hiding. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 289–90. Moreover, Nietzsche emphasizes that there are different types of people—idealized types such as "the artist" and "the free spirit" inhabit Nietzsche's work—and that the same thing, indeed the same virtue, can have vastly different significance for and impact on a person; See e.g. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 120. These are not issues Williams addresses.

39. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 36–37. We might also call Williams' style of genealogy "apologetic," as opposed to Nietzsche's "polemical" genealogy. For Nietzsche, see *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*; Nietzsche calls the work a "polemic" (*Streitschrift* in German) at preface, sec. 2. Williams considers his genealogy to be closer to Hume's derivation of justice (Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 33, 36). See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 536–552 (bk. 3, pt. 2, sec. 2, "Of the origin of justice and property"). Robert Nozick's derivation and justification of a minimal state in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), which Williams mentions at *Truth and Truthfulness*, 31–32, appears to be another example of a genealogy that aims at vindication. On the other hand, Michel Foucault's genealogical method is an example of the more "destructive" approach, unsurprisingly given his self-identification as a Nietzschean. In an interview, Foucault asserted "je suis simplement nietzschéen" (I am simply Nietzschean); see Foucault, "Le retour de la morale (354)," in *Dits et Écrits, 1954–1988*, vol. 4, *1980–1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 704. For Foucault's statement on genealogy see Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald Bouchard, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991). For his application of the genealogical method see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991), and Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998).

40. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 19.

41. Ibid., 36. In *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline* Williams writes of "a familiar idea, which I would put like this: the later theory, or (more generally) outlook, makes sense of itself, and of the earlier outlook, and of the transition from the earlier to the later, in such terms that both parties (the holders of the earlier outlook, and the holders of the later) have reason to recognize the transition as an improvement. I shall call an explanation which satisfies this condition *vindicatory*." Bernard Williams, *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. A. W. Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 189.

genealogy. But we should note that Williams' approach is unusual in virtue ethics, seeing that the field is characterized by (neo-)Aristotelianism, to which the genealogical approach is antithetical.[42] Indeed, unlike many others in virtue ethics, Williams does not argue for an understanding of human nature that grounds human excellence and the good life.

The point of his genealogical story, Williams explains, is "to illuminate our own actual understanding of truth and truthfulness, by offering an abstract basis to which real historical developments can be added."[43] Williams begins from what he thinks are very basic human needs and limitations, by considering how they are related to the activities of discovering and telling the truth, with the aim "to derive within the story *values* connected with these activities," and in particular values that are, or can be regarded as, intrinsic and not just instrumental. Starting from a State of Nature fiction, abstract argument from basic and general assumptions about human powers and limitations that Williams' deems indisputable, and thus more or less abstract philosophy, the story eventually turns to "real genealogy," that is to history and cultural contingencies.[44] Cultural and historical developments involve elaborations of the notion of truthfulness—what truthfulness is taken to be and the dispositions it is taken to involve vary over the course of time—and so philosophy has to engage itself with real history.[45] But if the elaborations are going to be elaborations of the same thing, there has to be a common basis that they are elaborations of; that is, unless the various ideas about truthfulness and truthful dispositions

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42. It is no surprise that, apart from Nietzsche, Williams draws inspiration for his work and method from Hume. Neither of the two philosophers is of "the school."
43. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 56.
44. Ibid., 38–39. The fact that Williams' genealogy is self-professedly and openly partly historical, partly fictional differentiates it from some of the famous earlier genealogies, which are intended as historical or at least are presented in a way that encourages such understanding of them (see page 14, note 39 above).
45. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 35, 40. Williams notes that the "filling or determination of the virtues of truth… has been culturally various"—for instance, in the archaic world being a "skillful and resourceful" liar was often admired (ibid., 277).

share a basic core or a broadly similar content, we cannot say they are ideas about the same thing. The purpose of Williams' State of Nature story and its abstraction from actual historical variation is to fix such a core.[46]

What, then, is this core? In general terms, Williams tells us that the value of truthfulness "embraces the need to find out the truth, to hold on to it, and to tell it" to oneself and others.[47] Truthfulness implies, as we have noted, a "respect for the truth." More specifically, the core of truthfulness is formed by Accuracy and Sincerity, the two basic virtues of truth. They imply "care, reliability, and so on, in discovering and coming to believe the truth," and people saying "what they believe to be true."[48] We can speak, roughly, of the virtue of acquiring true beliefs and the virtue of communicating what one believes to be true.[49] These two virtues denote and group dispositions important for human society and activity, for instance for the "pooling of information":[50] on the one hand, dispositions related to acquiring correct beliefs; on the other, dispositions related to reliability and avoiding deceit, to disclosing what one actually believes.[51] Though Williams thinks the precise meaning and significance of the virtues of truth has varied in different times and places, the core of truthfulness, according to him, is as outlined.[52]

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46. Ibid., 35, 42. In grouping dispositions together and explaining them as examples of the same general kind, Williams relies on a "functional interpretation," according to which "every society needs there to be dispositions of this general kind and also needs them not to have a purely functional value" (ibid.). The State of Nature story expresses this interpretation.
47. Ibid., 13.
48. Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 154. Williams capitalizes the two virtues to denote his semi-technical use. Alasdair MacIntyre, in discussing late 18th and early 19th century Christian funerary inscriptions, notes that sincerity "is a relative newcomer to the list of the virtues" (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 235).
49. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 11.
50. Ibid., 57, This also goes some way to explain their value, see chapter 4, page 111 below.
51. Ibid., 44. These virtues, Williams further claims, are connected to trust and trustworthiness—starting with the etymology of truth. As Williams points out, "the word 'truth' and its ancestors in Early and Middle English originally meant fidelity, loyalty, or reliability." Williams' idea is that if we are to trust others and rely on their speech, they had better abstain from deceit and be correct. And if we are to strive to acquire (and communicate) accurate beliefs, we had better be honest with ourselves. Ibid., 93–94. For the connection between truth and trust and the archaic word "troth," see further Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Truth* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 67–69.
52. See Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 93 regarding the core and historical variation of Sincerity. For a brief outline of the notion of truthfulness, see Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 157.

The basic characterization of truthfulness as presented seems intuitively quite accurate. We apply the adjective "truthful" to capturing as well as conveying the truth. For instance, "so and so gave a truthful testimony" implies that the person's statements were accurate and that his communication was honest and not deceptive. Antonyms of truthfulness, which include inaccurate and untrue (as in, "we were expecting a truthful account, but he provided an inaccurate one full of falsehoods") as well as deceitful and mendacious (as in, "he is deceitful and lacks truthfulness, he is full of mendacity and lies") confirm this double meaning. This duality seems integral to the way we use and understand the term, and it is a feature also of the equivalent word in languages such as German (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) and French (*véracité*).[53] Among other things, this helps us see how truthfulness is distinct from honesty. An honest assertion reveals what the speaker believes, but that does not mean it reveals true beliefs; a truthful assertion or truth-telling reveals the speaker's beliefs which are moreover true.

It is significant that Williams considers and calls Accuracy and Sincerity *virtues*, because doing so emphasizes their difference from most other qualities, including many desirable ones. What makes something a virtue? Williams does not offer a clear statement on the question, but his writings do not permit attributing to him some latent (neo-)Aristotelian conception—not only due to his genealogical approach, but also because he criticizes Aristotle's "doctrine of the Mean," which he says "is better forgotten."[54] At the same time, we do not need to leap into a deflationist view, according to which there is no difference between virtue and a desirable quality for Williams.[55] Upon a closer look, Williams' works offer some criteria—at least four—for a quality

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53. Williams points this out for German at *Truth and Truthfulness*, 93. For French, see e.g. Larousse, s.v. "véracité," accessed January 24, 2020, https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais.
54. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 36. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 1106b28–30 where Aristotle writes that "excellence [or virtue] is a kind of mean, since it aims at what is intermediate."
55. Williams writes in "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 157 that truthfulness "should be understood as a virtue *or desirable property*" (emphasis mine). But in *Truth and Truthfulness* he primarily calls it a virtue.

to be considered a virtue. First, he contends that virtues are dispositions and that they "involve characteristic patterns of desire and motivations" in a way mere skills do not: if a person is virtuous then that itself helps determine what he will do in the appropriate circumstances, which is not true of skills such as riding a bicycle that one can possess without exercising.[56] Second, Williams implies that virtues require overcoming and resisting motivations to contrary behavior: "Sincerity is a virtue," he writes, "and not just a reliable disposition to express inner informational states, because it operates in a space that is structured by motivations to conceal or dissimulate."[57] Third, for Williams the virtues "involve the will, in the uncontentious and metaphysically unambitious sense of intention, choice, attempts, and concentration of effort," a point he makes specifically about Accuracy and Sincerity, and they also involve and shape deliberation.[58] This follows from the third criterion: since dispositions that count as virtues operate in a space structured by motivations to the contrary, virtuous action require effort and so deliberation and the will. Fourth, Williams writes that virtues are "*ethically admirable* disposition[s] of character."[59] Apart from these criteria, we should keep in mind that virtue is a success term that implies not just attempting to do something but succeeding in it: the courageous man is not just one who attempts to face the enemy, but he who actually does so. Though to my knowledge Williams does not explicitly make this last point, it is too integral to the concept of virtue for us to ignore it.

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56. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9. As Williams explains, "one can be a good pianist and have no desire to play, but if one is generous or fair-minded, those qualities themselves help to determine, in the right contexts, what one will want to do" (ibid.).
57. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 124.
58. Ibid., 44–45; Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9. Although, as noted, Williams differs from Aristotle when it comes to understanding virtue, there is alignment here. Aristotle writes that "virtue… is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions" and that "the object of choice is something within our power which after deliberation we desire." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, rev. ed., Loeb Classical Library 73 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 1106b36–1107a1, 1113a10–12.
59. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9 (emphasis mine). In the broadest sense, "ethical" for Williams pertains to the Socratic question of how one should live.

Though the preceding clarifies why Williams speaks in the language of *virtues*, there is still the question of what makes Accuracy and Sincerity virtues of *truth*. Near the midway point of *Truth and Truthfulness* Williams notes, "from the beginning, I have called Accuracy and Sincerity equally 'virtues of truth,'" and this is appropriate, because "each of them, at the most primitive level, gets its point from the human interest, individual and collective, in gaining and sharing true information." To the extent "their point or purpose is concerned, they are equally related to the truth."[60] These remarks suggest that whether a virtue is a virtue *of truth* depends on its purpose and, thus, that for which it exists; namely, whether it aims at gaining and sharing the truth. It is worth noting, however, that this does not entail that the virtues of truth contribute equally to attaining that purpose or aim—a significant point we will address later.[61] But before we get there, we must look at each of the two virtues Williams identifies. To this task I now turn. [62]

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60. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 126.
61. See chapter 2, section 3 below.
62. *Truth and Truthfulness* consists of 10 chapters plus an endnote discussing the vocabulary of truth (primarily) in Ancient Greece. The first two chapters are preliminary: chap. 1, "The Problem," outlines the issue Williams deals with, and chap. 2, "Genealogy," addresses his methodology. Chap. 3, "The State of Nature: A Rough Guide," lays out the basic senses of Accuracy and Sincerity, believing and telling the truth, as they emerge in the fictional State of Nature story Williams constructs. Next, chap. 4, "Truth, Assertion, and Belief," clarifies some issues regarding what it means for beliefs and assertions to be true. This leads to the central two chapters, chap. 5, "Sincerity: Lying and Other Styles of Deceit," and chap. 6, "Accuracy: A Sense of Reality," which contain Williams' fuller discussion of the virtues of truth and their refinements, and are therefore key for *Truth and Truthfulness* as a whole. After this, chap. 7, "What Was Wrong with Minos?," and chap. 8, "From Sincerity to Authenticity," move into history and describe historical developments connected to Accuracy and Sincerity respectively: in chap. 7, the emergence of an objective conception of the past in Thucydides; in chap. 8, the invention of the idea of authenticity in the 18th century and its elaboration by Jean Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot. The two chapters provide an interlude of sorts before the culmination of *Truth and Truthfulness* in chap. 9, "Truthfulness, Liberalism, and Critique," which reveals the political aims and motivations behind Williams' project, and which leads into his hope regarding truthfulness (see pages 8–9 above, including note 25). Chap. 10, "Making Sense," discusses the construction of narratives, particularly historical ones, and so offers a reflection on and a kind of postscript to Williams' preceding account, before ending, as seen, by reiterating the hope expressed in the penultimate chapter.

CHAPTER 1

On Accuracy

Forming a clearer and more adequate understanding of truthfulness requires bringing its components into view. As noted in the introduction, according to Williams living truthfully is a matter of developing and exhibiting two "virtues of truth": Accuracy and Sincerity. In this chapter I will explicate the former, and in the next the latter.

My discussion intends to shed light on Williams' account as well as to deepen it. After offering an outline of Accuracy, I will prod the virtue further, focusing especially on the way in which a person exhibiting it can be said to aim at the truth, and the extent to which he does so. This will help clarify the contours of Accuracy—what is part of it and what is not.

I. An Outline

The virtue of Accuracy, Williams explains, "encourages people to spend more effort than they might have done in trying to find the truth, and not just accept any belief-shaped thing that comes into their head."[1] This implies a few things. First, Accuracy presupposes the everyday idea that

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1. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 87–88.

inquiry and beliefs aim at truth.[2] Beliefs, as Williams explains, aim at the truth in the sense that they are subject to norms of truth, meaning that it is a "*fatal* objection" to a belief that it is false. If a person who has a belief "recognizes that the content of his belief is false, in virtue of this alone he abandons his belief in it."[3] Second, Accuracy is directly related to this aim of beliefs: it implies being in a good state of affairs given the norms that govern beliefs. As Accuracy increases, the likelihood of violating the norms of truth decreases. In more practical terms, it involves "care, reliability, and so on, in discovering and coming to believe the truth."[4]

The focus on truth-discovery and belief-formation leads us to further features of the virtue. First, there are better and worse ways to attain truth, and cultivating Accuracy will necessarily involve a choice between different *investigative strategies*, or "policies of investigation."[5] Second, since we humans are finite creatures with limited time and strength, we are forced to assess the value of going down a certain investigative route and the value of the "possible information" we may gain "against the cost of acquiring it." To put it otherwise, investigation and information have

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2. Ibid., 135–136. Also, see ibid., 128–130 for Williams' response to Rorty's argument against the idea that inquiry aims at truth (for instance in Rorty, "Is Truth a Goal"; see also page 11, note 28 above). Williams interprets it as a form of indistinguishability argument that states, "if we (unqualifiedly) believe or (completely) agree that snow is white, there is no further [reason] for us to go in the direction of truth." There are two main problems with this, Williams argues. First, while we cannot make the distinction between complete agreement and truth (e.g. agreeing that snow is white and its being true snow is white) "with regard to ourselves at the present moment," we can make it with regard to another person, who can make it with regard to me, and we can both make it with regard to our past or future. Second, Williams suggests that the notion of justification of belief calls on the notion of truth: a justified belief is one that is arrived at by considerations that support it in the sense of "giving reason to think that it is true". See also Michael Dummett, *Truth and the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 39.
3. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 67. As Williams also puts it, "if the person who has the belief accepts the objection, he thereby ceases to have the belief, or at least it retreats to the subconscious" (ibid.).
4. Ibid., 127.
5. An example may help to clarify this. Take the study of mental processes: there is at least the choice between the psychoanalytic method with its intensive long-lasting engagement with a single individual and its inference of unconscious mental phenomena, the study of animal responses to stimuli and postulation of general mental processes more typical of behaviorism, as well as the use of MRI's to study brain functioning. Or, take the study of the past: one can rely on oral testimony, written sources contemporaneous to a given event, or a mixture of the two by using written and other evidence to cross-examine the testimony of those involved.

their price, in pursuing them we are forgoing other things, and so Accuracy requires appropriate *investigative investment*.[6]

These two notions—investigative strategies and investigative investment—imply that there are obstacles to our inquiries and to truth-discovery that we must overcome in order to be successful and acquire accurate beliefs. It is due to such obstacles that there are costs to truth-seeking and a need to "invest" in the investigation and choose the appropriate strategy. If no such obstacles existed, then truth-acquisition would be effortless and costless.

There are two kinds of obstacles—external and internal. External obstacles are instances, as Williams puts it, "of the world's being resistant to our will." There is a way the world is that is (largely) independent of our will, and our beliefs are "answerable to [this] order of things" even as the world does not lend itself to be straightforwardly and easily discovered.[7] Internal or inner obstacles, on the other hand, can be found within the inquirer, in phenomena such as self-deception and wishful thinking that the inquirer must resist if his pursuit of truth is to be genuine and have any chance of success.[8] The two types of obstacles can be explained further by connecting them, as Williams does, to two different sense of "objectivity." He suggests that external obstacles give currency to the idea of "objectivity" as a world independent of us, while internal obstacles are tied up with the other sense of "objectivity" as a property or virtue of an inquirer.[9]

Some more words on these obstacles are in order. Starting with the external ones, we can say, following Williams, that some of them are general across investigations. While he does not expand on this, at least such obstacles as lack of time and resources and the ambiguity or

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6. Ibid., 123–124.
7. Of course, we can change the world in certain respects and our will is to that extent efficacious, but there are limits to this—the world is resistant to being changed. This is another sense in which the world is resistant to our will.
8. We might say, following Williams, that Accuracy requires "skills and attitudes that resist the pleasure principle" (ibid., 125).
9. Ibid., 125.

overabundance of information spring to mind. At the same time, many obstacles are specific to the subject matter of the investigation: the obstacles to discovering the composition of dark matter are different from those to establishing subatomic processes or to finding out the real sources of one's anger. What makes external obstacles to truth-acquisition particularly challenging is that we do not typically know what exactly they are.[10]

Internal obstacles, according to Williams, concern a person's "will," by which he means "his attitudes, desires, and wishes, the spirit of his attempts, the care that he takes."[11] They consist in distortions of belief by our desires, wishes, character, and such, and thus, to follow Williams, involve wishful thinking, fantasy, and self-deception.[12] According to the norms of truth that govern our beliefs, beliefs should not be subject to the "will," but in reality our desires, fears, and emotions commonly influence our beliefs through a covert process.[13] Beliefs stray from the truth for two reasons in particular. First, we want a certain belief to be true because it is our belief, and thus come to believe that it is true (the belief's *being mine* drives the self-deception). Second, and in a more familiar fashion, we wish for something to be true (say, that all men are good) and thus end up believing that it is (the *contents* of the belief drive the self-deception). Both are forms of compromise-formation: by deceiving ourselves we are able to hold on to the sense of reality as independent of our will and the rules of belief-formation that dictate that a belief cannot depend

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10. Ibid., 133.
11. Ibid., 127.
12. Ibid., 127, 134. In her review of Williams' work, Catherine Z. Elgin suggests "fickleness" as another obstacle. As she understands the term, a fickle person is "anyone given to capricious changes of mind." Because his opinions reverse "frequently and for no apparent reason," there is also no reason to consider any of his beliefs accurate. Catherine Z. Elgin, "Williams on Truthfulness," review of *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, by Bernard Williams, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 219 (April 2005): 348. Elgin's addition of fickleness into the catalog of obstacles is welcome and she is right that Accuracy could hardly be expected from such a person— even if we must recognize the possibility that some of the person's fickle beliefs will, in fact, be true.
13. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 83.

on a wish, while living in an apparent world shaped by our will. As Williams puts it, it is a way for fantasy to pay homage to the sense of reality.[14]

The challenge and danger of both types of obstacles is ubiquitous. As long as we are mortal and lack omniscience, we will encounter external obstacles; as long as we are belief-forming creatures full of wishes, internal obstacles will trouble us. It is true that internal obstacles are more or less the same across different subject matters, whereas, as noted above, external obstacles vary to some extent. Whether one is doing psychology or chemistry, self-deception remains a possibility; on the other hand, moving from the former to the latter field alters at least some of the external obstacles. But we should not read too much into the constancy of internal obstacles or think it makes safeguarding against them any easier: the inner workings of fantasy are notoriously difficult to unmask, and self-deception and wishful thinking can take many shapes and forms. At the same time, the extent to which one or the other type of obstacle poses a problem depends on the topic of investigation. For instance, self-deception is much more likely when a topic bears on things important to us, say our own selves or the life of our community, rather than the brain of a leech. And questions like the ones mentioned above, for example about the composition of dark matter, are clearly going to face greater external obstacles than the attempt to figure out whether there is a tree in front of me.[15] Still, from the viewpoint of Accuracy all obstacles to all kinds of questions wherever they occur are significant. This is true for so-called "everyday truths" such as the tree in front of me, truths that Williams argues can "readily and reasonably be counted as facts,"[16] no less than for more complicated, less everyday matters, whether the truths in question

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14. Ibid., 134–135.
15. I am here obviously leaving aside skeptical and metaphysical worries about whether there "really" is a tree there independent of me as a perceiver and my description of it, and whether such non-description relative existence is ever possible (see e.g. Richard Rorty, "Charles Taylor on Truth," in *Truth and Progress*, 86).
16. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 10.

be those of physics, history, or psychology. After all, we are capable of failing to grasp and deceiving ourselves about even the most basic things.

The ubiquity of these obstacles suggests that the notions of investigative strategy and investment should be applied widely. Though these two notions are more important in relation to more complex topics, they are likely to have a role even in everyday matters; doubt about the most everyday beliefs can and does arise. The virtue of Accuracy has a role to play no matter the truths or the subject matter.

But how exactly do we overcome the obstacles? We have noted the promise of the appropriate or right investigative strategy, but what is such a strategy? And what exactly is the role of investigative investment?

Whether an investigative strategy or method is appropriate from the viewpoint of Accuracy depends on whether it has the property of being truth-acquiring, of being disposed to generate true belief. What kind of method, then, has this property? Such a question, Williams notes, appears to call for an answer that is at once general (that is, true across different subject matters since the property of being truth-acquiring is univocal) and substantial (that is, provide informative judgment about which sort of methods have the property and which do not). The problem, however, is that no general and nontrivial account of a method which favors finding out the truth is forthcoming. What can be said at this level of generality is simply, rather platudinously, that if X is a good method to find out whether "P" is true, then it must be a good way to find out whether P—this point, indeed, can be generalized across different subject matters. But whether a particular method is a good way to find out P depends on what the P is. A substantial account of such method

will thus need to understand what is being investigated. Or, as Williams puts it, "the efficacy of the method is related to the content of the propositions or classes of propositions."[17]

In more simple terms, whether an investigative strategy is good depends on whether we are looking at questions of physics, human psychology, economics, or morals. This we can link back to the obstacles to truth-acquisition. Different constellations of obstacles apply to different fields and subject matters, and since the obstacles differ, it seems reasonable to think that the ways to overcome those obstacles will differ as well. The question of the appropriate method or strategy is thus a question without a very satisfying general answer.

Williams explains that to get deeper into the appropriateness of different methods, and to articulate how ways of discovering whether something is true are related to what it is for such a thing to be true, would require entering the realm of metaphysics and theory of knowledge. We would need to consider each object of investigation and then try to find the method of investigation most appropriate for it. Such work is no doubt valuable, but Williams does not consider it necessary given his concern, which is with the virtue truthfulness and its components. An account of truthfulness does not require explaining how exactly obstacles will be overcome when it comes to different types of investigations, only pointing out the types of obstacles to truth-acquisition and, above all, the traits of a person who characteristically surmounts them. As Williams puts it, "granted there are methods of inquiry that are truth-acquiring, what are the qualities of people who can be expected to choose and use them reliably?"[18]

With respect to this question, we can note that two distinct steps are involved: choosing a method and following it. In the absence of a general method nothing very much can be said regarding the latter. One certainly needs to be skilled in following and using the specific method,

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17. Ibid., 131–132. See also Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 154–156.
18. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 132–133.

which in turn means one must know what its requirements are. To be successful, one will probably need also persistence,[19] patience,[20] and good fortune. Moreover, one has to want to follow the method, though the reasons for such desire may be many, as we will shortly see.[21] When it comes to choosing the appropriate method, it is paramount to have an understanding of the thing under investigation and what types of investigations are appropriate for such things (so, questions of metaphysics and theory of knowledge). Admittedly, these requirements lead us to the problem of how one can acquire such understanding without a method in the first place—a problem Williams does not fully address. Likely, one will have to start with a method but be ready to critique and modify it as its inadequacies become apparent and as one acquires better understanding of the object of investigation. In this process one will have to rely on a mix of qualities, such as skill, intuition, and preexisting familiarity with the subject matter, as well as some luck. Moreover, just as with using, so also with choosing a method there is the further issue of motivations.

What sort of motivations, then, impel someone to carefully choose and follow a method? Why would one bother to take care with either? The motives for choosing and using a method are likely going to be similar—after all, when the motive leading to the choice of method disappears one is likely to stop following it. But what might such motives be? This leads us to investigative investment and the reasons why people choose—invest in—the pursuit of truth over other things. In a sense this issue is more fundamental from the viewpoint of truthfulness than the question of

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19. Persistence is needed to overcome boredom and to sustain the effort by which one prevails over the difficult stretches in acquiring knowledge. This also suggests the importance of discipline. See Bertrand Russell, *Education and the Good Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), 251–254.
20. Patience is required because getting to the truth may take a while and can involve stretches of ambiguity, vagueness, and not knowing the answer. Someone who cannot withstand such stretches, perhaps due to a fear of losing control or the compulsion to have a clear-cut conception of things at every moment, is disposed to jump to pacifying and comforting but premature conclusions. The person who is unable to tolerate not having an answer is liable to short-circuit the process of following the investigative method.
21. Being forced to follow a method might work as well, though it seems unlikely to be as effective in the long run—particularly given the need for persistence and patience.

investigative strategies, since it drives the process of truth-acquisition. Without the motivation to pursue truth, Accuracy would never be able to get off the ground—particularly given the often high cost of acquiring information.

It is worth here to review the motivations Williams outlines. These can be split into two types: other-concerned and self-concerned. With respect to the first, Williams notes that a conscientious person in a situation of trust will take care to ensure information is passed on correctly and truly. In this case, I am invested in truth "on behalf of someone else, or on behalf of the group"; the motivation to bear the costs of investigation and to pursue it well stems from my relationship to others.[22] But one can be invested in truth quite apart from any such trustful relationship. There are at least three further, self-concerned, reasons why one might make such an investment. First, I can see it as "a speculative investment against future practical needs," calculating that knowing the truth will come in handy at a later date. In this case, truth is purely instrumental—the best way to ensure my future well-being.[23] On the contrary, second, I might desire truth for its own sake: "as a matter of conscience, honor, or self-respect." Truth is something one should pursue, and so I should have it as my goal quite regardless of any practical benefits (or drawbacks) it may bring—with Nietzsche we can say that "here we stand… on moral ground."[24]

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22. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 124. We might add also "on behalf of one's relationship to someone else," a situation that straddles the other/self-concerned distinction.
23. Ibid., 124.
24. Ibid., 126. For Nietzsche's statement see *The Gay Science*, 344. Related to this is also MacIntyre's assertion that "truth is *the* good internal to rational enquiry and the kind of trustworthiness required from each other by those who participate in enquiry includes an unfailing regard for truth and for truthfulness." Alasdair MacIntyre, "Truthfulness and Lies: What Is the Problem and What Can We Learn from Mill?," in *Ethics and Politics*, vol. 2 of *Selected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 119–120.

Third, the satisfaction of my curiosity, of my desire to know, may itself be a reward of investigation. Acquiring knowledge may be the prize and the source of pleasure.[25]

Whatever the more specific motivation, we can note on a more general level what is involved in desiring truth and seriously attempting to satisfy it. To quote Williams, the desire for truth implies that "if P, to believe that P, and if not P, to believe that not-P."[26] Given the obstacles that stand in the way of this, we can also say that the desire is a desire to overcome both external and internal obstacles to acquiring truth. Beginning with such a desire, one faces then the issue of how to properly investigate the question at hand, with all the complications regarding the choice of investigative strategy and method we have seen. But the desire for truth specifies which sort of investigation will be acceptable to the person involved, and which will not be. It does so by "controlling the formation of belief,"[27] to use Williams' phrase, and thus setting the conditions for one's beliefs; namely, that they be true.

The discussion so far should help us better understand Accuracy. As a virtue, it aims at true belief, and getting there requires overcoming external and internal obstacles to truth discovery. This in turn means we have to be willing to "invest" in the acquisition of truth and choose the

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25. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 124. Admittedly, the formulation of the third reason appears to leave it ambiguous whether the proper goal of action is the possession of truth or the expected satisfaction it brings. However, it seems to me, and Williams would likely agree, that to distinguish between the two in such a way would be to misunderstand what the satisfaction is about. To be sure, one's curiosity will be satisfied only if one acquires (or is reasonably sure one acquires) the truth, but the satisfaction lies in having acquired and possessing it. The satisfaction and possession of truth are tied up, such that in aiming at the satisfaction of curiosity one aims at truth and vice versa.

26. Ibid., 133. Among other things, this implies resistance to "bullshit." Harry Frankfurt writes that bullshit is "produced without concern for truth," and that for "the bullshitter… the truth values of his statements are of no central interest to him… his intention is neither to report the truth nor to conceal it," a fact such a person furthermore hides (Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, 47, 55; it is worth reflection whether hiding that fact is essential to bullshitting, or whether a bullshitter could simply lack awareness of what he is doing). Investigative investment, on the contrary, means that truth does matter; for the truthful person, the truth values of his beliefs and statements are of great concern. He is interested not in having some beliefs about the topic under consideration, but *true* beliefs, and he will thus resist "bullshit" no less than error.

27. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 133.

appropriate investigative strategy. With sufficient investment and a good choice, as well as skill, patience, persistence, and luck in following the chosen method, one can overcome the obstacles to acquiring the truth. Having said that, we should not lose sight of something Williams reminds us of: real world inquiries rarely if ever yield certainty, the pursuit of such certainty would be impossible or very expensive in terms of effort and time, and it can be difficult to decide when one has invested sufficient time and effort and be convinced one has done enough.[28]

II. Ensuring the Correctness of Belief

We have seen that the Accurate person aims at the truth and we have seen, more or less, what that involves. But the matter is somewhat more complicated than it appears thus far. If we are to have a thorough understanding of Accuracy, we must be more specific about the characteristic activity the virtue entails.

A good example of the nuance involved can already be found in Williams' introduction of the virtues of truth. He writes that Accuracy means "you do the best you can to acquire true beliefs."[29] At first sight, this formulation seems clear enough, but problems begin once we attempt to specify what it means in practice. Are we doing our best to acquire true beliefs when we form as many true beliefs as we can, or when we form only beliefs that are true? The two possibilities are different in an important way. In the first case, what matters is that we strive to acquire as much truth as possible, which is of course compatible with believing a number of false things. The person

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28. Ibid., 134.
29. Ibid., 11. It is worth noting the inadequacy of the formulation as a formulation of a supposed virtue. Two individuals can both do the best they can to acquire true beliefs, but their success may differ greatly, and consequently we can distinguish between them in terms of how accurate they are—indeed, one of them might *not* do the best he can to acquire true beliefs and still be more accurate than the other. But if Accuracy is a *virtue,* then it makes sense to say that Accuracy depends, at least in part, on whether one actually manages to acquire true beliefs. One's best efforts do not guarantee virtue, because virtue requires doing the right thing and not merely attempting it.

who has studied history, physics, psychology, economics, and a number of other subjects is likely to both know more things and believe more false things (his understanding of certain aspects of the subjects is likely to be flawed) than the scholar who is committed to understanding the thought of just one thinker. In the second case, on the other hand, what matters is that we avoid believing anything false; what matters is the proportion of true beliefs relative to false beliefs. And here, our scholar seems to fit the bill better than the voracious student of many subjects.

Though Williams does not draw or address this distinction explicitly, Accuracy is closer to the latter sense of doing your best than the former. The overt meaning of the term itself already suggests this. "Accuracy" does not imply or connote in any obvious way the attempt to acquire much truth or the wide-ranging pursuit of truth. Normally, when we say someone is accurate at something or that his accuracy is good, we mean that the person is precise in his execution of whatever he is engaged in without implying that he is likely to engage in or pursue such a thing frequently. Thus, when we say that a student calculates accurately, we mean he gets to the right or correct answer, but this does not mean he calculates often, nor that he enjoys calculating, chooses mathematics over other activities, and so on. Likewise, when we praise an archer for his accuracy, we praise him for hitting the bullseye, even if he is tired of or retired from archery or has promised his wife to keep his bow in the bedroom closet. Much the same applies when it comes to accuracy with regards to truth, or Accuracy: the term suggests the disposition and skill to avoid error and get to the truth when truth is at issue, when one is forming beliefs, but not necessarily the frequent pursuit of truth. Of course, accuracy tends to come with practice, and so the person who engages in an activity only little is unlikely to be particularly precise at it—whether the activity be mathematics, archery, or belief-formation. But in itself, the term accuracy does not imply anything

more than success in the sense of precision or correctness when one does in fact engage in an activity.[30]

Williams' own descriptions of Accuracy support our interpretation. As noted above, he calls it "the virtue that encourages people to spend more effort than they might have done in trying to find the truth, and not just accept any belief-shaped thing that comes into their head"; he also writes that it implies you "take care" with regards to the truth.[31] This strongly suggests that Accuracy is not just about believing true things, but, significantly, about how one comes to believe them. And capturing much truth in ways that also lead one to believe many false things is deficient in this regard.

Most importantly, however, the first time Williams offers a more detailed description of the two virtues of truth, he refers to Accuracy as a disposition that "applies to… acquiring a correct belief."[32] Someone with the virtue of Accuracy is characteristically disposed to acquire correct beliefs rather than false ones. The emphasis in Williams' formulation is on ensuring that one's belief is accurate, not on how much truth one manages to find. Furthermore, it is significant that the remark occurs in the context of Williams' imaginary State of Nature story. As we saw in the introduction, that story is meant to fix the core meaning of Accuracy and Sincerity on account of which "elaborations" of them can be said to be elaborations of the same thing.[33] Within that context, Williams' description of Accuracy can be reasonably taken to delineate its core meaning.

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30. By highlighting the similarities I do not intend to deny differences between these cases, most notably that while it is clear whether one is accurate with one's bow, things are less clear when it comes to forming beliefs. Calculation is interesting in this regard, because it seems easier to assess the accuracy of mathematical calculations than belief-formation more generally. And yet, all one can do to test one's accuracy in mathematics, similarly to belief-formation in general, is to look again at the problem, assess whether one has followed well the method one judges to be appropriate, and see whether one can get to the same answer.
31. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 11, 87–88.
32. Ibid., 44.
33. See pages 15–16 above.

So, while Williams later discusses the "further development" and "refinements" Accuracy undergoes,[34] elaborations which add more content to Accuracy and make it more "thick,"[35] we should deem Accuracy in its basic sense to refer to the disposition of character whereby one acquires beliefs that are correct.

This might readily give the impression that Accuracy is primarily about avoiding error, and so that avoidance of error fixes the sense in which the virtue implies aiming at the truth. I employ error here in a general sense, referring to the condition of holding a false belief: one is "in error" when one believes something false.[36] The person who has the virtue of Accuracy aims to ensure he has correct beliefs, and this necessarily involves avoiding false, erroneous, beliefs. But though avoiding error is essential to Accuracy, particularly if we focus on its basic or core meaning, it would be an error to think that it is all, or above all, what the truthful person is concerned with.

There are two ways to avoid error, after all. We may avoid it by having beliefs that are true or by *not* having beliefs. Consider the character we mentioned previously, the scholar studying a specific thinker and his thought. The scholar can avoid error about the thinker's thought by working hard, reading the thinker carefully, reflecting on what he reads, and forming correct beliefs about him; or, he can avoid error by giving up the task of forming beliefs about the thinker altogether. But we would hardly think he is exhibiting the virtue of Accuracy or truthfulness— indeed any virtue—in the latter case. We can also consider this in relation to a specific question— say, whether or not border barriers have an impact on migration.[37] One might escape being in error

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34. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness,* 126 and 141. I discuss an important refinement in the following section.
35. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits,* e.g. 129–130, 140–141, 200.
36. As such, the term encompasses more specific notions such as mistake, misunderstanding, being deceived, etc., which tend to provide context for and explanation of the error. This is consistent with the dictionary definition. See *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "error, *n.,*" accessed January 25, 2019, http://www.oed.com/.
37. Though this timely topic is controversial, I take it to be an uncontroversial claim that border barriers sometimes impact migration—in part because it is a rather modest claim. Clear examples of some such impact abound (e.g.

by investigating the question, looking at evidence, assessing the claims and concluding, correctly, that sometimes border walls do have an impact, and then shaping one's beliefs accordingly—whether that means replacing a false belief one held previously or acquiring a wholly new one.[38] But one might also avoid error by *not* investigating the question, by refusing to believe anything and suspending any beliefs one has about the topic; effectively, one can avoid error by *evading* the question. But if Accuracy is about *acquiring* correct beliefs, and one avoids error by *not* acquiring beliefs as in the second case, indeed by dropping beliefs one has, then one is not exhibiting Accuracy. Thus, we can say that a person with a disposition to avoid error by avoiding belief does not have the virtue of Accuracy. Truthfulness may imply characteristically suspending judgment, but only in order to find out truth and not as a goal in itself.[39]

This reveals that Accuracy implies not just avoiding error, but avoiding error by means of avoiding ignorance. By ignorance I mean the want or lack of knowledge, the absence of (justified) true belief;[40] we may say that while error involves false belief, ignorance consists of false belief

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Hungary's southern border in 2015). Of course, what exactly the impact is (reduction, diversion, etc.), is a further question.

The chosen example touches on a matter of contemporary political and cultural significance that is intertwined with issues of Accuracy, Sincerity, lies, misleading statements, bullshit—in short, with truthfulness. "Truthy," often hyperbolic, claims regarding the topic are the norm on both sides of the political spectrum. Indeed, when observing the political "debate" it is hard not to form the impression that only a small portion of what is said on the matter aims at truth even in the minimal sense that beliefs do. Williams himself once raised a similar concern: "the status of politics as represented in the media is ambiguous between entertainment and the transmission of discoverable truth… politicians, the media, and the audience conspire to pretend that important realities are being seriously considered, that the actual world is being responsibly addressed." Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 163–164, originally published in 1996 in the article "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception," *Social Research* 63, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 603–617. It seems undeniable that the situation has worsened in this respect since Williams first wrote the words.

38. Part of this is being attuned to what the evidence does and does not show. In the present case, the evidence mentioned in the previous note (note 37) would only show that a general belief that walls have no impact on migration is false, not that walls necessarily or inevitably have an impact. This evidence together would only demand dropping that general belief.

39. After all, Williams writes of "the qualities of people that are displayed in wanting to know the truth, in finding it out" (Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 7).

40. This, too, is consistent with the dictionary definition. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "ignorance, *n.*," accessed January 25, 2019, http://www.oed.com/.

or nonbelief (or lack of justification).[41] Someone who avoids error on a particular question by avoiding ignorance on it avoids, thus, false beliefs and nonbelief—that is, he forms a true belief. In other words, when the person with Accuracy considers a question—by happenstance, because of his interests, due to a sense of what is important—then characteristically he does not remain ignorant about it. When he considers x, then his beliefs about x are characteristically true—he is neither in error nor ignorant. The Accurate person aims at the truth in the sense that in considering a question, he aims to form beliefs that are true and none that are false.

III. Getting to the Truth

And yet, even this does not seem to be enough as a description of what it means to exhibit Accuracy, or the sense in which the virtue implies the pursuit of truth. The following examples will show why.

Consider an auditor who is working on a client's accounts and is concerned to acquire true beliefs about them. Suppose he characteristically acquires only true beliefs about the client's books. This does not yet mean that his true beliefs adequately capture the situation of the client or

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41. For the most part, we can leave out the last criterion of justification when it comes to truthfulness. Truthfulness requires Accuracy, and Accuracy is partly a matter of having the right investigative methods or strategies, methods that reliably render the truth. Since the beliefs of someone with the disposition of Accuracy arise out of truth-generating investigative methods, his beliefs appear to be thereby justified. Thus, here it seems acceptable to speak of ignorance and overcoming it without discussing questions of justification more extensively. Nonetheless, in a further study it would be worth examining and assessing more closely whether acquiring beliefs through methods of investigation that reliably lead one to truth is enough to justify those beliefs.

We can draw some implications from the formulations in the text, which may be useful for those interested in a more formal analysis. Since error is the condition of holding a false belief, and since ignorance is the absence of (justified) true belief, every instance of error implies ignorance: if I believe that x, and x is false, then my belief is not a (justified) true belief. However, the reverse does not hold: if I lack a justified true belief that y, that does not entail I have a false belief that not-y—another possibility is that I have no belief (and thus no false belief) about the issue at all (or else, that my belief is unjustified). Thus, ignorance does not entail error. Further, successfully overcoming ignorance about something, that is, acquiring knowledge or a justified true belief about the thing, does imply avoiding error (a false belief) about it: if I (justifiedly) believe that z, and z is true, then I do not have a false belief that z. However, successfully avoiding a false belief (i.e. error) does not entail avoiding ignorance: one way for me to avoid the false belief w is by having no belief about the question, in which case I am ignorant.

the full picture of what is going on. For instance, despite his concern to acquire (only) true beliefs, he may be inattentive, thoughtless, or lazy and fail to examine the aspects of the clients' financial statements that would reveal the full picture. Now it is possible that as a result of this he draws the wrong overall conclusions and forms false beliefs about the client (say, that the client's accounts are in order when they are not); it is also possible that he does not, either because it so happens that his beliefs turn out to be correct (the auditor believes the client has not engaged in fraud and indeed the client has not) or because he carefully refrains from drawing any such broader conclusions (he only has the limited belief that the figures he has analyzed show no signs of fraud). But even though in the latter case he has only acquired true beliefs—avoided error by avoiding ignorance—it does not look like he has got to the bottom of things, nor has he demonstrated a real concern to do so. We can then imagine he sincerely communicates with others—his colleagues, his boss, and so on. Assuming his beliefs about the client are true and he communicates those beliefs without deception, his assertions will be true as well—even if they leave important things out. But is our auditor an example of a truthful person? It seems possible to fault him for missing truths within his purview, and so we can wonder whether being truthful does not require more of him given his role as an auditor. Indeed, we can wonder whether his concern for truth, manifesting itself in a motivation to acquire true beliefs but not get to the bottom of things, is enough to merit the attribution of Accuracy. That is, might there be a deficiency in the auditor's character with respect to the virtue of truthfulness, even when his beliefs are characteristically true?

Consider another example: the scholar we mentioned previously. He may come to hold all kinds of false beliefs about the thought of the thinker he studies, in which case there is a clear problem with regards to truthfulness. But it seems there is another way for him to be deficient in truthfulness: despite characteristically forming true beliefs about the thinker, those beliefs might

fail to amount to an adequate understanding of the thinker's thought. Let us say the scholar correctly identifies the thinker's opposition to moralism and the reasons and the arguments the thinker marshals against moralism. The scholar thereby forms true beliefs regarding the thinker's opposition to moralism. And yet, it is possible that he remains ignorant of something significant regarding that opposition; for instance, that the thinker's opposition itself is, at bottom, a kind of moralism because it is based on some of moralism's basic assumptions. In that case, the scholar correctly believes that the thinker is an avowed anti-moralist, and yet he has no beliefs about the underlying relationship between moralism and the thinker's thought because he has not gone deep enough. It may be that the scholar is vaguely aware of the issue and evades it in order to avoid forming false beliefs and being in error. But there are various other possible reasons for his ignorance, such as that he simply lacks sufficient investment or interest in his object, or that he is lazy or inattentive, or that it is part of his character to avoid difficult and possibly uncomfortable questions. As a result, the scholar's true beliefs about the thinker do not amount to the truth about the thinker. Indeed, we can say that though he seems to be disposed to acquire true beliefs, he is not disposed to acquire the accurate and adequate truth about the object of his concern. And this raises the prospect that he is not quite the way we would expect from a truthful person. But is his failing really one of truthfulness?

It is not immediately obvious that the failures of these two characters should count as failures in the virtue of Accuracy. If our scholar writes a monograph on the thinker he studies, and his account is (more or less) true and we have no reason to think he is withholding anything relevant that he knows, we are likely to say he is being truthful whether or not the account captures all the relevant aspects of the thinker's thought. But when we consider truthfulness as a virtue what matters is not one off success, or whether some actions or their product at a given point in time

can be characterized as truthful, but whether the actions result from the right kind of character.[42] Unless the scholar's truthful monograph arises out of and expresses the right dispositions, those that make up Accuracy (and Sincerity), we should not attribute to him the virtue of truthfulness.

The relevant question, then, is whether the kind of character to which we can reasonably attribute truthfulness involves the dispositions and traits that characteristically impel one to get to the bottom of things and discover all relevant truths about something, to pursue and acquire an adequate understanding of an object of inquiry. To be sure, if the scholar willfully opts not to capture some such truths, perhaps by evading some relevant aspect of the topic of study, then there is clearly a problem from the viewpoint of truthfulness: in effect, the scholar is willfully avoiding truth-acquisition and so, at best, avoiding error through ignorance. But the problem does not disappear if the failure is unwilful: we are unlikely to think there is no issue with respect to truthfulness if a person is prevented by his laziness or thoughtlessness from seeing the need for further investigation. Williams, after all, suggests that Accuracy "implies care, reliability, and so on, in discovering and coming to believe the truth,"[43] and it does not seem to make a material difference whether one's failure to take care, be reliable, and so on is willful or not, as long as it is characteristic. This implies that even when one's beliefs are characteristically true, characteristically not going deep enough and failing to acquire true beliefs that adequately capture the truth of the matter is a failure of Accuracy and, therefore, truthfulness.

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42. A difficulty arises from the fact that we use the term truthful to describe more than just someone's character; we also use it to describe assertions and actions whether or not they express a character disposition. A version of this difficulty applies to most if not all virtue terms. It also does not help that we use the term truthfulness loosely. For instance, we are not unlikely to call a witness truthful as long as he replies without deception and states the facts as they are to the best of his knowledge, even if his assertions turn out to be false.

43. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 127.

It seems to me that in its discussion of the "refinements" of Accuracy, Williams' account implicitly points much to this conclusion. Williams writes that "a further development of Accuracy… consists in the desire for truth 'for its own sake'—the passion for *getting it right*."[44] Later, with reference to "a dedication to science and to standards of scientific truthfulness," he discusses "wanting the truth for its own sake (about a significant or interesting question)."[45] Clearly, a key intention behind such remarks is to highlight the way in which the concern with acquiring correct beliefs develops into a concern for truth itself. That is, the person with Accuracy comes to want truth for itself and not instrumentally or for the sake of something else; he finds it desirable for no other reason than that it is true.[46] But this is not all. It is telling that Williams explicates the notion of desiring truth for its own sake in terms of "the passion for *getting it right*." "Getting it right" can be contrasted with *getting it wrong* as well as with *not getting it at all,* and so the locution suggests getting to the truth of the matter about some topic or question. That, in turn, means forming beliefs that accurately and adequately capture the truth of the matter: having true beliefs about some topic or question does not yet mean one has got it right about it if one overlooks some relevant aspects, considerations, and thus truths. Our scholar may have got it right that the thinker he studies is an avowed anti-moralist, but if he fails to realize that the thinker's opposition to moralism is itself moralistic, then he will not have quite got it right about the thinker's

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44. Ibid., 126.
45. Ibid., 141. Apart from Accuracy, "dedication to science and to standards of scientific truthfulness" involves "Sincerity, both with others and with oneself" (ibid.).
46. Cf. John Stuart Mill, "Nature," in *Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society,* vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill,* ed. John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 395, where Mill writes, "Savages are always liars… of any point of honor respecting truth for truth's sake, they have not the remotest idea; no more than the whole East, and the greater part of Europe: and in the few countries which are sufficiently improved to have such a point of honor, it is *confined* to a small minority, who alone, under any circumstances of real temptation practice it." For the importance of truthfulness for Mill see MacIntyre, "Truthfulness and Lies," 114–121.

thought or its relationship to moralism. If he really has the passion to get it right about a certain topic, then he will not be happy if it is shown to him that although nothing he says is false, he has overlooked an important feature of it. This passion is key for Accuracy, or at least refined Accuracy as Williams presents it, and implied in it is the concern not to miss something important about the object of inquiry.[47]

We can clarify this further by calling to mind from our earlier discussion the features of Accuracy Williams identifies: investigative investment and the right investigative methods. Because of investigative investment one wants "to find out the truth on the question at issue,"[48] and because one chooses and uses the right investigative methods, one is able to acquire true beliefs about matters one encounters or considers. The better a person exemplifies the virtue of Accuracy, the more robust his investigative investment and his concern to withstand obstacles and difficulties, and the better his ability to choose and follow investigative methods that lead to truth; as a result, he is more likely to acquire and believe the truth.

To focus on investigative investment, we can see that it involves, at least when robust, the passion for or interest in getting to the truth of the matter. "Seriously want[ing]… to find out the truth on an issue" is a matter of "controlling the formation of belief," and means getting "into the… condition: if P, to believe that P, and if not P, to believe that not P."[49] With respect to a particular topic, issue, or question, investigative investment thus implies aiming to get into the condition of believing what is true about it: one does not want to find out just some truths about the topic, but the truth relevant given one's concern with it—so that if P, then one believes that P. To take our

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47. As for our auditor, we are likely to say he gets it right if his judgment that his client's accounts are in order is correct, whether or not he spends time to get to the bottom of the accounts in such a way as to support the conclusion. But if he is not motivated to get to the bottom, then he is hardly evincing the passion for getting it right about his client's situation that refined truthfulness involves.
48. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 133.
49. Ibid., 133.

scholar, if he investigatively invests in the thought of a thinker, he aims to get to the condition where if something is true about the thinker's thought, he believes it. The same point applies if he invests in a narrower aspect of the thinker's thought: if there is a truth about its relation to moralism, then the scholar wants to capture that truth.[50] Investigative investment points to more than just the concern to hold true beliefs about a topic or question; it points to the concern to get to the bottom of it.

We can thus say that the virtue of Accuracy involves more than our previously entertained idea entailed: it implies avoiding or overcoming ignorance in its own right, and not merely as a means to avoid error. If Accuracy implied only the latter, then the Accurate person would aim to acquire true beliefs insofar as that were needed to avoid error. However, that would, first, conflict with Williams' attribution to the truthful person of a desire or passion for truth for its own sake: if one desires truth for its own sake, then one does not desire true beliefs simply as means to something else. Second, it would be inconsistent with investigative investment and the passion to get it right. They imply getting to the truth about the topic under consideration and so taking care not to miss relevant aspects of the topic; by contrast, aiming at true beliefs as a means to avoid error only requires forming true beliefs when one has beliefs, regardless of what one notices or misses.

The truthful person's focus, then, is squarely on overcoming his ignorance about the topics he deals with. And that involves making sure that his beliefs adequately capture the truth of the matter. Even if the scholar's beliefs about a thinker's thought are correct (he avoids error), he remains ignorant about the topic of his study as long his beliefs about it leave out something important. Though the person exemplifying Accuracy is concerned with not being in error, he will

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50. More formally: if one investigatively invests in topic A, and x, y, z, and q are true of and relevant to one's consideration of A, then one wants to believe x, y, z, and q—and not just x and z.

not be happy until he gets hold of the truth. And since as a *virtuous* person he succeeds rather than merely attempts, he does not characteristically miss truths relevant to his concern or inquiry.[51] He characteristically aims at *and* acquires the truth on the questions he considers, and so forms and holds accurate and adequate beliefs about them.

IV. The Range of Investigative Investment

Accuracy, then, implies striving for and getting to the truth about matters or questions one deals with. But thus far we have largely left the range of those matters indeterminate. This is an issue we should address.

Up to a point, such indeterminacy is appropriate. It is appropriate because Accuracy leaves it somewhat open what and how many topics one deals with: though Accuracy implies strong investigative investment in whatever questions one deals with, the actual range of investigative investment of a person exhibiting the virtue can vary. We might say, thus, that Accuracy implies something conditional: when (or if) one deals with a matter or question A, one characteristically strives and succeeds to find out the truth about A (which involves having correct beliefs x, y, and z about A). One may deal with a matter for various reasons, some of which we have already mentioned and will discuss again below. But whether one does indeed deal with A, and so whether one wants and chooses to pursue the truth on it, is a further (or prior) issue. Accuracy implies investigative investment, but it does not govern precisely what or how many things one is invested in.

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51. We might say, borrowing an expression from Heinrich Meier, that when it comes to an object or topic of inquiry or contemplation, the genuinely truthful person "seeks to do justice to it in its reality." Heinrich Meier, *On the Happiness of the Philosophic Life: Reflections on Rousseau's Rêveries in Two Books*, trans. Robert Berman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 86.

This can be made clearer using our previous example. If the scholar comes to believe, thanks to certain of his character traits,[52] that the thought of the thinker he studies is based on assumptions shared with the moralism the thinker criticizes, we can say the scholar displays Accuracy. If, as our example assumes, he is interested in the thinker's thought and therefore investigatively invests in it, he will aim—assuming Accuracy—to get to the truth about it. But just because he has little interest in the thinker—perhaps he has not encountered the thinker's thought or perhaps his focus is on other topics—does not necessarily mean that he is failing with respect to Accuracy. Investigative investment is one of the features of Accuracy, but its absence in a specific question does not necessarily imply one is deficient in the virtue. Williams himself points out the possibility of asking "Shall I have a belief about this?" and links the question and its variations to the notion of investigative investment.[53] But he does not suggest that the virtue of Accuracy requires or guarantees that one ask the question often or always answer it in the affirmative. There are multitude of topics and questions that anyone will inevitably, by virtue of human finitude, not invest in. And if this alone were a reason to deem a person lacking in truthfulness, then truthfulness as a virtue would be impossible.[54]

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52. Traits that lead and allow him to overcome various external and internal obstacles to truth-acquisition, such as, say, a strong desire to a contrary belief.
53. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 87.
54. There is, of course, nothing unusual about having no beliefs on a variety of issues: there are many things we do not inevitably form beliefs about. I have no idea what the third nearest star from our solar system looks like or what its attributes are, and I have no beliefs regarding the matter. Similarly, not only do I not know who the Vandal leaders in the 4^h century were, I do not even believe anything about the question—I have no belief that it was, say, Hilderic or Huneric. A moments reflection will reveal to us all kinds of matters we have few or no beliefs about. It is significant that once we become aware of such matters, we can ask ourselves whether we shall try to form beliefs about them or not—whether we shall invest some of our time and effort, however minimal, into forming beliefs on the matters in question.

It should be noted that the absence of a belief about something need not mean one has no cognitive or representational mental content about the thing in question, though that is the most obvious case. It may be that one lacks belief about Vandal leadership even as one holds quite extensive representational propositional attitudes about Vandal leaders because those attitudes fall short of belief. Bernard Reginster explains that "a representational propositional attitude" is "an attitude of acquiescence, in a broad sense, to a representation of the

But is there, then, a range of investment appropriate and necessary for Accuracy, and what is it? That is, is it possible to exhibit Accuracy no matter how few things one invests in, or does truthfulness require some minimum range of concern below which one can be said to fail in terms of truthfulness? Clearly, one must investigatively invest in *something*: since Accuracy implies investigative investment, the complete absence of such investment means there can be no Accuracy. But this only shows that investigative investment must have a range—it leaves open the more interesting and intricate question of what that range might have to be. Indeed, if the range only requires investing in something, then Accuracy seems to be compatible with investing in one thing only.

It is not easy to delineate in a precise manner the range of investigative investment that Accuracy might entail. But we can make the following observations. We have seen that Accuracy involves, most obviously, characteristically ensuring one's beliefs are true, and that ensuring their truth requires sufficient investigative investment in the topics one has beliefs about. This means, then, that a person exhibiting Accuracy characteristically invests in the topics on which he forms beliefs. Furthermore, we have seen that Accuracy implies not just ensuring the correctness of one's beliefs, but also that they adequately capture the truth of the matter and do not leave out something important or relevant. We can say, thus, that the truthful person investigatively invests in whatever topics he forms beliefs about to the extent needed to ensure the correctness and adequacy of his beliefs about those topics.

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world as being a certain way." Some of these attitudes "aim at truth" while others do not: belief is the primary example of the former, "make-believe… or pragmatic reliance on certain concepts in representing the world" are examples of the latter. Bernard Reginster, "Honesty and Curiosity in Nietzsche's Free Spirits," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51, no. 3 (July 2013): 446–447. It is possible for someone to acquiesce to representations about how the world is, but to do so in the latter mode; he might, for instance, form numerous representations and quite extensive stories about Vandal life in the 4th century, without these yet counting as beliefs. In such cases too, no less than in the absence of representational mental content altogether, there exists the question of whether to form *beliefs* about Vandal leadership.

This, however, leaves open at a different level what we were just inquiring about. If the range of investigative investment appropriate to Accuracy is contingent on the topics about which one forms beliefs, then is there an appropriate range of topics for belief-formation? In other words, is there anything we can say regarding how many and which topics the person displaying Accuracy has beliefs about?

Again, it is difficult to say much concerning this in any very specific manner. Nevertheless, we noted that the person with Accuracy does not characteristically avoid forming beliefs—he is, after all, in the business of getting to the truth. Based on this we can say that when he encounters a topic, he is characteristically impelled to form beliefs that adequately capture the truth. To use an example from before, if he encounters claims about the impact of border barriers on migration, he is impelled to find out the answer, and not merely shrug off the question. Naturally, he cannot pay the same attention to or invest as much in everything, and so considerations of what is "significant or interesting," as Williams notes,[55] play a role. Consequently, we can say that the character of the Accurate person is such that when he encounters a topic through his actions or in his thinking, he is impelled to form beliefs about it and so investigatively invest in it, though whether he does so and to what extent depends on other things he has invested in or may have to deal with. This may not be very precise, but it is something—and we should not forget that we are discussing character traits, qualities, and dispositions that make up a virtue, a subject matter which by its very nature appears to allow only limited precision.

What one encounters and what one considers significant or interesting naturally varies from person to person, and depends on a person's social and cultural context, form of life, and so on. However, such variation should not lead us into the mistake of thinking that there is no constancy

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55. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 141.

at all in the human condition. To the contrary, there is likely a core set of topics or questions that a human cannot but encounter—that is, issues which humans face by virtue of being human. Clearly, the thought of a specific thinker or the possible accounting fraud of a specific company are not such issues. But there are other topics that most likely are. For instance, it seems reasonable to think that every human faces the issue of what is good and bad, right and wrong—the problem of morality and ethics. Every or almost every human being has beliefs about right and wrong, and every human being is brought up in an environment where such beliefs exist; thus, every person inevitably encounters moral questions. It seems, then, that a truthful person will strive to find out whether his and others' moral beliefs are true, and indeed to get to the truth of the moral matter.[56] The failure to do so, the lack of investigative investment in this topic, seems to involve an evasion of something one encounters and—almost by definition—considers significant. If there are indeed topics or questions that humans qua humans face, particularly if they are important, then we can say that truthfulness requires investigative investment in them.

Speaking generally, then, we can characterize the truthful person's range of investigative investment, the range that Accuracy implies, in the following way. The truthful person characteristically investigatively invests in those topics, subjects, and questions he encounters, accidentally or of necessity, or those he is interested in or deems significant. This implies that truthful individuals are bound to vary in terms of what they seek to find out and know: this variation is a function of their individual differences and circumstances. However, if what I have said is correct and there are topics or questions that humans as humans encounter, then two truthful individuals also share areas of concern. Indeed, we might say that those areas form the baseline

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56. This, in turn, involves answering the question of whether there can be truth regarding right and wrong.

topics that any genuinely truthful person investigates: no matter how otherwise inclined we are to judge a person's character truthful, if he ignores such topics, something is not quite right.[57] I have suggested one such topic, and reasons why it might be inevitable, but there are likely to be others and a further study of truthfulness would do well to explore what they are.

Still, we should not overestimate the extent of such topics, and keep in mind that there are many issues and questions humans do not inevitably encounter or form beliefs about. And it is important to note that Accuracy, and so truthfulness, is compatible with both pursuing and not pursuing the truth on such issues. The truthful person may well invest and look into them, but there is no guarantee that he will.

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57. An interesting, and comic, example of this can be found in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The example is noteworthy both because the topic of truthfulness is highly important for Nietzsche and because Williams claims Nietzsche as a primary influence and inspiration. For Nietzsche's importance to Williams see *Truth and Truthfulness*, 12–19; see also introduction, pages 13–14, especially note 38 above. For truthfulness and other closely related notions in Nietzsche's work see Alan White, "The Youngest Virtue," in *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*, ed. Richard Schacht (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 63–78; Jean-Luc Nancy, "'Our Probity!' On Truth and Lie in the Moral Sense in Nietzsche," in *Looking After Nietzsche*, ed. Laurence A. Rickels (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 67–87; Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

In the Fourth and Last Part, Nietzsche's Zarathustra encounters "the conscientious one" (in German, *der Gewissenhafte*) who tells Zarathustra that he would "rather know nothing than half-know many things," that he "get[s] to the ground of things," and that "a handsbreadth of ground" suffices him as long as it really is "ground and soil" since "on that one can stand." At first sight, this looks like a robust form of truthfulness: the conscientious one aims to get the truth about something and appears to have admirable qualities that we would associate with Accuracy. However, the situation and Zarathustra's interlocutor prove to be highly comic. The conscientious one turns out to have been fishing leech in the swamp with his outstretched hand, and so Zarathustra asks him if he is "the knower of the leech." But that, the conscientious man protests, "would be something immense…!" Instead, he is "a master and knower of… the leech's *brain*." That is his "world," "home," and "realm," and he has "thrown away everything else" in "pursuing this one thing… that the slippery truth might here no longer slip away." He is focused on this task because the conscience of his spirit wills that he "might know one thing and otherwise know nothing," and so, he admits, "close by… [his] knowing lies… black unknowing." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.4 "The Leech" (translation modified).

The passage derives its humor from the juxtaposition of the qualities that we would readily associate with truthfulness and the utter insignificance of the object of study. A sense of the conscientious man's deficiency is naturally evoked in the reader. And that sense, it seems to me, is connected to the insignificance of his endeavor when contrasted with Zarathustra's truthful grappling with the major themes of existence. The knower of the brain of the leech may well display many qualities of truthfulness, and yet it seems impossible to attribute the virtue to someone with his narrowness of vision—to someone who fails to consider the topics that man as man faces.

It is also important to note that Accuracy does not in itself require actively expanding the range of investigative investment, nor does it imply that the range is particularly wide. The truthful person will expand his investigative investment as he encounters new topics or questions he does not yet understand, and when he becomes aware that he has been evading or ignoring some question or topic that he has faced all along. But this does not mean he actively seeks out ever new things to investigate. A scholar will investigatively invest in other things than just the thinker he studies—at least if he is a truthful person and not merely a truthful scholar. But his being truthful does not mean he will actively look to learn the truths of psychology, history, physics, and geology as well. Not actively inquiring into ever more topics may signify a failing of some sort—perhaps one lacks inquisitiveness or is not well-rounded enough—but it is not a failing or deficiency of Accuracy. We are compelled to say that Accuracy does not entail a commitment to pursuing truth either widely or with respect to a growing number of topics. Truthfulness is compatible with not pursuing the truth and having no beliefs on a wide array of questions; depending on one's life circumstances and what one encounters, it is compatible with having beliefs on only a limited number of matters.[58]

Thus, although Accuracy involves overcoming one's ignorance about many things, it also leaves a wide berth for ignorance. As we have seen, a person displaying Accuracy characteristically overcomes ignorance about the things he investigatively invests in, things he encounters and deals with. But since the virtue does not entail actively expanding the range of such

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58. It may be tempting to infer from "the desire for truth 'for its own sake'" that Williams writes about some broad desire for truth on topics wide and far, but this would be to misunderstand Williams' point. As I noted, Williams later mentions "wanting the truth for its own sake (about a significant or interesting question)," and the parenthetical addition indicates that at stake is not some general passion for truth whatever the truth may be. Rather, as I also noted, Williams calls on the idea of wanting truth for its own sake to highlight that truth is not desired merely instrumentally, as means to something else. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 126, 141; see also page 39 above. But desiring truth for its own sake does not mean that truth is the only thing one desires for itself, nor that one desires it above all other things, nor indeed that one desires it about more and more topics. Wanting truth for its own sake does not imply a broad or general pursuit of it.

investment, there are many things he does not and perhaps will never concern himself with. And someone with an understanding of only certain topics, no matter how accurate and adequate, remains ignorant about a variety of other things. Though Accuracy is opposed to ignorance about the things within a person's purview, it is not necessarily opposed to ignorance about those falling outside his horizon.

From this it follows that breadth of knowledge is a very unreliable proxy for Accuracy—and for truthfulness. It is neither sufficient nor necessary. It is insufficient because one can acquire a breadth of knowledge while being sloppy and holding many false beliefs, or by moving haphazardly from one question to another rather than trying to capture the truth about the questions one deals with. Breadth of knowledge is thus compatible with an absence of the characteristic traits of truthfulness. It is not necessary for Accuracy, because one may characteristically pursue and acquire truth as truthfulness implies, and yet not possess knowledge about all manner of topics due to one's circumstances (for instance, access to means of investigation or the technological level of society) or narrow interests. In fact, if a truthful person decides to expand his horizon and actively seeks out new topics for investigation, that does not in itself make him any more truthful than he was before. Pursuing and acquiring the truths of psychology, history, physics, and geology—broad knowledge in other words—does not suddenly render him better from the perspective of being truthful. The impetus to learn about and encounter ever new topics and truths, then, must come from something external to Accuracy and truthfulness.

V. Truthfulness and Inquisitiveness

Before concluding, I would like to briefly address this impetus to learn about ever new topics. Doing so seems worthwhile since it reveals a feature that is not part of or implied by Accuracy as

Williams analyzes it, even though one might naively think so, and even if the impetus appears to be one manifestation of a concern with the truth.

As we have just seen, the active expansion of the range of investigative investment, the range within which a person characteristically pursues the truth, is not integral to nor entailed by Accuracy. Instead, it seems to me that we can best understand that quality, tendency, or disposition in terms of inquisitiveness. Being inquisitive means to inquire, question, research, and obtain information.[59] This may—and no doubt most often will—imply a passion for the truth, and probably even wanting truth for its own sake, but inquisitiveness primarily designates a strong interest in looking into various questions and topics, especially if they are new and even if it is easier or safer not to; there is a reason why the term is relatively often taken in the sense of "prying."[60] It seems fair to say that a person who is inquisitive is disposed to inquire into ever new topics. If he constantly encounters new things, then this provides his inquisitiveness material to work on; but if he does not, he hardly rests content and instead actively seeks out topics to look into. The disposition to inquisitiveness, then, leads a person to bring more and more things under his concern, and to investigatively invest in them. While the truthful person is content if he is confident that his beliefs are correct and adequately capture the truth of the matters he deals with, such confidence does not suffice for the inquisitive person due to his characteristic impetus to obtain ever more information.

Inquisitiveness thus described does not look like a virtue at all. Whereas the virtue of truthfulness involves not just the attempt to acquire truth, but also successfully overcoming various

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59. This is consistent with the definitions of "inquisitive" and "inquisitiveness." See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.vv. "inquisitive, *adj.* and *n.*," "inquisitiveness, *n.*," accessed August 22, 2019, http://www.oed.com/.

60. Ibid. Thus, one definition of "inquisitive" is "unduly impertinent or curious." It would be a stretch to say that the tendency is necessarily "undue," but it seems reasonable to say that it is marked by or connotes a kind of restlessness, and it is not hard to see why this can come to be viewed as excessive.

internal and external obstacles to acquiring it, inquisitiveness appears to simply involve characteristically inquiring into ever new topics. That is, inquisitiveness is not really a success term, and so appears to be a mere tendency or disposition the expression of which depends simply on whether one has it. One is inquisitive by virtue of looking to gain some knowledge or information, but the failure to obtain them does not diminish inquisitiveness.

Truthfulness and inquisitiveness are also independent of one another. Of course this does not mean they are mutually exclusive, and inquisitiveness can certainly provide the impetus for pursuing the truth—we only have to remind ourselves of our above discussion of the motives of truth-pursuit, which, following Williams, involve curiosity.[61] At the same time, since such pursuit may rest on what Williams suggests is moral ground, "as a matter of conscience, honor, or self-respect,"[62] inquisitiveness is not essential to truthfulness or the motivations that underpin it. On the other hand, though an inquisitive person aims to find out what the case is and so to obtain true beliefs, that does not mean he is good at it or has the qualities that make him reliable in getting and holding onto the truth. In particular, it is unlikely that an inquisitive person will take special precautions to avoid being in error the way a truthful person does. Hence, inquisitiveness, unlike truthfulness, is compatible and may lead one to quite a bit of error. If we were to say, employing terms from the beginning of this chapter, that the inquisitive person does his best to acquire true beliefs, then what matters for his "doing best" is striving to acquire more truths even at the cost of believing many falsehoods, rather than the proportion of true to false beliefs. In sum, we can say that neither truthfulness nor inquisitiveness requires or entails the other.

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61. See pages 28–29 above. There is likely some, at least slight, distinction between curiosity and inquisitiveness. But their meanings are sufficiently close for the point to stand.
62. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 126.

The foregoing discussion has hopefully adequately elucidated the virtue of Accuracy and the characteristic activity it involves. It has also hopefully clarified the sense in which Accuracy can be said to aim at truth. We can say that true belief is its goal in the sense that the Accurate person characteristically forms beliefs that are true and that capture the truth about the topic or question he deals with. Indeed, we can say that Accuracy implies a twofold relation between belief-formation and truth: on the one hand, belief-formation is constrained by truth, so that one characteristically only forms a belief if it is true; on the other hand, truth also provides the impetus or motivation for belief-formation when one considers topics or questions about which there is a truth. That is, there exists a relation both between the truthful person's beliefs and the truth, and his motivations and the truth. At the level of the truthful person's life, we can say that he aims and succeeds at getting to the truth about what he considers, and, indeed, that his life and actions are shaped by a certain pursuit and acquisition of true beliefs. Of course, truthfulness is also a matter of the way a person communicates and shares the truth he possesses—a topic I will now address.

CHAPTER 2

On Sincerity

The second virtue of truth Williams identifies and discusses is Sincerity. Commonsensically, we would say that being truthful involves telling the truth. Whereas Accuracy helps explain how and why the truthful person acquires and possesses the truth, Sincerity motivates the idea that he tells it. More specifically, while Accuracy involves ensuring one's beliefs are true, Sincerity is a matter of communicating those beliefs, of making sure one's assertions express what one really believes. Sincerity, we can thus say, is a virtue of communication. In Williams' words, it is "the virtue of the free declaration of belief."[1]

In this chapter I will investigate Williams' analysis of Sincerity. I will begin by discussing its basic sense and clarifying its meaning through a consideration of its opposite, insincerity. This will lead us to the motivations for as well as the scope of the virtue, and we will see the central role the notion of deserving the truth has in Williams understanding of Sincerity. I will then briefly consider the difference between Sincerity and Accuracy, before I turn, in the last part of the chapter, to a lacuna in Williams' account and some problems it therefore faces.

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1. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 185.

I. The Free Declaration of Belief and Avoiding Deception

"At the most basic level," Williams tells us, Sincerity is "simply openness, a lack of inhibition." He explains that in the most basic case, expressions of beliefs, or utterances, are spontaneous regarding their content (regarding the "what" of the utterance if not the "whether"), and we are "disposed to spontaneously come out with what we believe." It is only after further adjustment that we do not.[2] This elementary form of Sincerity involves thus a disposition to spontaneously express what we believe, a spontaneity that is not "expressed in deliberation and choice."[3] In particular, Williams notes, in such cases no Accuracy is required to discover what one believes; in the simple case "I am confronted with my belief as what I would spontaneously assert."[4]

However, it would be a mistake to think that such spontaneous expression is necessary for Sincerity. "Adjustment or reflective thought about what I should say" does not entail insincerity, and one can be sincere and yet express one's beliefs carefully or after some reflection. Indeed, Williams admits that we often do need to discover by inquiry what we believe, and that this tends to involve reflection as well as engagement with other people.[5] What is more, taken on its own, the basic, spontaneous kind of Sincerity leads to problems with regards to the unity and stability of an individual's character, as Williams explores in his discussion of *Rameau's Nephew* by Diderot.[6] Williams thinks that without such stability and without a pattern to our utterances it is hard to count them as utterances of belief or opinion at all. And he deems reflective thought and

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2. Ibid., 75.
3. Ibid., 45.
4. Ibid., 76.
5. Ibid., 75–76
6. For the discussion see ibid., chap. 8, sec. 3 "Diderot and *Rameau's Nephew*," 185–191. For the work *Rameau's Nephew* see Denis Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, in *Œuvres*, ed. André Billy, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1951).

reflective engagement with others as necessary for such stability, because completely spontaneous and uninhibited expression on its own will not produce it.[7] A successful disposition of Sincerity will thus combine spontaneity and reflection.

It is concealment and deception rather than adjustment of the content of assertions that characterizes insincerity. To get a better sense of this, it is helpful to contrast insincerity with Sincerity. Williams notes that in the case of a sincere assertion, a speaker intends, first, to inform the hearer "about the truth," the state of things he describes, and, second, "about [his] beliefs." On the contrary, a speaker who makes an insincere assertion "has neither of these intentions."[8] Such a speaker conceals the truth, or what he takes to be the truth, and thereby deceives the hearer about the state of things. In doing so he misleads the hearer about his actual beliefs as well: one believes what one takes to be true, and that is what the speaker withholds.[9] Insincere assertions thus aim at imparting a false belief to the listener, and that may take different forms depending on whether the main goal is to disinform the listener about the state of affairs or about the speaker's beliefs. There is a difference between pretending to believe that P in order to convince the listener to believe that P (for instance, to pretend to believe the US is a fascist country in order to convince the listener to

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7. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 189–193.
8. Ibid.., 73–75. The sincere speaker's intention to inform the hearer does not necessarily mean that the speaker supposes the hearer thinks he is being sincere, nor that he cares whether the hearer does—though he may of course suppose so and care.
    Williams also raises the issue of so-called plain truths, "truths which [speakers]… know are as plain to their hearers as to themselves"—say, "here he is!" (ibid., 72; see also ibid., chap. 3, sec. 2 "Plain Truths," 45–53). It seems mistaken to say that the speaker intends to inform anyone of anything by means of such assertions, and they can hardly be characterized as a form of intentional, reflective transmission of information. Plain truths, however, are a special case, and Williams says that with them there is no need to rely on the speaker's Accuracy or Sincerity since that which is stated can just as easily be observed by the listener (ibid., 49). At the same time, this does not change the fact, as Williams puts it, that "the transmission and sharing of information is a basic function of language" (ibid., 72). Many statements and truths are not "plain," and Sincerity focuses on these. See further ibid., 72–75.
9. See also Harry Frankfurt, "The Faintest Passion," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 66, no. 3 (November 1992): 6.

believe the US is such a country), and pretending to believe that P not in order to convince the listener to believe that P (knowing, for example, that the listener already steadfastly believes P or believes not-P) but to get the listener to think that the speaker himself believes that P (for instance, to pretend to believe that a particular claim is a human right, not in order to change the listener's view on the matter, but to convince him that the speaker himself believes the claim is a human right).[10]

Sincere communication, we can thus say, implies concealing neither what one believes to be true nor what one's belief is. Sincerity does not necessarily mean one spontaneously asserts what one thinks, and it is compatible with expressing oneself carefully or after some consideration. But instead of lying, dissimulating, misleading, and so on, the Sincere person characteristically declares his beliefs freely to others.

Before taking a closer look at what Williams has to say about deception, it is worth noting here a relevant possibility Williams does not grapple with: intending to mislead the listener about one's true beliefs while intending to inform him about the truth, or at least while intending to begin a process through which the listener is informed about the truth. In fact, even more strongly, it seems possible to pretend to have beliefs one does not hold *in order to* get the listener to believe what is true. In such cases, the speaker aims to impart the truth but recognizes that the best way to do that may be through dissimulation. This obviously raises questions as to why anyone would take up such a strange strategy, and why we should think it would lead to success. There could be a number of reasons. If I as the listener am proud or independent-minded, then the fact that you as the speaker appear to believe P may make me less likely to believe P even though it is true, whereas pretending you believe not-P might have the opposite reaction. Or, if I am not ready to accept a

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10. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 75.

truth and if hearing the truth now would make me less likely to accept and believe it in the long run, then it may make sense for you as the speaker to hide your (true) belief, so that, in the long run, I may come to accept the truth that I am currently ill-placed to accept. One place where this type of strategy of communication might come in handy is teaching—another one is psychoanalysis.

To take the latter, self-knowledge is clearly an aim of analysis, and it is meant to help the analysand accept and believe truths about himself that he has hitherto rejected or ignored. Let us assume that early on the psychoanalyst makes a correct interpretation and correctly identifies the analysand's feelings of guilt to be the result of his anger towards his father. In this case, the analyst has beliefs about the analysand which are true, and the hope is that over the course of the treatment the analysand can acquire self-knowledge. But at an early stage it may well be unwise for the analyst to voice this (true) belief and doing so may prove detrimental or even fatal to the goal of (eventual) self-knowledge. Thus, at least for some time, it may be best for the analyst to conceal his actual belief *in order to* make it more likely that the analysand will come to accept the true belief. These considerations raise the question of whether misleading about or concealing one's beliefs as a way of communicating the truth is best understood as insincerity. That is not clear to me, though Williams' answer, given the criteria of his account, would seem to be yes. But if we should understand this mode of communication as insincere, then it appears that one can be insincere towards a person for their long-term benefit and, moreover, for their obtaining the truth. And in that case, it is worth asking further whether our attitude towards insincerity should be altogether negative.

Returning to Williams' account, we have seen that insincerity involves deception about what one believes. Such deception can be further classified into two types: lying and misleading

by exploiting the inferences people regularly and reasonably make from assertions. A lie, on Williams' account, is "an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer with regard to that content." According to this, a lie is a deception that makes use of the content of the assertion for the purpose of misleading.[11] The other form of deception, on the other hand, exploits the fact that "in relying on what someone said, one inevitably relies on more than what he *said*." Hearers normally "gather more from a speaker's making a particular assertion than the content of that assertion," so that they may "acquire many" beliefs while a speaker "expresses one," and this can be used for deception. Most significantly, such deception utilizes "conversational implicatures" discussed by Paul Grice, "implications of a speaker's using to perform a speech-act with one content rather than another." These can be understood in terms of expectations competent speakers have regarding the meaning of assertions in normal circumstances. An example would be, as Grice himself discusses, "I went into a room yesterday and spoke to a woman…" and the expectation, shared by competent English speakers, that the woman in question was not the speaker's wife; or "I broke a thumb yesterday…" and the expectation that the thumb was the speaker's. However, as Williams notes, not all inferences from assertions are implicatures: consider for instance the conclusion one draws from a person's behavior that they lack courtesy. Such inferences, presumably, can also be utilized to mislead others. The important point is that deception is possible even without a lie, by exploiting the various avenues for misunderstanding and uncertainty that attach to speech. Williams stresses that this form of deception is no less insincere.[12]

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11. Ibid., 96–97.
12. Ibid., 97–100. Williams cites Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), chaps. 1–7, 15, and 17.

This means that insincerity is more than just lying, and Sincerity, expressing or asserting what one (really) believes, must be understood more capaciously than as just avoiding lies. Williams' emphasis on this point sets him apart from the moral tradition he discusses at length, exemplified by Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant, according to which lying is categorically different from other forms of misleading.[13] While the tradition does not think "there is nothing wrong with other forms of misleading or deceitful speech," nor "necessarily think… all lies are equally bad," it draws an "overall moral distinction" between lying and other forms of deceitful speech, and declares that lying is "unqualifiedly wrong" (though sometimes forgivable) while the other forms are not. Indeed, the tradition discusses various ways to avoid lying by means of other forms of misleading, which range from the innocent, such as refusing to answer, to the less obviously innocent but still categorically preferable to a lie, such as equivocation.[14]

Williams is not impressed by the distinction the tradition draws, nor by its attempts to regard certain forms of deception as inherently preferable to lies. He does not consider the distinction between lies and other forms of deceit as morally weighty, and thinks something is going wrong if we judge finding "some weasel words" more honorable than lying.[15] Williams suggests that to deceive people can be to attack their freedom, to manipulate others, and abuse trust, and that this is a general point about deceit, whatever form it takes. Lying may be worse, at least in some circumstances, especially insofar as there is something odious about the immediate "substitution of the [liar's] will for the world" that a lie effects, and there may be good reason to

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13. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 100–110.
14. Ibid., 102–3. There are, quite naturally, differences between the authors in this tradition. To name just one difference, for Aquinas a lie covers any intentional assertion of a falsehood (the intention to deceive is thus not included in the definition), while Augustine has a more standard account of the lie and so one more akin to Williams' (ibid., 102n26; see also MacIntyre, "Truthfulness and Lies," 106–107).
15. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 107.

distinguish between lies and other deception in institutional settings—such as the legislature—that Williams characterizes as adversarial but rule-governed.[16] Nevertheless, Williams urges us to reject the categorical distinction and realize that deception is deception no matter its form. This does not mean we cannot judge different instances of deception differently—there may be mitigating factors, other values that demand it—but Williams thinks that from the point of view of Sincerity, and thus truthfulness, it is all bad.

What emerges from all this is Williams' conception of Sincerity as trustworthiness in speech.[17] Sincere communication, as we have seen, is an expression or assertion of what I believe and take to be true, and the virtue of Sincerity means characteristically communicating sincerely. The virtue implies avoiding deception—lying and other kinds—and is thus a form of openness.[18]

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16. Ibid., 108–109, 118, 122. Williams highlights the convention in the British Parliament according to which ministers may not lie though they can mislead in other ways. More generally, his point is that in certain institutional and, particularly, governmental settings it may well make sense to distinguish between forms of deception. This is because, on the one hand, no-one can expect the government to be transparent about everything, but, on the other, the government should not be able to get away with any deceit. A rule or norm against lying will mean statements are more rigorously and suspiciously questioned and inspected, and as long as most follow it most of the time, individuals can through such questioning be forced to "produce the truth… or [be] seriously embarrassed." Key to success, Williams thinks, is a structure (ensured by an institutional framework) that is both adversarial and rule governed. But since most of life and most of our engagement with others does not have this structure, it does not make sense to apply such norms and such a sharp distinction between lying and other deception in most other settings. Ibid., 108–109.

17. Ibid., chap. 5, sec. 3 "Trustworthiness in Speech," 93–96. Also ibid., 121.

18. Williams mentions "hypocrisy" as a special kind of failure of Sincerity, calling it "an offense in public or interpersonal relations" (ibid., 184). While he does not explicitly analyze the nature of this failure, he appears to understand hypocrisy as a kind of pretense: the hypocrite pretends to be otherwise than he is. Williams discussion of *Rameaus's Nephew* by Diderot is instructive in this regard (see page 54, note 6 above). He quotes the narrator's description, according to which Rameau "owned up to the vices he had, and which others have—he was not a hypocrite… he was simply more open and more consistent, and sometimes profound in his depravity." Denis Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, 462, quoted in Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 188 (Williams' translation). Rameau, according to Williams, "is true to himself in at least this sense, that he is conspicuously not self-deceived… he *possesses* a lot of truth about himself… He is also to an unusual degree sincere. He certainly flatters and lies, but… he admits that he does so. He *reveals* a lot of truth about himself" (Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 189). That is, Rameau does not pretend to be better than he is, he does not hide his failures, and so he is not a hypocrite.

Such conception of hypocrisy is in line with the common idea that the hypocrite does not really intend, believe, desire, etc. what he feigns, and, generally speaking, that he does so to gain some advantage—as, for instance, a politician who claims to run for office to serve the public when all he wants is wealth or honor. To take one example from the literature, Christine McKinnon writes that "the hypocrite… is one who shams, who presents

Importantly, however, it does *not* entail two things. First, Sincerity does not ensure one is always successful at informing the hearer about what one believes—that requires skill from both the speaker and the listener—though Williams certainly seems to assume and hope, reasonably, that success is more likely given the right intentions. Second, Sincerity on its own does not entail that what one believes to be true *is* true. If one's belief is erroneous, then a sincere assertion of that belief will be an open communication of one's false belief. I will return to this thought below.

II. Motivations and Scope: Equality and Deserving the Truth

Two further, crucial, issues regarding Sincerity emerge from our discussion thus far. First, why should one be Sincere? Similarly to the investigative investment in the case of Accuracy, what is it that sustains the disposition of Sincerity? Even if, as Williams notes, assertions are expected to be true since a lot of the time they do express true belief, this helps not one bit "as soon as a *question* comes up, whether… [one] should on a given occasion… work the system"—for instance by lying.[19] The question—should I deceive or tell the truth?—remains. Second, what is the scope of Sincerity? We have seen that Sincerity requires avoiding deception, but to what extent does it require us to do this? Or, as Williams puts it, "what beliefs, and how much of one's beliefs, one may be expected to express in a given situation"?[20] These two questions, of motivations and scope,

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her motives as other than they are… in what she takes to be a more favorable light… because she wants people to think better of her." Christine McKinnon, "Hypocrisy, with a Note on Integrity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (October 1991): 323. McKinnon mentions two specific ways in which the hypocrite's misrepresentation of self works: the hypocrite professes good intentions that his subsequent actions belie; or else, he professes to have more worthy intentions than he really does, tries to convince others of this, and acts according to the professed, false intentions (ibid., 321). McKinnon focuses mainly on the intentions and motivations of a person, but she mentions the misrepresentation of convictions as well (ibid., 321–322); indeed, it seems reasonable to think the hypocrite may feign beliefs as well as motives. Understanding hypocrisy as a kind of pretense makes it clear how it is a failure of openly communicating what one truly believes, and so a failure of Sincerity.

19. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 84–85, 106.
20. Ibid, 97.

turn out to be interconnected: the reasons one has for communicating one's belief freely also help determine the extent to which one avoids deception, the extent to which one shares one's beliefs and with whom.

There are a number of possible motivations for speaking sincerely. First is that of telling the truth because one thinks one must tell it. But, as we have seen, Williams rejects the idea of an unconditional obligation, and would thus have little sympathy for this reason for truth-telling. Indeed, he appears to reject wholesale any answer rooted in natural or moral law, and so any obligation arising from either.[21] Williams suggests that the disposition of Sincerity is not a matter of following a rule, but that of having "a set of values that shape one's attitudes to the people to whom one may be speaking."[22] This is tied to Williams' contention that it is important to consider the context in which one speaks and with whom.

A promising context for speaking sincerely is that of normal trust, where the interlocutors take themselves (not necessarily consciously) to be "engaged in some kind of co-operative and trustful conversation." In such circumstances we have reason, according to Williams, "to sustain the relation of trust" and speak accordingly, which means openly. We can say, then, that the second possible motivation for Sincerity is that of sustaining relations of normal trust. Nonetheless, many circumstances do not fit into this category. People engage with each other in a variety of contexts, in which various types of expectations and motivations obtain; Williams himself says that "in trying to understand Sincerity.… we cannot simply assume those relations [of trust]."[23] Moreover, the earlier problem of "working the system" remains: if I can reap the benefits of these relations

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21. Ibid., 106–107, 122.
22. Ibid., 110.
23. Ibid., 110–111.

as well as gain something extra by deceiving my interlocutors when it is advantageous, why not

do so?[24] It is true that if I am motivated to sustain these trustful relations, I have to be careful about

my deception so as to not get caught, and much of the time I will have to tell the truth. But when

I can get away with lying, why should I not? What should an individual's motivations be like such

that he does not choose deceit? Although trust certainly has important social benefits and may well

be "a necessary condition of co-operative activity,"[25] on their own these benefits cannot get to the

robust notion of Sincerity Williams looks for.

A reason—the third—for telling the truth even when deceit is otherwise appealing is that

one's relations with others are shaped by friendly acquaintance. There are clearly degrees to this,

but the idea is that such relations give one a stronger reason to be sincere than the existence of

relations of normal trust alone. However, Williams warns us against overestimating this point.

People in friendly relations commonly lie and mislead others so as not to wound or offend them

or to jeopardize "systems of mutual esteem." Lack of sincerity may moreover show up in situations

where one guards a friend's secrets from other friends or uses "paternalistic" deceit to protect an

old lady from pain by lying to her about her child's misfortunes. Some "social falsehood,"

insincerity, may thus be necessary to sustain friendly relations, and so friendly relations get us only

that far when it comes to Sincerity.[26]

There are, of course, further reasons to communicate openly. For instance, fourth,

"manifestly coincident self-interest" can serve as a powerful reason to tell what one takes to be the

truth. But it, too, fails to get us very far. Even granting the distinction between immediate and

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24. We can follow Harry Frankfurt and say that claims according to which deception or lying undermine social intercourse or destroy the value of conversation, found for instance in Kant and Montaigne, are simply uncompelling. As Frankfurt pointedly puts it, "The actual quantity of lying is enormous, after all, and yet social life goes on." Frankfurt, "The Faintest Passion," 5–6.
25. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 88. For more see ibid., chap. 5, sec. 2 "Trust," 88–93. See also ibid., 49 for the role of trust in learning.
26. Ibid., 112–114.

longer-term self-interest, the question remains what happens to Sincerity in the absence of such coincidence, which is hardly unusual. A fifth reason is one's membership in a "shared enterprise to find out the truth," where it would be beside the point not to speak openly or to deceive others. This is rather promising and seems to give a strong reason for Sincerity, but such circumstances are specific, rare, and limited. Sixth, there are the adversarial and rule-governed institutional and governmental settings with their special requirements regarding truth-telling that we have already mentioned, and to them we can add the not really adversarial but rule-governed, "well-ordered impersonal enterprise[s]," such as the modern bureaucracy or even the business one works for.[27] Such settings come with expectations about the absence of deception (I am not supposed to lie or mislead on, say, a tax form; the bureaucrat is supposed to tell the truth) which structure the interactions between all parties, and give a reason to tell the truth. But these settings, too, are rather specific, and the reasons for truth-telling they provide are not, ultimately, that strong (as, say, the prevalence of tax fraud suggests). Speaking more generally, these last three provide more clearly self-interested or self-regarding reasons for truth-telling. But they apply only under quite specific circumstances, and thus when those circumstances fail to hold, the problems regarding the motivation for Sincerity reappear.

Williams is no doubt aware of this, which leads him to look for further support for the disposition and virtue of Sincerity. In the past, he notes, ideas of honor, nobility, and avoidance of shame have played such a role, by turning deceit into something only the weak do, those who lack self-sufficiency and are "so dependent on others that [they have] to hide."[28] But ideas of nobility

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27. Ibid., 114. For the adversarial and rule-governed settings see page 60, note 16 above.
28. Ibid., 115. Williams offers Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* as an example of someone who is motivated to truth-telling by honor, nobility, and avoidance of shame. See Sophocles, *Philoctetes,* trans. David Grene, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies,* ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, vol. 2, *Sophocles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

and the desire for self-sufficiency turn out to be unreliable supports for Sincerity due to an ambivalence: the need to dissimulate may be a failure from the perspective of self-sufficiency, but so can the need or obligation to be open with others. If the man of "noble self-sufficiency" is someone beyond either need, then he is likely to be "unhelpfully misleading" or "ironical," or will deploy "masks" rather than speak openly. Such "motivations of a self-sufficient nobility," Williams writes, are "most naturally rooted in hierarchical and aristocratic societies, or, again, in association with a very highly cultivated aesthetic." They can be seen "in ancient Greek literature, in Nietzsche, and in writers such as Yeats," as well as in Adam Smith's appeal to the idea of a "gentleman… a hangover from an age before the modern world," and in "the *ancien régime*."[29] The past support for Sincerity was unreliable and, although he does not state it quite openly, Williams seems to think we are beyond such ideas anyway. Assuming he is right, what support do we have today?

Williams appeals to "a significant luxury" that "we have, or think we have": "living in a world understood as a community of moral equals; we want to believe that what people deserve or are owed is determined not by considerations of social position but, at the most basic level of morality, from a position of equality."[30] This luxury points to the reason why Williams dismisses the idea of self-sufficient nobility as no longer appropriate: though he does not make it clear who constitutes the "we" or how large it is on a global scale even today, Williams implies that at the fundamental level "we" take and want to take people to be equal. Moreover, while he does not openly assert that Sincerity ultimately relies on the belief in equality, he clearly thinks the luxury

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29. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 116. Though Williams does not invoke him explicitly, the mention of irony brings to mind Socrates who, at times, was accused by his interlocutors of being "unhelpfully misleading." See e.g. *The Republic* and Thrasymachus' charge: "Heracles! Here is that habitual irony of Socrates. I knew it, and I predicted to these fellows that you wouldn't be willing to answer, that you would be ironic and do anything rather than answer if someone asked you something." *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 337a.
30. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 116–117.

we have, or think we have, reveals the deeper support for Sincerity available in our times. His statement is the culmination of a discussion of the various other reasons and supports for truth-telling today and in the past, which leaves us with the sense that they are all inadequate and unable to solve the problem of insincerity when it is in one's self-interest. Following such a story, we are led to infer that "our" belief in the basic relation of equality between individuals is the only rampart left to support the virtue of Sincerity.

Williams' statement raises questions of course. What if one does not happen to be part of the "we" in whose voice Williams speaks, and does not share "our" belief? Williams does not offer an answer—perhaps he has little to say to those who are not part of the we or do not want to believe in what it believes. Williams may think that if the belief in basic equality and the role it plays in supporting Sincerity has nothing to hook on to in a person's inner constellation of reasons, there is not much one can do to convince him, even though it can be said that "in respect of truthfulness, he is not as we want people to be."[31] But what about the person who is part of us, wants to believe in the "position of equality," but in his Accuracy refuses to believe it without strong evidence of its truth and refuses to take his desire for the belief as such evidence? Is it not precisely because he is truthful that he is at odds with Williams? And what is left of Sincerity then? This issue cannot be ignored or easily dismissed, and I will return to it in the last part of this chapter. But for now, we can say that the deeper support for Sincerity is available only to those of us who understand the world as a community of equals and see that as a reason to declare one's belief. Only such individuals, believing in basic equality, will persist with truth-telling even when it is against their self-interest.

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31. Ibid., 120. This would be in line with Williams' preference for internal as opposed to external reasons; see Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," in *Rational Action: Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, ed. Ross Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

As I indicated, understanding the reasons or motivations Williams sees at the core of Sincerity also helps clarify the proper scope of the virtue. One might think that a person who takes himself to live in a community of equals would avoid deception of his fellow community members "absolutely" or at least "as much as possible." If that were the case, Sincerity would parallel Accuracy: as from the viewpoint of Accuracy overcoming obstacles to truth is better than not overcoming them, so from the perspective of Sincerity not deceiving others is better than deceiving. This line of thought could very well acknowledge that humans are merely human and are likely to err and lack the right resolution, particularly given the often high costs of speaking sincerely with everyone.

But this is *not* what Williams argues for. He faults, as we have seen, the "tradition" for maintaining that lies are unqualifiedly wrong while other deception is not, but his solution is not to declare the latter unqualifiedly wrong as well.[32] To the contrary, Williams thinks that Sincerity sometimes permits and even requires lying: he writes that "there is something wrong in your conceptions of what truthfulness requires" if you "have a problem" about lying when a murderer is at your door.[33] Indeed, Williams thinks that the disposition of Sincerity involves the ability "to think clearly and without self-deceit about the occasions when deceit is required."[34] We can thus say that on Williams' account, the scope of Sincerity is both broader and narrower than what has been thought in the past. It is broader because the Sincere person will characteristically avoid not just lying, but more broadly also other forms of deception. It is narrower, because Williams rejects the idea that Sincerity implies telling the truth unconditionally: though the person with Sincerity

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32. See Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 105.
33. Ibid., 114.
34. Ibid., 121.

characteristically refrains from deception, Williams also thinks that there are limits to belief-sharing internal to the virtue.

But what are those limits? And when might Sincerity require deception? His answer to these questions, and so his understanding of the scope of Sincerity, rests primarily on the notion of *desert*, though also on considerations of harm that the sincerity might cause. Rejecting, as noted, appeals to natural or moral law, he instead appeals to the idea of deserving the truth. That notion, on Williams' account, helps specify when deception is appropriate: one does not owe the truth to the people who reveal themselves as undeserving of truth, and so Sincerity does not involve telling the truth to those who do not deserve it. The line of thought is clearly influenced by Benjamin Constant, whom Williams mentions approvingly, who wrote that "toka tell the truth is… a duty, but only to one who has a right to the truth."[35]

This naturally raises the further question of *who* exactly, then, deserves the truth and how much. Williams' account answers the question both negatively and positively. Negatively, the person who violates trust, for instance by acting threateningly or manipulatively, can be said to be at fault and no longer to deserve the truth. Deceit may be a necessary defense or precaution against someone who threatens, manipulates, or violates freedom through deceit, or has other damaging intentions. In such situations the interlocutor is "at fault and no longer deserves to be told the truth," and there is no need to regret deceiving him.[36] How one acts has consequences, and as we

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35. For Williams' approval of Constant see ibid., 114. Constant writes, "Dire la vérité n'est donc un devoir qu'envers ceux qui ont droit à la vérité. Or nul homme n'a droit à la vérité qui nuit à autrui" (Telling the truth is therefore a duty only towards those who have a right to the truth. Yet no man who harms others has a right to the truth). Constant, *Des réactions politiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 137. For Kant's discussion of Constant's claim see Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

36. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 117–118. More than this, Williams thinks that to feel bad about it may be to have one's sense of truthfulness out of order. However, he also considers it a mistake to think in terms of reciprocity when it comes to deciding whether deceit is appropriate from the viewpoint of Sincerity: just because

have seen, Williams thinks that the virtue of Sincerity may sometimes allow, or even require, insincerity.[37] This helps circumscribe somewhat the notion of desert Williams employs by indicating who does *not* deserve the truth. Nonetheless, it leaves the matter undetermined insofar as it is not yet clear who does deserve it.

More positively, truth is deserved by those who are in a relation of trust. Whether or not someone deserve the truth depends on whether that person is still "in a relation to us which is structured by the normal expectations of a trustful exchange." There exist, of course, "different kinds and degrees of trust," and so how much and regarding what one can expect to be told the truth is shaped by the circumstances, context, and the level of trust—by the relation of the speaker to the hearer and the context in which the exchange occurs. What exactly we are owed or can expect from others depends on "the particular relations in which we socially and personally find ourselves."[38] There is a difference between what my friends and a bureaucrat can reasonably expect from me, what I owe each of them if I am to be Sincere.

But why, or on what basis, do people in situations of trust deserve the truth? Here Williams' appeal to the "significant luxury" we already mentioned becomes crucial. According to the luxury "we have, or think we have," that of "living in a world understood as a community of moral equals," all individuals are at a basic level equal. As Williams continues, "we want to believe that what people deserve or are owed is determined not by considerations of social position but, at the most basic level of morality, from a position of equality."[39] That is, the idea of basic equality helps determine what we deserve or are owed to in general, and thereby helps fix the idea of deserving

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someone turns out to be a liar does not mean we are entitled, from the perspective of Sincerity, to lie to them at will. We are unlikely to have "a complete justification for lying to him," since it is "an unlovely idea to turn into a liar, even in relation to this person." If our commitment to Sincerity is serious, Williams thinks we are likely to withdraw relations with him instead, and are right to do so. Ibid., 114, 120.

37. Ibid., 121.
38. Ibid., 117, 121.
39. Ibid., 116–117.

or being owed something specific, such as the truth. In the first instance, we all deserve the truth by virtue of our membership in the community of moral equals. Admittedly, this does not mean that "everyone… equally deserves the truth" in matter of fact, since we have seen that a person may forfeit his prerogatives by proving himself to be undeserving of truth. Nor does it mean, in practice, that everyone deserves truths on the same things: the extent to which someone is owed the truth, which particular truths he is owed, is partly a function of the social context and his relationship to the speaker—though not, Williams adds, his position in some predetermined hierarchy.[40] So, to take two people in the same context or circumstances, assuming neither has proved himself undeserving of truth through manipulation, deceit, and so on, then they both deserve the same truths because they are in a basic sense equal. This, in Williams' hands, is the "modern understanding of what people deserve."[41]

Underlying the notion of desert that Williams employs is thus the idea of basic moral equality. Desert is filtered through the lens of real interactions, contexts, and relations of trust, but also individual actions: what exactly one is owed is a function both of the social roles one occupies and how one behaves.[42] Relations of trust alone, however, no matter how important and beneficial they may be, do not get us to the idea that other people deserve the truth, that truth is owed. For that, the "modern" position of equality is needed, a position from which what we are owed is ultimately determined.

I have spoken mainly of deserving the truth, and while it is the fundamental criteria in determining how much truth-telling Sincerity requires, it is not the only one. In addition and very much secondarily, Williams identifies situations where "deceit may be necessary from kindness,"

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40. Ibid., 117.
41. Ibid., 122.
42. Ibid., 117.

as when we protect others' secrets or the well-being of another who would likely be hurt by finding out the truth (say the old lady asking about her dead son's fate). In such cases no one is undeserving of truth, and one should certainly not engage in such deception callously; it makes sense, moreover, to feel there has been a loss or violation.[43] Nevertheless, according to Williams, we are sometimes in situations where it is best not to tell the truth out of kindness, and Sincerity does not prevent such exceptions.

Putting all the above together, then, we can say that under Williams' treatment Sincerity takes a more complex form than may at first appear. It implies the free declaration of belief, first, when the other person is deserving of truth and, second, assuming that does not result in some hurt or harm that kindness prompts us to mitigate. To make sense of these conditions we must, on Williams' account, consider the importance of trust and relations of normal trust, while keeping in mind that at a basic moral level we are, or want to believe we are, all equal.

Indeed, the idea of equality is at the core of Williams' account of Sincerity. It is not only that which supports the reasons or motivations for Sincerity, but also the basis on which rests Williams' notion of deserving the truth that fixes the scope of the virtue. This suggests, to use Nietzsche's phrase which Williams cites approvingly, that Sincerity rests on "moral ground."[44]

III. Connection to Truth

Before taking another, closer look at the idea of deserving the truth and problems in Williams' account of Sincerity, I would like to briefly return to a thought expressed above; namely, that

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43. Ibid., 118.
44. Ibid., 126.

Sincerity does not entail the beliefs one expresses are true. Williams alludes to this by writing that "merely in defining Accuracy we have to mention *the truth,* whereas with Sincerity the reference to truth comes one stage later."[45] But he does not explore the implications of this difference, which are significant: Accuracy proves to be truth-directed in a way Sincerity is not. And this, in turn, highlights the fact that of the virtues of truth, Accuracy has a relatively more important role.

We should clarify yet further the difference between the two virtues. We can recall from chapter 1 that Accuracy is the virtue of getting to the truth. It requires, among other things, aiming at the truth and taking care that one's beliefs be accurate and adequate and reflect what the case is it requires "care, reliability, and so on, in discovering and coming to believe the truth." The relationship between one's beliefs and the truth, thus, is a core focus of Accuracy. Consequently, Accuracy cannot be understood without reference to this relationship, and so without reference to truth. Williams contention that "merely in defining Accuracy we have to mention the truth" gets at this.[46]

Things are quite different with Sincerity. As we have seen, it is the virtue of characteristically communicating, to deserving others, one's actual beliefs (appropriate to the context) without deception or concealment.[47] But communicating beliefs does not in itself entail communicating what is true. The beliefs the Sincere person expresses "aim at the truth" in the minimal sense that any belief aims it, by virtue of being subject to norms of truth,[48] but that by no means entails that his sincerely communicated beliefs are, in fact, true. Nor does it mean he aims at the truth in the sense of concerning himself with and taking care to ensure the truth of his beliefs and utterances. Assertions can be legitimately used for all kinds of purposes other than

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45. Ibid., 126.
46. Ibid., 126–127.
47. I am excluding here the qualification Williams makes about harm and kindness.
48. See chapter 1, pages 20–21 above.

communicating the truth, such as gaining praise, entertaining, or convincing others rather than persuading them. Even if "the aim of speaking [in general] must in some sense be to… assert, the true rather than false," as Williams at one point suggests, falsehood is not "a fatal objection to assertions"—after all, we humans have "interests in other things besides being maximally efficient communicators."[49] Accordingly, Sincerity can be defined "merely by mentioning people's beliefs"; truth "comes into it" only "one stage later," and only "because beliefs 'aim at' the truth" in the limited sense described.[50]

This reveals that while Accuracy is necessarily and directly connected to the truth, Sincerity is not and "implies only that a speaker says what he believes."[51] The beliefs a Sincere person expresses can, of course, be true or false, but that turns out to be a further or secondary question. Open communication and declaration of belief is open communication and declaration of belief even when the assertions involved express falsehoods. Even those who are unable to find out the truth can be Sincere.

This is important, because it indicates that of the two virtues of truth one is more significant for satisfying the interest from which both derive their point or purpose. Williams writes, as I noted in the introduction, that Accuracy and Sincerity get their "point ultimately from the human interest, individual or collective, in gaining and sharing true information," and that "so far as their point or purpose is concerned, they are equally related to the truth."[52] But though their purpose may be equally related to the human interest in gaining and sharing the truth, their contribution to satisfying that interest, to achieving its ends, is importantly different and unequal. The interest, as we can clearly see, is twofold and for two distinct if connected things: for gaining or acquiring and

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49. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 67, 85.
50. Ibid., 126–127.
51. Ibid., 126.
52. Ibid., 126–127. See introduction, page 19 above.

for sharing or communicating the truth. And it is important to realize that the second hinges on the first, whereas the reverse is not the case: only by possessing the truth can we share it, but sharing true information, or even having it shared with you, is not the only way to gain it. This points to the fact that Accuracy, the virtue ensuring that one gets to the truth, is necessary for both ends, whereas Sincerity is only necessary for the second, for sharing the truth. Another way to express the point is to note that one can characteristically gain true information if one is Accurate and insincere, but that one cannot characteristically share true information if one is Sincere but inaccurate. It is Accuracy which ensures that open communication characteristically involves the communication of truth: Accuracy is necessary to turn the free declaration of belief into the free declaration of true belief, the sharing of one's beliefs into truth-telling, the Sincere person into a truth-teller.[53] In this way, then, the role of Accuracy is more significant.

Still, one may push against this line of thought. One may question whether both gaining and sharing the truth do not require Sincerity just as they do Accuracy. If they do require Sincerity, then there is little reason to think that Accuracy plays somehow a more significant role. Two reasons appear to suggest this, though neither of them is ultimately successful.

First, certain things Williams says might give the impression. He writes, for instance, that "someone who is conscientiously acting in circumstances of trust will not only say what he believes, but will take trouble to do the best… to make sure that what he believes is true," and that "to the degree that you owe them the truth… to that degree you owe them an appropriate effort to get hold of the truth."[54] The idea here is that if others are relying on you, or if you owe them the

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53. This might even raise a question about the status of Sincerity as a virtue of truth in the first place. If, in the absence of Accuracy, Sincerity is not directed towards truth, then in what sense does it exemplify truthfulness? A virtue *of truth*, one might think, must express a certain kind of relationship to truth, and Sincerity, on its own, fails to do this. It may be a form of honesty, but not all honesty is necessarily truthful.
54. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 80, 149–150.

truth, then you better not mislead them and so you better make sure your belief is true. And this, one might think, suggests that Sincerity is integral to characteristically gaining the truth.

However, even if Sincerity may provide the impetus to concern oneself with the truth and to cultivate Accuracy, it is not necessary for characteristically gaining the truth. There are many other reasons for pursuing and acquiring the truth, some of which we discussed in chapter 1.[55] At any rate, even if Sincerity impels one to take care that the beliefs one shares are true, it does so only to the extent needed to make sure one does not deceive one's interlocutors. In particular, it offers no motive to take care to believe the truth regarding topics one will not discuss with others, but which one is nevertheless concerned with or finds interesting. Thus, Williams' above remarks show, in fact, neither that Sincerity is necessary for gaining the truth nor that it leads to the truth-acquisition typical of the truthful person.

The second reason one might think that characteristically gaining the truth depends on Sincerity is that it is difficult to envisage truth-acquisition in the absence of sincere communication. As we saw in chapter 1, there are many obstacles to Accuracy, with wishful thinking being one of the most serious.[56] Because of this, to quote Williams, "the resistance to fantasy, the consciousness that I cannot merely make things as I would wish them to be, [is] a feature of all genuine inquiry."[57] The presence of others can and does offer such resistance, since they can point out and help us see where our wishes and fantasy lead us astray. It seems important to have another person to talk openly with if we are to sustain our grip on reality and prevent our wishes from becoming beliefs that distort or falsify that reality, though this only works, of course,

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55. See pages 27–29 above.
56. See pages 22–24 above.
57. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 204. See also ibid., 197–198.

if we do not deceive or mislead our interlocutor, and more generally when we can trust the other to say what he sees.[58] Sincere communication thus appears key for overcoming at least some of the obstacles in the way of getting to truth.[59]

The importance of sincere communication in this regard is undeniable, but it does not support the claim that Sincerity is necessary for characteristically gaining the truth. What is necessary is not the virtue of telling the truth to those who we owe it to, but communicating sincerely with certain trusted others, having one or a few individuals who can help us stay rooted in reality. Admittedly, even that might not be enough, since collective delusion is possible; in such instance, sincere communication is not helpful to overcoming wishful thinking and it can be even harmful. The possibility of collective delusion does not mean that "one best keeps hold on reality

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58. And yet, this does not mean the other cannot or will not hold back his beliefs, particularly if he deems that helpful for my ability to retain or regain my grip on reality. While I must communicate openly as otherwise it will be very hard if not impossible for the other to see where I go wrong, his helping me will not require quite the same level of openness, even if it will certainly require open and accurate identification of my errors. In other words, the relationship need not be symmetrical: the other can help me without my helping him in the same way. A familiar example of such asymmetry is the teacher-student relation. Another one is the psychoanalytic setting, the purpose of which is to overcome the analysand's, but not the analyst's, wishful thinking by means of a fundamental rule that the analysand, but not the analyst, follows: "say whatever goes through your mind." Such rule of radical openness exists to help the analysand become better at understanding himself—to help him gain in Accuracy we might say (see also page 57 above). This is not to deny that some of the best relationships to preserve one's grounding in reality are friendships, which are largely symmetrical. In such friendships my friend helps me towards Accuracy just as I help him. For the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis see Sigmund Freud, "On Beginning the Treatment (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis I)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 12 (1911–1913), *The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 134–135; also, Jonathan Lear, "The Fundamental Rule and Value of Psychoanalysis," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 63, no. 3 (June 2015): esp. 515–519.
59. Williams offers a further reason to appreciate the importance of sincere communication with at least some other people: "it is the presence… of others that help[s] us to construct even our factual beliefs" (Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 194). The psychoanalyst Hans Loewald discusses something similar, though it does not require the physical presence of others: "In writing down (or voicing) my thoughts I give them visibility (or sound) in the form of symbols… these thoughts—immaterial insofar as I cannot apprehend them with my senses—materialize for me, and in materializing they gain distance from me and become elements of the world around me… I can check whether the words I use actually represent my thoughts. I notice that my thoughts, in the process of being represented by symbols of this kind, undergo changes: They may become clearer or more confused, or change direction." Hans W. Loewald, *Sublimation: Inquiries into Theoretical Psychoanalysis*, in *The Essential Loewald: Collected Papers and Monographs* (Hagerstown, MA: University Publishing Group, 2000), 485. Loewald thus suggests that not only speech but also writing can help construct, shape, and stabilize what we really believe.

in solitude,"[60] but it does indicate that sincere communication supports truth-acquisition only insofar as one's interlocutor is able to move one to overcome wishful thinking. This requires that he see what is going on in us and that he communicate in ways that shake us up.[61] We might say that sincere communication is helpful only when it occurs in the context of a determination and ability to pursue the truth about at least one of the interlocutors. Thus, not the virtue of Sincerity but a very specific kind of sincere communication appears necessary for characteristically gaining the truth.

These reflections reinforce our earlier conclusion regarding the two virtues' unequal contribution to satisfying the human interest which gives them their point, and regarding the relative importance of Accuracy. Sincerity may furnish motives for truth-acquisition, and some sincere communication is probably crucial if one is to overcome wishful thinking. But neither of these factors means that the virtue of Sincerity is essential for the truth-directedness characterizing the truthful person. Unlike Sincerity, Accuracy is crucial for both gaining and sharing the truth, and thus it seems reasonable to say that of the two virtues of truth it is the more decisive one.

IV. Lacuna in Williams' Analysis

In the remainder of this chapter I would like to discuss a lacuna in Williams' account of Sincerity, and thereby of truthfulness. As we have seen, the notion of deserving the truth is key to the account: Sincerity entails characteristically sharing one's beliefs with deserving others (to the extent appropriate to the social context). That notion relies on the "luxury" Williams appeals to, on ideas about fundamental equality and the relationship between equality and desert. In the absence of

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60. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness,* 199.
61. Of course, it also requires that we ourselves be at some level moved to resist the workings of wishful thinking.

such ideas, Williams' account would not permit discerning who, if anyone, deserves the truth, and so the sense in which truthfulness implies characteristically telling the truth to those who deserve it would remain exceedingly vague.

It seems natural to read Williams' appeal to the luxury as a straightforward statement of beliefs that lead to other beliefs: the belief that people are morally equal and the belief that what one deserves is determined from a position of such equality leads to the conclusion that people, whoever they may be, are owed the truth (appropriate given the context) unless they forfeit their prerogative to it. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of Williams' language in the relevant passage is striking and noteworthy. He writes that "we have, *or think we have*" a significant luxury that amounts to "living in a world *understood* as a community of moral equals." It is unclear from this whether we have the luxury or merely think we have it, whether we do live in a world of equals or only understand our world as such. Moreover, Williams writes that "we *want* to believe that what people deserve or are owed is determined… from a position of equality."[62] But wanting to believe desert is tied to or determined by equality guarantees neither that one, in fact, has a belief that it is, nor that it is true that it is. Williams hedges his formulations, the quoted passage is hard to pin down: are the stated claims meant to be true claims, or merely ones we happen to consider or wish for? Things would be clearer if Williams proceeded to argue for the truth of his claims, but he does not do so. It is not clear whether he demurs because he does not consider the issue or because he does not consider it significant or troubling. In any event, the passage leaves it open whether the ideas that specify the notion of desert are true, or ones Williams or his readers wish to hold on to.

That such questions remain at this crucial juncture is a problem. It is a problem for a few reasons. First, when an important notion in an account rests on ideas or claims the truth of which

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62. Ibid., 116–117 (emphasis mine).

is questionable, then it is a problem for the account in question—at least insofar as it is meant to be a true account. Williams appeals to the ideas regarding equality and its relation to desert in order to motivate the notion of deserving the truth and through it to establish the scope of and reasons for Sincerity. But it turns out his discussion leaves it unclear whether those ideas are true, indeed whether they are even meant to be true. This raises the possibility that certain ideas that are integral to his account are false.

Second, the existence of such questions places some doubt on the reflective stability of Williams' understanding of Sincerity. As noted in the introduction, one of Williams' main goals is to provide an account of truthfulness that is stable under reflection. That requires that his account survive reflective scrutiny and that we be able to hold on to it coherently and without contradiction or inconsistency.[63] And yet, now, through our reflection on Sincerity, we see that missing from Williams' account is an argument for and even an explicit statement of the truth of certain ideas that are integral to his account. The specter of inconsistency and incoherence thus raises its head, at least assuming the account of truthfulness is supposed to eschew falsehood.

But is this last assumption warranted and is the threat of reflective instability genuine? It may be that Williams' intention is to provide not so much an account that is in every respect true, but one that we can have adequate confidence in. In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Williams argues that it is confidence, rather than "cognitive certainty" or "decision," that explains the conviction people can have in ethical life and allows people to use thick ethical concepts "to find their way around a social world."[64] Though Williams does not clearly define his idea of confidence, he describes it, in contrast to what he considers the rival notions of cognitive certainty and decision,

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63. See introduction, page 13 above.
64. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits,* 168–171.

as "basically a social phenomenon" fostered by "institutions, upbringing, and public discourse" that involves "social confirmation and support for the individual's attitudes."[65] Such support, Williams advances, helps ethical concepts withstand challenges and make them stable under reflection. This applies, presumably, also to truthfulness and can help explain Williams' self-appointed task—particularly as the virtue is as good of a candidate for a thick concept as any, since we use it both to describe a person and to evaluate him.[66] It is reasonable to think that in *Truth and Truthfulness* Williams wants to increase his readers' confidence in truthfulness.

If we view Williams' intention in this light, then it becomes less of a problem that he leaves some of his introduced terms vague, indeterminate, or unargued for. In the passage we have discussed Williams speaks of *us*: "we" have or think we have the luxury he appeals to, the idea of equality with its relation to desert in general and deserving the truth in particular, not other people elsewhere or in other times. Indeed, given Williams' audience and the time and place of his work, such a "luxury" is quite uncontroversial. Williams likely thinks his readers are already sufficiently confident about living in a world understood as a community of moral equals, and so there is less reason for him to offer an explicit argument for that. As long as we are sufficiently confident in our possession of this modern luxury, we will avoid doubts regarding it and so keep the reflective instability at bay.

This line of thought is not entirely unreasonable: if our confidence in certain ideas at the core of Williams' account of Sincerity is so strong that no amount of reflection will dislodge it, then no amount of reflection will destabilize Williams account. There are, of course, the further

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65. Ibid., 170–71.
66. Ibid., 129 where Williams explains that "thicker" ethical concepts "express a union of fact and value," and so have the dual use of description and valuation. See also A. W. Moore, "Bernard Williams: *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*," in *The Twentieth Century: Quine and After*, vol. 5 of *Central Works of Philosophy*, ed. John Shand (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2006), 217.

questions of who exactly falls into this "we," and whether all readers share its confidence. But if Williams is focused on addressing and convincing those who already are confident enough in living in a world understood as a community of moral equals and in the belief that what people are owed is determined from the position of equality, then the problem of reflective instability I pointed to appears to dissipate.

But this answer will not suffice for a person exhibiting thoroughgoing Accuracy: his aim is truth, and confidence as Williams understands it falls short. The Accurate person characteristically gets to the truth regarding the questions he deals with. This means that when he encounters Williams' account, he will strive to identify the propositions proposed by or implicit in it and examine them for their truth. He will test his thinking and beliefs to see whether he has strong reasons to believe that the ideas Williams expresses are true, refusing to take his desire to think so as such a reason. These ideas will contain, for instance, the idea that we live in a world understood as a community of moral equals, that what someone deserves is tied to this equality, and that individuals deserve or are owed the truth in the sense of having truth told to them. Even if he belongs to Williams' "we" and wants to be confident and believe in its luxury, even if he is inclined not to deny the ideas he finds in Williams, as an Accurate person he nevertheless refuses such comforts and insists on questioning them with the goal of forming true beliefs. Furthermore, even if he does not chance on Williams' book, the issues of what it means to be truthful and in what sense it involves truth-telling are almost certainly going to arise for him given that he strives to live truthfully. Consequently, he will be led to question most if not all the above ideas. The Accurate person will thus strive to get to the truth about whether anyone deserves the truth and if so on what basis.

From the viewpoint of the Accurate and truthful person, it is, therefore, a problem that Williams' analysis and defense of Sincerity rests on claims or ideas that are vague and questionable in their truth. It is a problem because he is not content until he has sufficient guarantee that his understanding of truthfulness is accurate and adequate. His Accuracy will move him to question and doubt Williams' account of Sincerity, but since Williams does not offer an argument he can follow or evaluate, he will be forced to move beyond Williams' work. It appears, thus, that on its own Williams' account of one virtue of truth cannot compel someone committed to the other.

This indicates that at least as far as the truthful person is concerned, Williams' account is unstable under reflection. The Accurate person is impelled to reflect on and examine the claims integral to Williams' discussion of Sincerity, and he cannot consistently aim to find out the truth and accept claims that may or may not be true. If they turn out to be true, then, ultimately, there is no problem. But the Accurate person's reflection on the issue will not come to a rest until that is established, and the problem is that Williams' account does not achieve this, nor does Williams show real concern of achieving it. To this extent, Williams' account is deficient and future discussions of truthfulness, at least those sympathetic with Williams' overall approach, must provide more solid answers than he does.[67]

Still, are we perhaps not overemphasizing the possibility that claims integral to Williams' account might be false? Even if his remarks are ambiguous and he does not provide an explicit argument, can we not relatively easily come up with robust reasons for thinking that his claims about equality and desert are true? And even if those reasons fall short of certainty, would they not

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67. It could be that there is no truth of the matter regarding these issues, or even that what we think about them determines their truth—perhaps this is Williams' final word. See Colin McGinn, "Isn't It the Truth?," review of *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, by Bernard Williams, *New York Review of Books*, April 10, 2003, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/04/10/isnt-it-the-truth/, sec. 2. But this view cannot be assumed and must be argued for, which Williams does not do. Again, the Accurate person will not be content otherwise.

at least help us minimize the possibility of falsehood, and so give perhaps even the Accurate person grounds to be confident in Williams' account of Sincerity? It seems foolish and imprudent to question or challenge some of Williams' key ideas. Who, after all, would deny the thought that we live in a world understood as a community of moral equals? In our time and place the idea of fundamental equality is almost universally accepted as true.

Putting, then, the question of equality aside, we can see that Williams' account rests on other ideas and claims that are not as uncontroversial today nor as easily held to be self-evident. Does the equality Williams proffers really imply or give rise to the desert he envisages? For instance, his account proposes that truth, a property of propositions, is the kind of thing that one can deserve and that can be owed to someone. But it is not immediately clear that it is. Some properties of things, after all, are not owed to anyone—for instance beauty (a property of objects, ideas, propositions). And accepting the idea that we live in a community of moral equals does not necessarily entail thinking that truth is the kind of thing that is deserved: we remain equal, after all, even if no one deserves the truth.[68]

But even if we accepted that truth can be deserved, perhaps by rejecting the alternative as counterintuitive, then much work would still remain to show that deserving it takes the shape Williams suggests. Williams' account implies that our membership in a community of moral equals means we are owed, we deserve to be told, the truth appropriate given the context and relation to a speaker, assuming we have not proved undeserving by violating trust. That is, we are all worthy of truth (appropriate to the context) unless we prove ourselves unworthy. Though we can come to no longer deserve the truth if we behave in the wrong manner, no positive actions,

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68. The conclusion about desert does not follow even if one accepts the further claim that what one deserves is determined ultimately from the position of equality. Even if that is the case, it is still possible that truth does not fall within the set of things that the members of the community of equals deserve.

such as striving to obtain the truth, are necessary *in order to* be in a position to deserve it. In the first instance, then, we deserve to be told the truth by virtue of who we are. But for this much to follow, we must accept not just moral equality, but a rather specific form of the idea of a community of moral equals. Simply on the basis of a belief in equality one might also think, in a sense inversely to Williams, that we deserve the truth only when we cultivate the qualities needed to successfully pursue and acquire it, and that no-one deserves truth simply by virtue of who he is. Equality can equally ground and give rise to the competing notion of deserving the truth, whereby we equally deserve the fruit of our labors, and no one deserves, has the right to, the fruit others have obtained. We certainly think of desert in this way when it comes to other important success concepts. For instance, we are much more likely to say that someone deserves happiness when he has done all the right things, not that he is owed happiness by virtue of his being equal. And we do not generally take this to undermine the notion of fundamental equality.

If Williams' explication of deserving the truth is questionable, then so is his account of Sincerity. If truth is not the kind of thing that can be deserved, or if our membership in a community of moral equals does not engender desert in the sense of being owed the truth, then the notion of desert will not fix the scope of Sincerity in the way Williams hopes. For instance, if Sincerity involved telling the truth to those who deserved it, but deserving the truth were contingent on one's ability to obtain the truth rather than on sustaining relations of trust, then Sincerity would leave much more room for deception than Williams thinks. Perhaps in that case we would think that the notions of Sincerity and truthfulness have been stretched beyond recognition. But that does not make it legitimate to conclude that Williams' sense of deserving the truth is, therefore, adequately justified or true. The contention that we deserve the truth in a specific way and for specific reasons, and so the specific claim about the scope of Sincerity, must be justified in its own right. If a

particular justification fails, one cannot be faulted for looking into alternative ways to fix the scope of Sincerity—for instance, by treating it as a kind of civic virtue, which involves sharing one's beliefs (appropriate given a context) with one's fellow citizens to the extent needed for the survival and success of the political community as well as deceiving agents of external and internal threat. No doubt Williams would reject such an approach and the scope of Sincerity it fixes, but in the absence of a more detailed exposition and argument, his account is not in a position to rule it out.

I can ultimately neither confirm nor deny the doubts facing Williams' proposal, nor argue for some alternative. However, my goal was not to definitively show that Williams' ideas are erroneous, but that they may well be, and that his account is deficient or incomplete to the extent that it does not provide an adequate argument for believing them. Williams may well capture what his readers assume, or want, or feel they need to be the case about Sincerity, but that is not quite the same as capturing what properly understood is. And this deficiency, I have tried to argue, is a problem. It is a problem, on the one hand, because it is a problem for any account if its core pillar lacks adequate justification. On the other hand, it is a problem specifically because truthfulness is the subject matter of Williams' account: the truthful person Williams envisages will be in tension with himself insofar as his Accuracy impels him to investigate and doubt whether the support on which his Sincerity rests is true. There is much work, then, to be done before the truthful person's reflection on Williams' account of truthfulness will come to rest—questions over certain central claims remain, and the truthful person will not be content until they have been answered. For the truthful person at least, Williams' account does not provide the reflective stability it aims to. This is not to say that it is impossible to vindicate Williams' account, only that the vindication must come from some source outside of his text. Our discussion has set out the requirements for such a vindication, and so a task for future discussions of truthfulness sympathetic to Williams.

CHAPTER 3

Tensions Between the Virtues of Truth

In the previous chapters we examined and elucidated the two virtues of truth Williams identifies, and the distinction between them should by now be clear. Accuracy, we have seen, is the virtue of truth-acquisition that involves characteristically ensuring the correctness of one's beliefs and getting to the truth about the questions one deals with. The Accurate person forms beliefs that are accurate and adequate to the matters he considers. Sincerity, on the other hand, is the virtue of the free declaration, to deserving others, of beliefs appropriate to the context and social roles (but not hierarchies) of interaction. The Sincere person communicates openly with those who deserve the truth. The combination of these two virtues accounts for that which "the value of truthfulness embraces": "the need to find out the truth, to hold on to it, and to tell it."[1]

It may be helpful to see the contrast between Accuracy and Sincerity as a distinction between two types of virtues: Accuracy is a self-regarding virtue, Sincerity an other-regarding one. Whereas the former aims solely at certain internal states of the agent (holding beliefs that are true), the latter aims at the transmission of something to external others through the agent's states (alignment of speech and belief). Accuracy aims at *my* beliefs' being true; by contrast, Sincerity involves communicating my beliefs *to you*. Thus, the former establishes and maintains a relation

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1. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 13.

between the truth and the agent himself, while the latter establishes a relation between the agent and others. Other people feature in the aim of Sincerity, the other-regarding virtue, in a way they do not in Accuracy, the self-regarding one.[2]

This difference raises the question of whether Accuracy and Sincerity always work in concert, or whether they may pull a person in conflicting directions. Though under propitious conditions sharing one's beliefs may combine seamlessly with acquiring true beliefs, could it be that in less favorable times there exists a tension between the two distinct virtues? To be clear, the relevant question is not whether gaining the truth goes hand in hand with sharing it in every instance and without exception. Virtues are dispositions, and it is possible to be disposed to act in a certain way without always and necessarily acting so. It is also possible to sometimes, even quite often, act a certain way without being disposed to act in that way—to paraphrase Aristotle, used in a related but different context, "one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day."[3] What matters for truthfulness is whether the relevant actions are characteristic or not, which is why we have spoken of *characteristically* getting to the truth and *characteristically* communicating what one believes (to deserving others). The relevant question, then, is whether tensions exist between these two characteristic ways of acting.

Williams does not seriously consider the possibility, implicitly assuming favorable conditions throughout, but it seems important to address the question if we are to have a more thorough and full-fledged understanding of truthfulness. Though no author can be faulted for failing to address all the different possibilities that his work raises or leaves open, it is best not to

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2. There is the added complication of the notion of Sincerity with oneself, which we have not focused on. But, at most, it is only a partial aspect of the virtue of Sincerity, and we cannot speak of Sincerity in the absence of open communication with others. Moreover, given that Sincerity with oneself seems to involve taking oneself as an interlocutor, it might be viewed as derivative of the latter, interpersonal form.
3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 1098a18–19.

ignore potentially significant ones. And the possibility in question is certainly significant. If tensions between the virtues of truth exist, they pose a challenge to the attempt to live truthfully. And if one harbors the hope that truthfulness will flourish—as Williams and many critics of the post-truth era do—and if such hope is not to be blind, then it is important to reflect on how such tensions arise and persist and under what conditions.

In this chapter, I will argue that tensions do exist between Accuracy and Sincerity. In fact, and more specifically, my claim is that under certain conditions Sincerity can and does frustrate Accuracy. In order to demonstrate this, I will discuss two scenarios in which this is liable to happen. Unfortunately the lack of space and time prevents me from considering the reverse— whether Accuracy is liable to frustrate Sincerity—though it is worth noting that the last section of the previous chapter, in which we discussed the reflective stability of Williams' account of Sincerity, hints at a way in which that might take place. At any rate, the tensions we will consider here are especially problematic: the previous chapter also showed that Sincerity implies truth-telling only in conjunction with Accuracy, and this means that by frustrating Accuracy, Sincerity hurts its own contribution to truthfulness.

I will begin by considering the way in which Sincerity might be damaging to Accuracy. After this, I will turn to two scenarios in which such damage is particularly likely, perhaps inevitable: under conditions of persecution and when social barriers to obtaining certain important goods exist. My primary focus will be on the former, for a few reasons besides personal idiosyncrasy and life experience. First, it seems to me to bring out the tensions between the virtues of truth most clearly, concretely, and poignantly. Second, persecution is an important reality of human social life, but one that is today rather ignored—especially relative to the topic of social barriers and the agitation it arouses in scholars and laypeople alike. Williams' book is a case in

point: despite its political-philosophical aspirations and discussion of truth-telling, it passes over entirely the phenomenon of persecution.

I. Cause for Tension

That the disposition to share one's beliefs with deserving others is sometimes in tension with the disposition to acquire true beliefs is not hard to see. There are many circumstances in which one can obtain the truth about something only if one deceives individuals who themselves have in no way violated trust. For instance, imagine a person who desires an answer to a question that requires reading a book at the university library, which he cannot access unless he deceives the librarian and pretends to be a student. Assuming the investigator is an Accurate person, he is impelled to obtain true belief; at the same time, if he speaks his mind as Sincerity requires, he will not obtain a true belief about the question he investigates. Sincere communication in this example frustrates truth-acquisition because it prevents the investigator from obtaining that which he needs for a successful investigation—a book.

The example, very specific though it is, reveals a more general point: communicating sincerely sometimes undermines what we might call the conditions of possibility or the prerequisites of Accuracy. In chapter 1 we saw that Accuracy involves, besides investigative investment, choosing and following the right investigative strategy or method.[4] A person's ability to choose and follow the right investigative method, in turn, depends on certain further factors. These include qualities internal to a person's character, such as his skill and persistence, as well as goods external to him, such as various material means of investigation. It is the latter that are

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4.   See pages 21 and 25–27 above.

relevant here: the trouble with open communication is that it sometimes deprives one of the access to goods needed for successfully investigating questions one is concerned with.

There are generally a number of different goods prerequisite for a successful investigation. First, and as our example illustrates, the ability to follow a good method depends on the possession of the material resources necessary for carrying out the inquiry. What they are turns on the specific study: in natural sciences one needs laboratory equipment, in social sciences other humans to interview or observe, and in the humanities access to books. It may be possible to choose the right method even without such means, but it will be impossible to follow one's choice through, ensure the accuracy of one's beliefs, and discover the truth. Second, and to state the somewhat obvious, one needs the means of survival, since in the absence of shelter, security, and nourishment one will hardly be able to preoccupy oneself with any investigation at all. One must have one's basic needs met for the choice and use of appropriate investigative strategy to be possible—not to say, at least in most cases, for investigative investment to arise. Apart from these resources, carrying out a well-chosen investigation requires certain less tangible goods. Finding out the truth calls for, third, the space and freedom to act in ways demanded by an inquiry, and so, at least usually, freedom from constraint on one's physical movement and actions. And fourth, time is of the essence: if one is constantly preoccupied with something else, one's ability to ensure the correctness of one's beliefs diminishes. Leisure is crucial. We can say, thus, that an adequate amount of freedom is needed for getting to the truth: freedom from constraint and freedom from labor and distraction.

If these external factors are crucial for the good choice and use of investigative method, then they are also crucial for Accuracy. Though Williams does not explicitly make this point, it simply follows from his description of the virtue. If Accuracy involves the choice and use of appropriate method, as Williams thinks, and if that choice and use hinges on further factors, then

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so does Accuracy.[5] It might seem strange to claim that a virtue depends on some such factors: if it is a virtue of character, then surely it is a matter of one's character and not some further, largely external goods? But upon closer consideration the connection to external factors is not that strange at all. To take Aristotle's list of excellences, the important virtue of magnificence is possible only if one has considerable means, and so it is dependent on something external to the agent.[6] And if virtue is dependent on external factors or goods, then it can be disrupted when those goods are denied or deprived. If a person cannot obtain or retain the prerequisite goods of appropriate choice and use of investigative method, then he will not be able to be Accurate.

Here we are concerned with instances where the open disclosure of one's beliefs plays an important causal role in hindering one's ability to obtain or retain such goods, and thus where sincere communication negatively impacts one's ability to live Accurately. This can occur because sincere communication leads to a denial of access to the external goods one needs, which was roughly the example we discussed above; the investigator is prevented from entering the library because he is open about his beliefs and about who he is. But open communication may frustrate Accuracy also by depriving one of access to the prerequisites of investigation one already has. This would be the case, to adapt our previous example, where a student has his library privileges withdrawn because he shares beliefs that fall foul of the university's speech code.

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5. There are no doubt questions, on everyday matters in particular (such as whether there are flowers outside my window right now), which require barely any investigation to obtain accurate beliefs. But if one gets to the truth only on matters like this, then one's Accuracy is of a very limited kind. And even so, one's ability to find out the answer presupposes at least being alive and that which is needed for survival—as well as some freedom.

6. Aristotle writes, "a poor man cannot be magnificent, since he has not the means with which to spend large sums fittingly; and he who tries is a fool… But great expenditure [magnificence] is becoming to those who have suitable means to start with, acquired by their own efforts or from ancestors or connections." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 1122b26–31. In discussing philosophic ethics generally and Aristotle's *Ethics* specifically, Leo Strauss said, "virtue presupposes a substantial economic equipment. One cannot have moral virtue without having property, as in the Middle Ages the philosophers still maintained, and they were condemned by the Catholic Church for that reason among other things." Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens," October 25, 1950, 30:45, https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/jerusalem-and-athens-oct-25-and-nov-8-1950/.

Any time that Sincere behavior frustrates the acquisition of true belief seems problematic from the viewpoint of truthfulness, but we should not overstate our case thus far. We have mentioned one instance, somewhat speculative, in which sincerely communicating hurts a person's ability to obtain a truth on some specific question. Nevertheless, even if sincere communication sometimes has this effect, that does not yet mean the person is no longer someone who characteristically gets to the truth. As noted at the beginning, the question we must consider is whether the *characteristic* sharing of one's beliefs frustrates one's *characteristic* acquisition of truth. Having clarified the way in which sincere communication can hinder truth-acquisition, we can now turn to two scenarios where such conflict is rather more pervasive.

II. The Problem of Persecution

Sincerity is liable to frustrate Accuracy when it elicits adverse reactions. When beliefs we share give rise in others to reactions and subsequent actions that negatively affect our possession of the goods needed to appropriately choose and use an investigative method, then belief-sharing hurts our ability to get to the truth. One way this happens is that people, intended interlocutors or accidental hearers, get offended and act on the offense. There are various possible reasons for being offended: in response to an unacceptable content of the expressed view, merely because a belief is contrary to the offended party's own beliefs, and even due to the absence of belief about some important thing when the truthful person simply expresses his skepticism or agnosticism. Such reactions are no doubt more likely with respect to certain subjects than others—what they are depends on the social, cultural, and political situation and context. But to speak generally, people are more likely to be offended when a topic is regarded, fully consciously or not, as important; using psychological terminology we can speak of cases where individuals have strongly

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cathected[7] views or beliefs. Particularly questions about how to live, morality, and one's identity seem to fit into this category—questions regarding good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust, and who one is.

Adverse reactions to and actions against sincere speech can also be caused by a hearer's consideration of how the speech impacts his interests. As before, different aspects of the communication may be seen as problematic: its content, as when an uncomfortable truth about someone is revealed, but also the mere fact that someone dares to contradict some opinion, thinks independently, or claims to speak the truth. And the interests judged to be harmed may be various: financial, political, reputational, etc. Whatever the precise reason, in the cases under consideration a hearer moves to prevent further such communication due to a perception of harm. This he can do by undermining the speaker's ability to speak altogether, or, particularly if there is concern that inconvenient or uncomfortable truths will be revealed, by undermining the speaker's ability to find the truth. Though the process is in many ways similar to the one involving offense, it is likely to be less immediate, since it depends on a judgment, however rudimentary or incorrect, of one's interests and how a speaker's communication affects them. By contrast, being offended tends to be a more purely emotional response.

Whether the actions undercutting the conditions of truth-acquisition arise because a hearer is offended or sees harm to his interests, they can take various forms and may but need not be the

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7. *Besetzung* in Freud's original German. It can be defined as "a quantum of psychic energy invested in the mental representation of a thought, feeling, wish, memory, fantasy, or person… also… used to mean the relative intensity of interest, attention, or emotional investment in a given mental content or activity," and its amount "can be intensified (hypercathexis), diminished (hypocathexis), withdrawn (decathexis)." Elizabeth L. Auchincloss and Eslee Samberg, *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), s.v. "Cathexis," available at www.pep-web.org. *Besetzung*, not uncommon in colloquial German, might also be translated as "occupation" or "investment." James Strachey reports that Freud was not happy with Strachey's invented technical term "cathexis." James Strachey, "The Emergence of Freud's Fundamental Hypotheses," appendix *to The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, by Sigmund Freud, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 3 (1893-1899), *Early Psycho-Analytic Publications* (London: Hogarth Press, 1962), 63n2.

outcome of deliberation. They can range from physical violence to legal measures to social pressure. It is not hard to see how freedom, leisure, the means of survival, and other important resources are threatened by death, imprisonment, or various legal deprivations. But we should not overlook the important role of social pressure: even in otherwise relatively tolerant regimes, social pressure may be borne on individuals and organizations to deprive those expressing or holding unacceptable views, actual or suspected, of that which they need for carrying out investigations—for instance pay or an institutional position with access to resources.

We can denote this phenomenon—undermining a speaker's ability to be Accurate through a reaction to his communication—a form of persecution.[8] Of course, it is a rather specific form of persecution. In its general sense, persecution refers to pursuing and subjecting an individual or a group of individuals to hostility or ill-treatment,[9] and so the term is much broader, referring also to hostility against others on the basis of who they are or what they are suspected to believe even when they never communicate their actual beliefs. But as long as we keep in mind that we are using the term to refer to something quite particular, it seems legitimate to speak of persecution given the phenomenon we have described.[10]

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8. Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). 22–37, esp. 32–33.
9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.vv. "persecute, *v*.," "persecution, *n*.," accessed October 7, 2019, http://www.oed.com/. The *Oxford English Dictionary* adds that the ill-treatment is "esp. on grounds of religious faith, political belief, or race." This does not, however, mean that these grounds are necessary for talking about persecution.
10. We might add that we are using the term also in a rather neutral way: even if the suppression of the truthful person seems prima facie unjust, we have not established that truthful communication is always just. Possible first impressions notwithstanding, such rather neutral use is not a problem. Though the notion of persecution commonly tends to suggest injustice and wrongdoing, these connotations are not essential to it given that it is possible to ask, further, whether a particular act of persecution is just or not. We may be inclined to think that any hostility towards people on grounds of, say, their religious faith must be unjust. But this idea is certainly contestable and certainly not self-evident, and, speaking historically, it has been denied by many if not most people.

Persecution, in the sense we have discussed it, is a problem from the viewpoint of truthfulness and a threat one must face.[11] Under conditions of persecution, the virtue of Sincerity impels one to act in ways that, at times at least, give rise to responses that undermine the conditions of appropriate choice and use of investigative method, and so undermine some of the prerequisites of Accuracy. By characteristically sharing his (true) beliefs with deserving others, a person puts in danger his ability to characteristically get to the truth on the questions he deals with. Thus, under conditions of persecution, Sincerity is liable to frustrate Accuracy. And because finding truth is necessary for speaking it, the Sincere person thereby also imperils the basis of truth-telling.[12]

Still, is this conclusion not going somewhat too far? After all, it certainly seems possible to state many things openly even under heavy persecution: no matter how severe the conditions, one will be able to express many beliefs on many topics without the fear of retribution. Indeed, it is not improbable that one can speak freely on most things—particularly as far as one's concern is with the everyday. On the one hand, only a relatively limited number of topics or questions are likely to elicit the offense or considerations of harmed interest that give rise to the type of punitive actions described; on the other hand, it can be expected that many people will not act persecutorily. Bearing this in mind, we should not jump to the hyperbolic conclusion that sincere communication is in all respects in tension with getting to the truth, nor deny that it is possible, as a rule, to state many things openly.

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11. Leo Strauss writes of "basic truths which would not be pronounced in public by any decent man, because they would do harm to many people who, having been hurt, would naturally be inclined to hurt in turn him who pronounces the unpleasant truths" (Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 36). But as we have seen, the problem is broader than this: whether the voiced truths do harm or good, a threat persists as long as a communication is perceived as harmful or offensive.

12. See chapter 2, section 3 above on how Sincerity implies the open sharing of *true* belief, and so truth-telling, only given the virtue of Accuracy.

For all that, our previous point stands. We ought to not forget that we are here discussing not every and any instance of sincere communication, but the disposition or virtue of Sincerity, which involves characteristically sharing one's beliefs (appropriate to the context of the interaction) with those deserving the truth.[13] Sincerity means that one does not characteristically, or as a rule, engage in deception (of those deserving the truth). But, under conditions of persecution, not characteristically deceiving others on certain topics is liable to frustrate one's ability to acquire, and so to tell, the truth. To retain the goods needed for the appropriate use and choose of investigative method, one therefore needs to characteristically, as a rule, use deception on certain topics and with certain people—and such communication does not look like that which we would expect from a Sincere person. This, then, is the tension between Sincerity and Accuracy. Even under conditions of persecution one may be able to share, even characteristically share, one's beliefs on certain topics and with certain people without hindering one's ability to acquire the truth, but the problem is that one cannot do it, must not do it, to the extent implied by Sincerity if one is to avoid the risk of undermining one's Accuracy. Sincerity frustrates Accuracy not because every truthful utterance leads to persecution, but because some do.

Still, there is a further question and potential objection one might raise by pointing out that, on Williams' account, Sincerity involves sharing one's beliefs only with those who do not reveal themselves as undeserving of truth. We saw in the previous chapter that there are some serious problems with this notion that create trouble for Williams' account. But putting these worries aside and assuming Williams is right, does the notion of desert not offer a way to dissolve the tensions we have noted between Sincerity and Accuracy? Can we not think that those persecuting a speaker in the way we have described indeed prove themselves not to deserve the truth? Williams, after

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13. I am putting here aside the qualifications Williams makes regarding speech that causes sufficiently severe harm to others (which kindness prompts to mitigate). See chapter 2, pages 68 and 70–71 above.

all, suggests that the person violating conditions of trust is undeserving of truth, and persecution certainly seems like a violation of trust. If Sincerity allows and even mandates deception of those who do not deserve truth, and if the persecutors do not deserve it, then it begins to look like Sincerity is compatible with deceiving the persecutors. And if it is compatible with such deception, then it does not look like it frustrates Accuracy after all: we said that Sincerity is liable to frustrate Accuracy by virtue of involving communication that elicits persecution which undermines the ability to investigate well, but now it turns out that Sincerity does not involve sharing one's beliefs in such cases at all. Following this line of thought, not sharing your beliefs with others if they would persecute you is what you do if you are truthful. And if that is the case, then the dangers we spoke of earlier do not arise, and the dilemma between hurting one's Accuracy by telling the truth and retaining it through deception and insincerity can be avoided.

This suggestion, nevertheless, runs into some serious problems—quite apart from whether the notion of desert Williams employs ultimately survives scrutiny. First, it implies that in settings where most people are prone to persecute the truth-teller, truthfulness implies lying to most people. This goes much further than there is reason to think Williams intended. Rather than conclude this way, it seems more intuitive, not to say more prudent, to affirm that there are situations, circumstances, and societies in which significant tensions between Accuracy and Sincerity exist, and in which being and remaining truthful is likely impossible. There is also another way in which the suggestion leads to a counterintuitive view of truthfulness. We generally think, second, that whether or not someone is virtuous shines through or comes out most clearly when the stakes are high—in the present case, when the consequences of telling the truth are severe. Michel Foucault's discussion of the ancient notion or virtue of *parrēsia*, a form of truthfulness that combines sincerity

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with saying what is the case,[14] is distinct from Williams' treatment of truthfulness, but it points to something important in this regard. According to Foucault, *parrēsia* involves "courage" and "danger" arising "from the fact that the truth you say is able to hurt or anger the interlocutor," meaning that "the parrhesiast is somebody who takes a risk."[15] The suggestion we are examining, that Sincerity allows or mandates deception when one's interlocutors would react badly, sits badly with this intuition that genuine truthfulness, genuine Sincerity, may require heavy sacrifices.

Whether or not these two considerations from intuition are convincing, the suggestion that Sincerity involves deceiving one's would-be persecutors faces a further problem: the persecutor is not always the interlocutor. The distinction between the intended and the actual hearers is important here. Though the truthful person may intend his words only to one person, it can nevertheless happen that others hear them as well, whether through eavesdropping or because the intended hearer repeats them. And some of those other actual hearers may then engage in persecution. At the same time, the intended hearer may well be innocent. Certainly, it seems reasonable to think that he violates trust if he callously or unthinkingly repeats the words intended for him only, particularly if the speaker has admonished him to keep a secret. But not all repetitions

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14. Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: Lectures at the University of California–Berkeley October–November 1983*, in *Discourse and Truth and Parrēsia*, ed. Henri-Paul Fruchaud and Daniele Lorenzini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 42, where Foucault writes, "not only is the parrhesiast [the one who uses *parrēsia*] sincere, not only does he state his opinion frankly, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true."

15. Ibid., 43. More than this, Foucault notes that "somebody is said to use *parrēsia*, and deserves to be considered as a parrhesiast, if and only if there is a risk, there is a danger for him in telling the truth." In other words, "*parrēsia* is [necessarily] linked to danger, it is linked to courage. It is the courage of telling the truth in spite of its danger. In *parrēsia*, telling the truth takes place in a game of life or death." Ibid., 42–43. Cf. Rousseau's remark: "sincérité… dont il sera toujours impossible de s'assurer, tant que l'on risquera quelque chose à parler vrai" (sincerity, of which it will always be impossible to be sure as long as something is risked to speak the truth). Jean Jacques Rousseau, Citoyen de Geneve, à Christophe De Beaumont, Archevêque de Paris, in Rousseau, *Collection complète des œuvres de Jean Jacques Rousseau, Citoyen de Geneve*, ed. J. M. Gallanar, vol. 6, *Mélanges, tome premier* (Geneva: L'Édition du Peyrou et Moultou, 1780–1789), 45 (my translation). The claim that danger is essential to truth-telling goes too far at least with respect to the virtue of truthfulness we have analyzed—nor does truthfulness share certain other features of *parrēsia*, such as that the speaker speaks from a position of inferiority (Foucault, *Discourse and Truth*, 44). But the notion that danger is a proof or indication of someone's being a truth-teller brings it out well that to be (considered) a genuine truth-teller, one ought to tell the truth even when the consequences are severe.

of what one has heard count as violations of trust. And if the communication is overheard, then the interlocutor has not done anything to prove himself undeserving of truth. Thus, even if we take a view on who deserves being told the truth so strict as to exclude those likely to engage in persecution, the problem of persecution does not dissolve, and Sincerity is still liable to frustrate Accuracy. The issue persists because in communicating openly under conditions of persecution, the truthful and Sincere person is liable to undermine his ability to gain the truth by eliciting persecution not by the intended, but the other hearers. To avoid this, one might decide not to share the truth with one's interlocutor when there is any risk of persecution, even if the interlocutor deserves it. But that, on Williams' account, would amount to not telling the truth to someone one owes it to, and would therefore be an instance of untruthfulness.

Based on our discussion, and as noted above, we can thus say that under conditions of persecution Sincerity is liable to frustrate Accuracy. But the extent to which it does is a function of a few factors. The problem, as we have seen, arises when hearers—intended or not—are offended by sincere speech or see it as harmful to their interests, due to which they engage in actions that deprive one of the goods needed for Accuracy, needed to use and choose the investigative method well. The extent of such persecution depends, first, on the extent to which the topics one has and expresses beliefs about[16] happen also to be sensitive in the sense of causing offense or being perceived as harmful and giving rise to persecutory actions. Second, it depends on the extent to which persecution deprives one specifically of the goods one needs to investigate the topics one is concerned with. Losing access to a history book is hardly a problem if one is studying botany; at the same time, some of the prerequisite goods, such as the means of sustenance

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16. This is a question, as we saw in chapter 1, determined largely by one's experiences, interests, and social context, though there are also topics that one cannot but have beliefs about if one is Accurate. See chapter 1, page 45–47 above.

or leisure, are required no matter what the investigation. We might say, then, that Sincerity frustrates Accuracy and persecution poses a problem for truthfulness only to the extent there is a twofold correspondence: between the topics one has beliefs about and the topics sensitive to others, and between the goods one needs for successful investigation and those one is deprived of through the actions of others. To speak more broadly, it seems reasonable to think that the problem increases in severity as people's persecutory tendencies increase: the more readily people are offended by speech or the more readily they see it as harmful to their interests, the more readily they engage in actions against a speaker, and the more their actions deprive a speaker of goods.

The extent to which Sincerity frustrates Accuracy under conditions of persecution thus varies, but at any rate the possibility of persecution complicates the attempt to live truthfully. It turns out that under certain conditions the two virtues of truth can decouple and pull a person in different directions. How, then, is a person aiming at truthfulness to act when persecution is an imminent threat? Williams' work does not discuss the possibility, and so it offers few clues. Admittedly, it may be too much to demand a very precise answer from a philosophical account such as his: one surely needs to know the particulars of a situation before making a judgment, and even that knowledge might not permit a very precise determination. And yet, this does not mean that a more general reflection on the question should be shunned.

When persecution of the kind discussed is a real threat, the person striving to live truthfully has three options. First, he can act as before, with Accuracy and Sincerity, attempting to combine truth-acquisition with truth-telling. Second, he can continue to communicate sincerely while avoiding altogether, in speech *and* thought, those topics likely to elicit persecution, actively restricting thus the set of topics he investigatively invests in and forms beliefs about. Third, he may refuse to curtail his investigative investment, and instead choose to avoid speaking on

dangerous topics or to deceive others about his beliefs when necessary.[17] With the first option, by essentially disregarding the threat of persecution, he risks losing that which he needs for successful investigation and Accuracy; with the second and third options, he himself chooses to act in a deficient manner with regards to, respectively, the virtues of Accuracy and Sincerity. It may seem that the latter two cases are worse, since one's failure to live up to the demands of truthfulness is self-chosen, whereas in the first case the immediate cause lies in others. However, we should keep in mind that by choosing to act as before one puts at risk one's ability to exhibit not just one virtue of truth, but both of them. As we have noted before, to tell the truth one must possess it, and so if one loses one's ability to acquire the truth then one's ability to speak the truth is weakened as well. Furthermore, with options two and three one chooses not to act in a particular instance according to the demands of one of the virtues of truth, but one does not thereby necessarily lose the *capacity* to behave in accordance with them. With option one, on the other hand, a person risks sparking off persecution and losing precisely the ability to find out, and so speak, the truth on great many questions. Overall, the choice appears to be between, on the one hand, sacrificing one of the virtues of truth, and, on the other, acting as one's dispositions to Accuracy and Sincerity impel one but thereby damaging one's ability to live a truthful life. It does not look like there is a particularly good course of action from the perspective of truthfulness when persecution is a real threat.

How serious, then, is the problem of persecution we have identified? If it is coeval with human life, then the question ensues whether truthfulness is ever possible in more than a qualified

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17. One way in which he might do this is by trying to communicate—in writing or in speech—in such a manner that he is understood differently by different people, so that his communication gets across his real beliefs to those more amiably disposed—or, at any rate, those among them who have ears—without being perceived as offensive or harmful to one's interest by those who would engage in persecution. For some examples of such writing see Arthur M. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). A person who managed to pull this off would deceive only those who arguably did not deserve his trust anyway, while sharing his beliefs with those who do. Granted, this is quite far from the free and open declaration of belief Williams advocates. But its virtue is that it permits communicating publicly without sacrificing the ability to investigate successfully, and so without curtailing the ability to tell the truth.

or limited sense. By contrast, if persecution takes place only rarely, or perhaps used to occur but no longer does, then there is little reason to be concerned about the possibility of genuine or full truthfulness. Judging the seriousness of persecution as a problem requires, then, assessing its prevalence and inevitability—whether it is an ever-present threat or one that can be, and perhaps has been, surpassed. Such an assessment, if it is to be adequate, stands in need of historical, political, and philosophical reflection. It is not possible here to provide a definitive answer to the question or treat the matter as extensively or rigorously as the topic deserves, but we can at least clarify the issue somewhat further.

In one sense, persecution of the kind we have described is a threat whenever there is the possibility that people react to a communication in a persecutory manner. That possibility exists wherever humans live in a group, since it is coexistent with social life and communication: whenever one says something to others, it is possible that they will judge it to be offensive or contrary to their interest and act against the speaker. This is simply a function of the relationship between communication, interpretation, and action: an utterance does not determine (though it influences) either how listeners understand and interpret it or the way they act on the basis of what they hear, and so various reactions are possible. Nevertheless, this is a weak form of possibility— a mere possibility if you will. It does not imply that persecution is ever likely to ensue from some or indeed any conceivable communication. Just because people *may* act in a persecutory manner does not mean there is any reason to think or real danger that they will, and so the possibility of a society in which people may persecute but never in fact do remains.

What matters for our purposes, then, is not the mere possibility but the *real* possibility of persecution—a stronger form. By the real possibility of persecution I mean a state of affairs in which if one communicates on certain topics, then certain people will or are very likely to respond

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with persecutory behavior.[18] It is this kind of possibility that gives rise to the dilemma, outlined above, that a truthful person faces: either he fails to do what he is disposed to and what we would expect from him, or he does it and undermines his ability to acquire (and tell) the truth.

Is the real possibility of persecution ineluctable?[19] The question is a momentous one, and students of various fields—historians, anthropologists, sociologists, political theorists, psychologists, and philosophers—have a role in answering it. The historical record seems to suggest that a regime and social arrangement without persecution would be a stroke of fortune or a prayer,[20] though history on its own can presumably only tell us something is very difficult, not that it is impossible. At the same time, we may be inclined to judge that our own age, with all its proclaimed progress over the past, might be different. But once we remember that persecution can take the form not only of violent actions or legal measures, but social and public pressure as well, such judgment proves to be highly ambitious. Social pressure seems to be alive and well in the age of widespread connectivity and social media, with such technological developments making it easier to conduct broad pressure campaigns.[21] Indeed, in recent years there appears to have been

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18. This is still a form of possibility because the persecution is conditional on the initial communication. In the absence of communication on sensitive topics, no persecution will ensue. Judging at a given point in time, we cannot say that persecution will come about, only that it might. Whether it will or not depends on the choices of the communicator (and, of course, the potential persecutors).

19. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 21.

20. For prayer see *The Republic of Plato*, 450c–d, 456b–c, 499b–d, 540d–e.

21. It is said that the Internet creates a "global village," something Williams discusses along with its tendency to foster "that mainstay of all villages, gossip" (Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 216). Another mainstay of villages, of course, is hostility towards non-conformity and ostracism and persecution of those violating taboos. On the one hand, the Internet has allowed any and every taboo to be broken. On the other hand, as social media has gained in social importance and become a mass phenomenon, as it has turned societies into a kind of village where individuals can easily find out what someone somewhere is saying or doing and think they know what it means, it has become an effective mechanism of enforcing taboos. Outrage and policing the acceptable and unacceptable is quite easy, as the numerous social media pressure campaigns on institutions and individuals attest. The Internet gives social pressure a whole new force and efficacy. Take the United States, where legal protections on freedom of speech are as strong as anywhere, and yet where it has probably never been as easy to lose one's job as a result of ill-considered speech if it causes the offense and outrage of the virtual peasants.

an intensification of the efforts to root out unacceptable views, including from science and academia, perhaps the two fields of human endeavor that most pride themselves on their freedom of thought and inquiry. Not all such efforts, it seems safe to say, are motivated by a genuine concern for truth.[22] It seems likely that a regime or society in which the threat of persecution is no

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22. The stories of Dr. Kenneth Zucker and Dr. Allan Josephson offer two interesting case studies. Dr. Zucker was the head of the Family Gender Identity Clinic at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto for more than 30 years, before being ousted from the position in 2015 amid accusations that he was practicing "conversion therapy" with gender dysphoric patients. The criticism centered on Zucker's view that congruence between a patient's birth sex and gender identity was the best outcome, even as he stressed the importance of assessing each patient individually and left the door open to gender transitioning in some cases. Molly Hayes, "Doctor fired from gender identity clinic says he feels 'vindicated' after CAMH apology, settlement," *Globe and Mail* [Canada], October 7, 2018, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-doctor-fired-from-gender-identity-clinic-says-he-feels-vindicated/; Madeleine Kearns, "Dr. Zucker Defied Trans Orthodoxy. Now He's Vindicated.," *National Review*, October 25, 2018, https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/10/transgender-orthodoxy-kenneth-zucker-vindicated/. According to one petition to dismiss Zucker, he engaged in "dehumanizing practices [that] include teaching transgender children," or "prepubescent gender-variant youth" as the petition also calls them, "to be more content with their biological gender." "Eliminate Dr. Kenneth Zucker and His Practice of Transgender 'Reparative Therapy,'" Change.org, accessed October 24, 2019, https://www.change.org/p/camh-terminate-dr-kenneth-zucker-as-head-of-the-gender-identity-clinic.

   Dr. Josephson, psychiatrist, chaired for nearly 15 years the division of child and adolescent psychiatry and psychology at the University of Louisville. In 2017, he expressed the view that from the perspective of medical science biological reality is a more appropriate basis for classifying individuals than gender identity, and said that parents should empathize with their children and "use their collective wisdom in guiding their child to align with his or her biological sex." Largely due to the reaction of his faculty colleagues, Josephson was demoted and subsequently informed that his contract would not be renewed. Madeleine Kearns, "Gender Dissenter Gets Fired," *National Review*, July 12, 2019, https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/07/allen-josephson-gender-dissenter-gets-fired/; Jamie Dean, "Transgender Tide," *World Magazine* [US], May 11, 2019, https://world.wng.org/2019/04/transgender_tide.

   These cases suggest that social pressure is used to adversely affect the lives of individuals even today, and that such social pressure is not always particularly concerned with the truth. The causes of gender dysphoria are still not well understood (see "Gender Dysphoria: Overview," NHS, last reviewed April 12, 2016, https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/). Though it may sometimes be possible to identify appropriate treatment without a precise understanding of a condition's aetiology, the lack of understanding urges caution particularly when the proposed intervention is drastic and irreversible. (It should be noted that in the UK the NHS offers mainly psychological treatment for children, "because majority of children with suspected gender dysphoria don't have the condition once they reach puberty"; "Gender Dysphoria: Treatment," NHS, last reviewed April 12, 2016, https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/treatment/.) Leon Kass, Harvey Mansfield, and others have pointed out that it is not uncommon for scientific research—especially in the social and behavioral sciences—to be impacted by politics, ideology, and changing mores. See Brief of Leon R. Kass, Harvey C. Mansfield, and the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy as Amici Curiae in Support of the Petitioners, *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, 570 U.S. No. 12-144 (2013), 7–17. They point specifically to the changes in views on homosexuality within psychology, prompted more by a reaction to activist protests at APA conventions in the early 1970s than scientific discoveries; for further, see Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 67–154.

   The use of social pressure becomes a problem for truthfulness when it is used to deny goods needed for exhibiting Accuracy. It should be noted that though Zucker and Josephson's ability to pursue the truth was hindered, they did not entirely lose the goods needed for it: Zucker received a settlement and remains the editor

longer real would have to be either exceptionally tolerant or thoroughly committed to truth, so much so that the truthful person would not need to worry even about social pressure when addressing the most cherished and sensitive opinions. It is questionable whether a society can be so tolerant, let alone that it can be so tolerant and remain stable in the long run. As for a regime committed to truth, the matter leads us to the old quarrel between those who deem society to rest on opinions and myths,[23] and those who hope for one based on reason and truth.[24] Williams alludes to this quarrel in *Truth and Truthfulness*, resting his own position ultimately on hope. He writes:

> It is not foolish to believe that any social and political order which effectively
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> uses power, and which sustains a culture that means something to the people

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of an academic journal, and Josephson's case is making its way through the courts. Moreover, I cannot know whether Zucker and Josephson exhibited the virtue of Accuracy, and it is possible that their expressed views are false—although given that only recently those views would have been regarded uncontroversial, and in the absence of any contradicting scientific breakthroughs, there is a good chance that they are not. But these two cases suggest that a truth-teller speaking on certain topics must be mindful even today of the threat of social pressure.

23. A proposition "accepted by many contemporary social scientists," as Leo Strauss wrote in 1954 in "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," *Chicago Review* 8, no. 1 (Winter–Spring 1954): 65. Consider also Strauss' own statement that "classical political philosophy… asserts that every political society that ever has been or ever will be rests on a particular fundamental opinion which cannot be replaced by knowledge. This state of things imposes duties on the philosopher's public speech or writing which would not be duties if a rational society were actual or emerging; it thus gives rise to a specific art of writing." Leo Strauss, preface to *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), x. See also Meier, 323–329. This also raises the question of the relationship between philosophy and the political community. Strauss writes that "the philosophers are not as such a constituent part of the city.… The end of the city is then not the same as the end of philosophy.… Philosophy can then live only side by side with the city." Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, 14.

24. "No experiment can be more interesting than that we are now trying, and which we trust will end in establishing the fact, that man may be governed by reason and truth." Thomas Jefferson to John Tyler, Washington, June 28, 1804, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. James P. McClure, vol. 43, *11 March to 30 June 1804* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 666. Compare this to James Madison's contention in *Federalist*, no. 49 that "in a nation of philosophers… A reverence for the laws would be sufficiently inculcated by the voice of an enlightened reason. But a nation of philosophers is as little to be expected as the philosophical race of kings wished for by Plato. And in every other nation, the most rational government will not find it a superfluous advantage to have the prejudices of the community on its side." Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Benjamin Fletcher Wright (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1996), 349. It is of some consequence that Jefferson and Madison are the fathers, respectively, of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

who live in it, must involve opacity, mystification, and large-scale deception.

Reasonable people can believe, contrary to the ideals of liberalism, that human

beings cannot live together effectively, at least on any culturally ambitious scale,

if they understand fully what they are doing. It is not necessarily foolish to

believe these things, but they may not be true, and we can still live in the hope…

that they are not.[25]

III. Social Barriers and Attaining the Prerequisite Goods

Though I have focused on persecution as a problem for truthfulness, I would nevertheless like to

note another set of conditions in which Sincerity is liable to frustrate Accuracy. This happens when

only some individuals have access to the prerequisite goods for appropriate choice and use of

investigative method. There are at least two ways in which access may be restricted: society may

deem only some individuals legally entitled to the goods in question, or the allocation of the goods

may be such that it is very difficult for certain individuals to obtain them. In other words, the cause

of the barriers to access may be primarily legal, as when a society decrees that some groups cannot

work in universities thereby denying them the chance to investigate many questions. But the cause

may also be mainly economic, when no legal barriers to access exist, but groups of individuals live

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25. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 232. It is not insignificant that the passage occurs at the end of the important chap. 9, titled "Truthfulness, Liberalism, Critique" (see page 8, note 25 above). By contrast, Strauss writes, "Fārābi ascribed to Plato the view that in the Greek city the philosopher was in grave danger. In making this statement, he merely repeated what Plato himself had said." Assuming philosophy is the quest for truth, another way to express the stakes of the old quarrel is by asking whether Strauss was right to claim "the existence of a danger which, however much its forms may vary, is coeval with philosophy." Strauss, *The Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 21.

in such poverty that they have little if any hope of ever obtaining that which being Accurate requires. Those unprivileged in either of these ways will struggle to obtain and retain the necessary time, freedom, or material resources for subsistence or for specific investigations.[26]

In the context of such social arrangements, characteristically open communication is liable to frustrate the unprivileged person's ability to acquire true belief. Given the legal and economic arrangements, Sincerity makes it more difficult, if not impossible, for some to obtain that which they need to be Accurate. On the one hand, if the law prevents certain groups from accessing goods needed for using and choosing some investigative strategy, then a member of the excluded group can obtain them only by convincing others that he is not who (he believes that) he is. For instance, a person who is preoccupied with a topic whose investigation requires university resources, but who belongs to an ethnic group that is not permitted access to certain university positions, will struggle to exhibit Accuracy in this regard unless he can deceive others about his identity. On the other hand, if, despite being entitled to the prerequisite goods, a person lacks the means to obtain them due to structural economic disadvantages which are practically impossible to overcome using legal means—for instance, he is poor without a legal way out of poverty—then, assuming he cannot change the order, his only real hope lies with violating the laws to the extent necessary. And in order to get away with such violations for any reasonably long period of time, he will inevitably have to use deception. Insincerity, thus, is necessary in both cases, whether one commits crimes or pretends to be someone who one is not, and it will almost certainly have to be typical or characteristic. If one were to characteristically share one's beliefs openly under the aforementioned conditions, one would hurt one's ability to obtain the goods one needs. In the absence of an honest

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26. Though our focus here is on barriers to accessing goods needed for successful investigation, we can add that such social arrangements may also affect the ability of certain people or groups to develop the internal qualities needed for Accuracy.

way to obtain such goods, one is left with the option of either accepting one's lot and failing to characteristically acquire true answers to the questions one is concerned with, or trying to obtain the goods through some subterfuge—in short, by giving up characteristically sincere communication. Sincerity is not the original cause of this predicament, but in such legal or economic conditions, its effect is to undermine truth-acquisition.

Social obstacles such as these, then, create a context in which Sincerity is in tension with Accuracy. In a society where legal or economic factors prevent some from accessing the prerequisites of Accuracy, those among them who are disposed to both virtues of truth face the dilemma of prioritizing one or the other—a prioritization that does not allow for full truthfulness. As under conditions of persecution, the extent to which they face this dilemma, and so the extent to which Sincerity frustrates Accuracy, depends on the extent to which the goods they cannot access due to their sincere communication are precisely those they need for answering the questions they are concerned with.

The surest way to eliminate this tension would be to ensure that all individuals have access to the goods they need to investigate the questions they are invested in. Since such access, at least in most actually existing or likely to exist societies, is a function of wealth and legal and social status, that would mean to ensure there is no one poor in any of these. However, this solution goes further than is strictly necessary: the problem, from the viewpoint of truthfulness, is not that someone faces barriers to the goods needed for a successful investigation, but that a person who would otherwise be truthful lacks access. What matters is that potentially truthful individuals are lifted out of poverty, and that they do not face any barriers to accessing the goods needed to be truthful. As long as this condition is met, any distribution of goods will do.

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Our discussion in this chapter shows that the self-regarding virtue of Accuracy and the other-regarding virtue of Sincerity do not always pull in the same direction. We have seen ways in which Sincerity can frustrate and undermine Accuracy, conditions under which it is liable to do so, and what such frustration hinges on. It turns out that sometimes it is difficult if not impossible to be fully truthful and live a genuinely truthful life. This is the conclusion we are compelled to draw when we consider the attempt to combine the two constituent virtues of truthfulness, as analyzed by Williams, under certain social, political, and interpersonal conditions.

That Williams does not consider these tensions is somewhat strange. It is also unfortunate, because maintaining awareness of them seems important for a thorough understanding of truthfulness. But the absence is especially worrying insofar as Williams and others hold out a hope that the virtues of truth can flourish in our society—or at least a future version of it. Those hopes can be realized only if the tensions within truthfulness can be avoided, and if Sincerity does not frustrate Accuracy. It is therefore important to reflect on these tensions and on whether they are escapable—in our present situation and the society that is humanly possible.

CHAPTER 4

On the Value of Truthfulness

The previous three chapters—on Accuracy, Sincerity, and the potential tensions between them—have clarified the shape of a truthful life and identified some challenges to it. Throughout, we have assumed such a life is worth pursuing. But we have not yet explicitly raised a decisive question, one underlying our whole investigation: why think truthfulness is valuable or good? The question might seem strange for a work that aims to elucidate truthfulness as a virtue. If truthfulness is a virtue, then this assumes it is something valuable and good: virtue, after all, is commonly understood as *excellence* of character or "ethically *admirable* disposition of character."[1] But this assumption itself remains unexamined. We have followed Williams in thinking that truthfulness is a virtue, and that it is therefore a valuable and good quality, but we have simply assumed that he is right on this key point and have not probed his reasons for thinking so. Clearly, truthfulness is commonly thought of as a virtue, it certainly appears to be valuable, and we may be reluctant to question this common judgment. But that is no guarantee against error or wishful thinking. As long as the question remains unexamined, we have not knowledge but presumption at best.

Why does Williams valorize the qualities he calls virtues of truth? In this chapter I would like to address this gap in our discussion. I will begin with a critical look at the main reason in

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1. See Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9 (emphasis mine). See introduction, page 18 above.

Truth and Truthfulness for deeming truthfulness valuable, before turning to further reasons that can be found in Williams' political thought. I will then highlight the alternative to Williams' approach, a more traditional eudaemonistic inquiry that attempts to discern the relation between truthfulness and living well understood in terms of human flourishing. Though Williams steers clear from such it, we should take such an approach seriously in light of the inadequacies in Williams' own reasoning. But if we do so—I will suggest in the last part relying on psychoanalytic insights—we must also take into account the importance for human flourishing of not concerning oneself with the truth. Only thus will we weigh appropriately the value of truth-acquisition and sharing for a life well lived.

I. Constructing the Intrinsic Good of Truthfulness

Williams does not offer an explicit and sustained argument for the value of truthfulness. Nonetheless, since *Truth and Truthfulness* as a whole aims to convince the reader that the quality is valuable, the work suggests reasons for such judgement. In the context of his State of Nature story, which outlines the basic forms of Accuracy and Sincerity, Williams insists that the virtues of truth "are useful, indeed essential, to such objectives as the pooling of information, and those objectives are important to almost every human purpose." For instance, both the community and the individual have "an interest in having correct information about the environment, its risks and opportunities."[2] Later on, to repeat something we have already seen, Williams appeals to "the human interest, individual or collective, in gaining or sharing true information," which "at the most

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2. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 57–58.

primitive level" explains the "point" of the two virtues of truth.[3] This appeal allows for slightly different interpretations given the various senses of the term "interest,"[4] but the important idea is that gaining and sharing truth is beneficial for us humans, both individually and as part of a collective. The benefit of gaining and sharing the truth explains the importance of the virtues of truth, qualities that are key in satisfying the interest Williams propounds.

But as I mentioned in the introduction, Williams is concerned to show not just that the virtues of truth are valuable, but that they have, or can be conceived to have, intrinsic value.[5] And the State of Nature story is limited, Williams acknowledges, in that it establishes only the "purely instrumental" value of the basic forms of Accuracy and Sincerity.[6] Williams is consequently compelled to move beyond the State of Nature and to elaborate the refined virtues of truth, in particular the passion for getting it right[7] and the idea of deserving or being owed the truth.[8] But

3. Ibid., 126; introduction, page 19 and chapter 2, pages 73–74 above. Related to this, see also Harry G. Frankfurt's reminder "that truth often possesses very considerable practical utility" (Frankfurt, *On Truth*, 15). Moreover, Frankfurt contends that "no society can afford to despise or to disrespect the truth," that "civilizations have *never* gotten along healthily, and *cannot* get along healthily, without large quantities of *reliable factual information*" (he does not explore what such healthy getting along means; for some relevant remarks see pages 164–167 below), that "individuals require truths in order to negotiate their way effectively through the thicket of hazards and opportunities," and that "we really cannot live without truth" (Frankfurt, *On Truth*, 32–36). The focus of Frankfurt's discussion in *On Truth* is slightly different from Williams': Frankfurt claims to be "concerned exclusively with the value and the importance of *truth*, and not at all with the value or the importance of our *efforts to find* truth or of our *experience in finding it*" (ibid., 11, see also 13).
4. Interest can refer to "that which is to or for the advantage of [someone]," "a feeling of concern for [something]," or even "a right or title to [something]." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "interest, *n.*" accessed November 23, 2019, http://www.oed.com/ (brackets mine). It is likely that Williams intends all these senses of interest to some extent: gaining and sharing true information is advantageous to individuals and groups of people, we often have a concern for engaging in such activity, and even a right to or title to it. The precise meaning of Williams' point depends on which of them one highlights.
5. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 38. See introduction, page 15 above.
6. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 58.
7. Ibid, 126, 141. See also chapter 1, section 3 above.
8. See chapter 2, sections 2 and 4 above. These elaborations also respond to another limitation of the State of Nature story, namely "that there is a lack of fit between the value of these qualities [Accuracy and Sincerity] to the community and their value to the people who possess them." This is most clear with Sincerity. On the face of it, "the value that attaches to any given person's having this disposition [of Sincerity] seems... largely a value for other people." Though it may be advantageous for a collective that individuals be Sincere, that does not mean it is also useful for each of those individuals themselves. As Williams notes, "it may... be useful for an individual to have the benefits of other people's correct information, and not useful to him that they should have the benefit

on what grounds should we consider them to be intrinsically valuable—what is their value based in or derived from?

Williams argues that whether something is intrinsically valuable depends on two things. The sufficient condition for x to have an intrinsic value is, first, that "it is necessary (or nearly necessary) for basic human purposes and needs that human beings should treat it as an intrinsic good," and, second, that "they can coherently treat it as an intrinsic good."[9] We might reformulate this by saying that if it is (nearly) necessary for humans to regard x as having an intrinsic value, and if they can coherently regard x as having an intrinsic value, then x indeed has an intrinsic value. On Williams' account, whether a good is regarded as intrinsic is an essential component of its being, in fact, intrinsically good. Moreover, given the coherence requirement, it must be possible to understand an intrinsic value in relation to other values one holds, and there needs to be a structure that makes them all intelligible (though this structure may change over time). To put it otherwise, it is crucial for Williams that the value in question be "stable under reflection"—an idea we have already encountered.[10] Williams contends that when these criteria are met, it is legitimate to speak of "constructing" an intrinsic good.

This explains what Williams' claim that the virtues of truth have intrinsic value amounts to. It implies, to take the second criterion first, that they can be coherently regarded, even under reflection, as being intrinsically good—something *Truth and Truthfulness* intends to convince the reader of. The ascription of intrinsic value to the virtues of truth also implies the first criterion: that is, given basic human purposes or needs, it is (nearly) necessary that Accuracy and Sincerity be

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of his." The "collective value of Sincerity" does not automatically "translate itself into a reason that each person has for possessing that quality himself," and the elaboration of the virtue Williams goes on to consider is meant to help with this. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 58.

9. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 92. Williams offers this analysis in his discussion of trustworthiness, but it is presented as a general analysis of intrinsic value and so we should expect it to apply to his elaborated virtues of truth as well.

10. See introduction, page 13 above.

treated as intrinsically good or valuable. Perhaps this in mind, Williams writes that "no society can get by… with a purely instrumental conception of the values of truth." Indeed, he suggests that "there is a serious question," if one thinks "there is no intrinsic value" to the virtues of truth, whether they "would still have the same instrumental value—indeed, that they would exist at all."[11] And he makes similar points regarding Sincerity and Accuracy specifically. Thus, he writes that the "need to rely on assertions' being sincere not only where this is guaranteed by obvious self-interest, immediate or medium-term" means "we need people to… treat Sincerity as having an intrinsic value."[12] And he maintains that the elaborated form of Accuracy "consists "in the desire for truth 'for its own sake'" (that is, not instrumentally), and that "the search for truth becomes in these respects an intrinsic good."[13]

The question then naturally arises whether it is indeed (nearly) necessary, for basic human purposes and needs, that Accuracy and Sincerity should be treated as intrinsic goods. The claim might have some plausibility with respect to the basic forms of these virtues, but much less so with their refined forms. In fact, Williams' own account gives reason for such doubt. He maintains that the virtues of truth have a history and that their shape "varies from time to time and culture to culture," and so he claims to articulate an "interpretation… that makes sense to us *now*."[14] But if the shape of the virtues varies, then past ages and other cultures have not had Accuracy and Sincerity in the refined form Williams elaborates, one that involves pursuing truth for its own sake

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11. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 59.
12. Ibid., 95.
13. Ibid., 126 and 141. One could also argue regarding Accuracy (and its more basic form) that due to our need to rely on others' reports of fact, it is vital that people reliably form true beliefs, and that such reliability can only be secured if the acquisition of true belief is valued more than instrumentally. It is interesting that Williams does not make this argument, particularly given its close resemblance to his argument regarding Sincerity (see previous note).
14. Ibid., 93 and 95 (emphasis mine).

and telling the truth to other members of a community of moral equals—Williams is quite explicit about this in his discussion of Sincerity.[15] And yet, past ages and other cultures have, presumably, been quite able to satisfy basic human purposes and needs. But if they have been able to do that without possessing the refined virtues of truth, and therefore without treating them as intrinsically valuable, then treating those refined forms as intrinsically valuable is hardly necessary for human purposes and needs. Now, it is true that Williams speaks of its being necessary or *nearly* necessary to treat them as intrinsically good. Could it be, then, that the qualifier "nearly" accounts for the fact that other times and places have not regarded the refined forms of the virtues of truth as intrinsically valuable, and yet have been able to satisfy basic human purposes? Perhaps. But if this is the meaning of "nearly necessary," then it is far from clear that we can speak of necessity at all—or, indeed, in what sense it is *near* necessity. Thus, when we think through Williams' account, it seems we can say at most that it is (nearly) necessary for human purposes to treat Accuracy and Sincerity in *some form* as intrinsically valuable, but not in the form Williams ultimately elaborates. And this means that the first criterion of Williams' construction of intrinsic good is not met as far as the refined forms of Accuracy and Sincerity are concerned, and so that intrinsic value should not be ascribed to them.

Apart from this issue regarding specifically the value of the refined virtues of truth, Williams' account of constructing intrinsic good faces also a broader problem: it strains the distinction between reality and appearance, between being good and being regarded as good, and this casts doubt on its tenability. The equivocation in *Truth and Truthfulness* between the claim that the truthfulness is and that it can be regarded as intrinsically valuable attests to this. If x is something that humans must (or nearly must) treat and, moreover, can coherently treat as an

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15. As we have seen, Williams distinguishes between "aristocratic" conceptions of the virtue and what makes sense to us now (ibid., 116–117; chapter 2, pages 64–66 above).

intrinsic good, this only means that it is (nearly) necessary for humans to behave towards x as if it were an intrinsic good, perhaps even think or consider that it is; it does not mean that x *is* an intrinsic good. What C. G. Prado remarks in a review about Williams' treatment of truth, we can also say about his treatment of the virtues of truth: Williams appears "to slide from the necessity of truth's [truthfulness'] being *dealt* with as if intrinsically valuable to truth's [truthfulness'] *being* intrinsically valuable."[16]

This problem can be elucidated further using the idea of *necessary falsehood*, falsehood necessary for human purposes or needs and even for sustaining human life. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that such falsehoods exist. No figure less than Williams' epitome Nietzsche urges us "to recognize untruth as a condition of life," writing that "we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments… are the most indispensable for us," and that "renouncing false judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life."[17] To give an example, moral notions of right and wrong may require treating and regarding individuals as having free will, but that alone does not entail that we are accurate in doing so and that free will exists; the alternative is that free will is a falsehood necessary for some important human purposes. Much the same point applies to Williams' attribution of *intrinsic* value: that some human purposes require treating certain qualities of character as intrinsically good does not prove that those qualities *are* indeed intrinsically good, and it may well be that the idea of their intrinsic goodness is simply a necessary falsehood. Williams' construction, emphasizing as it does the *need* to perceive rather than the perception of what is actually the case, does not eliminate the latter possibility. In response, one could either try to remove that possibility in some further way and show that it is not merely a

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16. C. G. Prado, review of *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*, by Bernard Williams, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 3 (September 2004): 523. For a similar point, see McGinn, "Isn't It the Truth?," sec. 1.
17. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 4. See also e.g. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, aphorisms 110–112, 115, 121.

necessary falsehood that x (Accuracy or Sincerity) is an intrinsic good, or one could bite the bullet and say that it is a necessary falsehood. The former option requires much more than Williams offers us; the latter option renders it difficult to see how one could continue to treat the seemingly intrinsic goods as before, at least if one is *truth*ful. In any event, the question calls for a move into a metaethical discussion of the (human) good—what it would be and whether it exists—and that is not a realm Williams appears keen to enter.

II. Politics and the Value of Truthfulness

If we are not convinced by Williams' elaboration of intrinsic value and his construction of truthfulness as an intrinsic good, what further reasons to deem truthfulness valuable does his work suggest? Some can be found in Williams' political thought, which displays his concern with truthfulness more than once. At a basic level, Williams notes, true information is helpful for various functions of government, and so "it is hard to deny… that some reliable types of inquiry and transmission of truth are necessary for administration."[18] But collective life and politics involve much more than just administration, and Williams' work suggests explicitly and hints implicitly at ways in which the virtues of truth may be valuable for those broader aims of collective and political life. I would like to briefly discuss three arguments that can be found in or constructed from his politics, as well as point out a deficiency in his political thought that weakens its ability to gauge appropriately the value of truthfulness.

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18. Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 160.

First, there is *the anti-tyranny argument*: "truthfulness is usually necessary or helpful in the restraint of tyrants," and "everyone needs not to be tyrannized."[19] Due to "their peculiar powers and opportunities, governments are disposed to commit illegitimate actions which they will wish to conceal, as… also… incompetent actions," and "without true information" they cannot be checked as "it is in citizens' interests" to do. Truth is needed to prevent governmental abuse, and this is a reason to deem valuable the virtues of truth, the reliable dispositions to acquire and share the truth. But, as Williams notes, it is not obvious that "the populace at large" should have true information, rather than "someone other than the government" that can oversee it. This consideration, in turn, suggests that the virtues of truth, valuable for collective well-being, need not be widespread. Still, one might think that it is better if more citizens develop them, and that there is security in numbers.[20]

Nevertheless, this line of thought runs into some problems. On the one hand, truthfulness does not appear to be *necessary* for anti-tyrannical purposes, even if it seems helpful. We can imagine citizens who are not particularly truthful, but who are extremely jealous of their freedom

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19. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 208. Hannah Arendt writes that "truth… is… hated by tyrants, who rightly fear the competition of a coercive force they cannot monopolize." But, she also notes, "it enjoys a rather precarious status in the eyes of governments that rest on consent and abhor coercion." Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 555–556.

20. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 207–208. Though Williams has some reservations about it, he writes that "to the extent that the anti-tyranny argument is an argument, it is obviously one of the best, because it relies on such a modest basis." He adds, relevantly to our discussion in the first part of this chapter, "it is of course an 'instrumental' argument, but in this connection that is not a disadvantage, particularly because both the ends and the means apply universally." Ibid. See also Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 157.

   In the same context as he discusses the anti-tyranny argument, Williams mentions three other arguments. There is *the argument from democracy,* and the *liberal argument* that comes in the *minimal* and the *self-development* versions. The first two give reasons why the government should avoid secrecy or falsehood (it is a violation of the trust granted to the government, denial of information is an illegitimate limitation on freedom), but they do not really explain why it would be valuable for individuals to develop truthfulness. The third argument, the liberal argument from self-development, does offer such explanation: the virtues of truth are important because "self-development consists of the exercise and development of one's powers in the light of the truth." But it expresses, in a rather general form, the importance of truth for individual flourishing, and does not address its value for collective life or politics specifically. Williams does not openly embrace any of these arguments. Williams, "Truth, Politics, and Self-Deception," 158–159, and Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 211–212.

and take every step they can to prevent its erosion by potential tyrants. Because they lack truthfulness, they are not very good at perceiving which actions truly constitute a threat, but because they are jealous they see more threats than there are; as a result, the government must guard against not just doing, but also being perceived as doing something illegitimate. Such jealousy, in fact, may be a more effective way to prevent tyranny, even though overall and in the long term it might not lead to better social and political relations within the polity.[21] On the other hand, we are interested in truthfulness as a deep-seated composite virtue of character that is manifested throughout a person's life, and the anti-tyranny argument only points to the importance of truthfulness in the specific and rather narrow domain of government oversight. The virtues of Accuracy and Sincerity may be good supports for political truthfulness, but they are hardly necessary given that it is possible to care about truth in some narrow sphere of life without being concerned with it more broadly as one would expect from the truthful person. Moreover, whatever value Accuracy and Sincerity have, it surely depends also on their impact—political and other— beyond government oversight. Thus, while the anti-tyranny argument suggests the value of political truthfulness, it does not demonstrate the value of the broader virtues of truth Williams delineates.

Williams' account of *political legitimacy* offers another, second, reason for judging truthfulness politically valuable. Williams notes that "there is an essential difference between legitimate government and unmediated power: one of the few necessary truths about political right

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21. Thus, careless, histrionic, and untruthful accusations against government officials of being incipient tyrants— something those in the United States may be familiar with—can function as a very powerful obstacle to the establishment of a real tyranny.

is that it is not merely might."[22] To distinguish a legitimate state or government from an illegitimate one Williams introduces the Basic Legitimation Demand.[23] He suggests that meeting it "can be equated with there being an 'acceptable' solution to the first political question," and he identifies that first question "in Hobbesian terms as the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation." "It is 'first,'" Williams continues, "because solving it is the condition of solving, indeed posing, any others"; only once a polity is able to adequately solve the question of order, protection, safety and so on, can it focus on further issues. And a solution is "required *all the time*," it must be continuously achieved anew, and is therefore "affected by historical circumstances."[24] Williams thinks that the Basic Legitimation Demand requires, minimally, that the state be competent enough in protecting groups under its authority. In addition to political competence, an acceptable solution requires that "the state… offer a justification of its power."[25] By claiming authority over a group of people, the state needs to say something as to why it is legitimate. That is, "for there to be a legitimate government, there must be a legitimation story, which explains why state power can be used to coerce."[26] But not all stories are acceptable and

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22. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 135. See also ibid., 94: "I take it that the following is a universal truth: legitimate government is not just coercive power."

23. For an overview see Williams, "Realism and Moralism in Political Theory," in *In the Beginning*, 3–6.

24. Ibid., 3–4, also Williams, "Human Rights and Relativism," in *In the Beginning*, 62. For a slightly different formulation of "the first question of politics" see Williams, "Humanitarianism and the Right to Intervene," in *In the Beginning*, 145. There Williams speaks of it in terms of "the first aim of a political order," which is to "reduce the probability of" what he describes as "the materials of… Hobbesian fear." That fear is about things that "by more or less universal consent would be regarded as a disaster… something basically to be feared… starving, [being] under-nourished, terrorized, murdered, under attack, forcibly removed, and so forth." Moreover, "this is connected with further Hobbesian aims of a political order, the securing of trust, and so of co-operation, the division of labor, and so on."

25. Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 4. Williams adds "… a justification of its power *to each subject*," but this need not concern us here.

26. Williams, "From Freedom to Liberty: The Construction of a Political Value," in *In the Beginning*, 94–95. See also Williams, "Toleration, a Political or Moral Question?," in *In the Beginning*, 135. That there is a "need for justification" is not simply a function of whether "someone demands one." Rather, Williams suggests, "one sufficient condition of there being a (genuine) demand for justification is this: A coerces B and claims that B would be wrong to fight it back… forbids it, rallies others to oppose it as wrong, and so on. By doing this, A

meet the Basic Legitimation Demand. In particular, an acceptable legitimation must go "beyond the assertion of power": "the mere circumstances of some subjects' being de facto in the power of others is no legitimation," "might does not imply right," and "the power of coercion offered simply as the power of coercion cannot justify its own use." Instead, Williams thinks that an acceptable story will meet "*the critical theory principle*" according to which "the acceptance of a justification does not count if the acceptance itself is produced by the coercive power which is supposedly being justified."[27] And in this respect the virtues of truth can be valuable: they can help determine the true reason for accepting a story and whether it is simply produced by the coercive power, and so help see whether the state or government is legitimate. By helping ensure legitimacy, truthfulness can also help bring about further political goods for which legitimacy is a precondition, such as justice. In this sense truthfulness embodies, Williams thinks, "the best hopes of the Enlightenment… its commitment to honesty and transparency and its rejection of power that falsely presents itself as cognitive authority," thereby "destroying representations" that keep people "in the unrecognized power of another."[28]

As uplifting as this conclusion may be, awareness of its limits is important. First of all, it hinges on the correctness of Williams' quite elaborate analysis of political legitimacy. I cannot here assess the account further than by pointing out that it remains somewhat unclear, by Williams' own standards, why ensuring the survival of a group of people, the first realistic problem of politics,[29] cannot function as a legitimate justification of authority. Even if the power is very

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claims his actions transcend the conditions of warfare, and this gives rise to a demand for justification of what A does." Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 6.

27. Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 5–6, 11. Williams notes the difficulty in determining "what counts as having been 'produced by' coercive power in the relevant sense" (ibid., 6). See also Williams, "From Freedom to Liberty," 89.

28. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 231. The important chap. 9 of *Truth and Truthfulness*, "Truthfulness, Liberalism and Critique," covers much of the same ground as the material quoted in this paragraph. Especially pp. 219–232 are relevant for Williams' understanding of political legitimacy.

29. See pages 127–128 below.

coercive, as long as it is also used to protect from internal and external threats to life and order, it can claim to be right not simply because it is mighty (because it is the power of coercion), but because its might is for the sake of the good without which further goods are impossible. But even assuming Williams' notion of political legitimacy is compelling, it only shows—similarly to the anti-tyranny argument above—the contribution to collective well-being of a limited form of truthfulness: truthfulness with respect to the stories that justify authority and power.

Third, a certain style of liberalism Williams promotes, *the liberalism of fear*, suggests another reason to value truthfulness—at least insofar as one agrees that it is the best politics we can hope for. Liberalism of fear, first articulated by Judith Shklar,[30] represents Williams' positive political project to the extent he has one. To see why, we need to first recognize that for Williams only liberal ways of legitimating political power and authority are acceptable in modernity. As he writes, "now and around here the BLD [Basic Legitimation Demand] together with the historical conditions permit only a liberal solution: other forms of answer are unacceptable." Or, to follow Williams in making his "view even cruder than it is anyway… LEG[itimacy] + Modernity = Liberalism." The main reason Williams offers in support of this claim is that other, more traditional justifications of government are no longer credible; it is "the Enlightenment reason that other supposed legitimations are now seen to be false and in particular ideological."[31] Most of them "have delivered various forms of inequality and hierarchy, with corresponding constraints." Moreover, "we do not believe these stories, and it is a notable feature of modernity that we do not"; indeed, "we regard… these stories, in particular those that involve religious or other

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30. Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
31. Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 8–9. Williams emphasizes that this does not mean that "all non-liberal states in the past were ILLEG[itimate]." If "in the modern world, only a liberal order can adequately meet the Basic Legitimation Demand… this is because of distinctive features of the modern world, not because legitimate government, necessarily and everywhere, means liberal government." Ibid., 10; Williams, "Toleration," 135.

transcendental justification, as simply untrue." Williams thinks we are correct in this, and so he writes of "the conviction that under the conditions of modernity… we… have a better grasp on the truth… a grasp on truths that destroy those fantasies that once provided the fabric of pre-modern legitimation stories."[32] In sum, for Williams it is the modern man's better grasp on truth that renders liberalism the only legitimate form of government today. This entails that as truthfulness grows, so does the case for liberalism.

Though Williams accepts that "the ambiguities of" the term "liberalism" "serve to indicate a range of options which make political sense in the modern world," he deems liberalism of fear to be "the least ambitious and the most convincing justification of liberalism."[33] Shklar writes in her original description that "for this liberalism, the basic units of political life are… the weak and the powerful. And the freedom it wishes to secure is freedom from the abuse of power and the intimidation of the defenseless." It is "entirely non-utopian" and follows "the conviction of the earliest defenders of toleration, born in horror, that cruelty is an absolute evil, an offense against God or humanity."[34] Its insistence on learning the lessons of history explains why Shklar calls it "the party of memory rather than a party of hope"—though Williams insists that "it can be, in good times, the politics of hope as well."[35] As Williams explains, the materials of liberalism of fear "are

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32. Williams, "From Freedom to Liberty," 95–96. Williams predicts that "faced with the criticism of these [legitimating] myths, increasing information from outside… non-liberal regimes may not be able to sustain themselves without coercion" (Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 14). And coercion will only prove their lack of a good answer to the Basic Legitimation Demand. Thus, those not yet part of the "we" Williams invokes, those living with less truth in non-liberal and so politically premodern conditions, will over time most likely become liberals.
33. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 208.
34. Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," 23, 27. Note, however, that Shklar does not share Williams' equation of liberalism with modernity: "liberalism… is not, as so many of its critics [!] claim, synonymous with modernity" (ibid., 21; brackets mine).
35. Ibid., 26; Williams, "The Liberalism of Fear," in *In the Beginning*, 61. Shklar owes her coinage to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Conservative," in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 173. "The most immediate memory," Shklar writes, "is at present the history of the world since 1914" (Shklar, 27).

the only certainly universal materials of politics: power, powerlessness, fear, cruelty, a universalism of negative capacities," and so it acts as a "constant reminder of the reality of politics."[36] In this, Shklar and Williams agree, it differs from "liberalism of natural rights" as well as "the liberalism of personal development."[37] According to Williams, the "first requirement" of liberalism of fear is "the condition of life without terror," and after that it "considers what other goods can be furthered in more favorable circumstances." Once "primary freedoms are secured, and basic fears are assuaged," then liberalism of fear focuses, Williams contends, on "more sophisticated conceptions of freedom and other forms of fear, other ways in which the asymmetries of power and powerlessness work to the disadvantage of the latter."[38] The virtues of truth, it seems safe to say, can support these aims: Accuracy and Sincerity can help acquire, retain, and share the historical memory of horrors, and generally of things we have or may have to fear. Truthfulness thus appears valuable because it ushers the move to liberalism, the modern form of political legitimation, and because it keeps in our minds the materials of liberalism of fear—in short, because it supports the politics Williams contends is the most convincing and acceptable today.

However suggestive Williams' discussion, questions remain here as well. For instance, the claim that in modernity only liberalism is acceptable is rather ambitious. That the claim is

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For the insistence on learning from the past see e.g. Shklar's remonstrances with American political theorists who, she thinks, frequently lack a sense of history (ibid., 35–36).

36. Williams, "The Liberalism of Fear," 59, 61.

37. Ibid., 55 and Shklar, 26–27. According to Shklar, the former "looks to the constant fulfillment of an ideal preestablished in normative order, be it nature's or God's, whose principles have to be realized in the lives of individual citizens through public guarantees," while the latter argues that "freedom… is necessary for personal as well as social progress"—she associates these two types of liberalism with John Locke and John Stuart Mill respectively (Shklar, 27). With respect to the "founding fathers and heroes" of liberalism of fear, Williams identifies the lineage of Montaigne (whom Shklar mentions), Montesquieu, and Constant (Williams, "The Liberalism of Fear," 56).

38. Williams, "The Liberalism of Fear," 60. This follows Shklar's claim that "every adult should be able to make as many effective decisions without fear or favor about as many aspects of her or his life as is compatible with the like freedom of every other adult. That belief is the original and only defensible meaning of liberalism" (Shklar, 21).

contested—even today many people thoughtfully believe nonliberal legitimation stories—does not mean that it is false, but while Williams asserts it forcefully, he does not offer the reader many arguments in its support. Perhaps the reader who finds himself puzzled on this point is not—not yet at least—part of the "we" Williams addresses, and so to greater or lesser extent premodern.[39] Still, in the absence of something more robust than an evocative suggestion, the idea that truthfulness is valuable because it promotes liberalism loses some of its force. Furthermore, there is room to doubt how much truthfulness actually contributes to the specific type of liberalism Williams espouses. The virtues of truth can certainly help acquire and sustain historical memory and awareness of possible—and reasonable—sources of fear, but what really matters are the lessons one draws from this. And to draw the correct lessons one must also make a correct assessment of what is ultimately possible in politics; can we really hope for no more than what liberalism of fear proposes? In particular, why think that after removing basic fears and ensuring basic freedoms one should seek to mitigate further fears and asymmetries of power and extend freedom further? Why not, for instance, strive to create a political order that cultivates virtuous people, helps them live happily, and establishes the conditions for human greatness? Accepting the first requirement of life free from terror, why not seek to combine it with aspirations higher than those Williams mentions? Williams might reply by pointing to the possible dangers in doing so, or say that such aspirations do not make much sense today, or that it is no one's business to tell anyone else what to aspire to.[40] But would he be right? Truthfulness demands that such questions be explored further and more thoroughly, and so the jury remains out on whether being truthful really leads to liberalism of fear.

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39. Alternatively, the reader might claim to be *post*-modern and to have left the historical stage of modernity behind. It is not clear what Williams would have to say to him.
40. Shklar makes the last point explicit: "No form of liberalism has any business telling the citizenry to pursue happiness or even to define that wholly elusive condition" (Shklar, 31).

Although Williams' political thought intimates reasons for thinking truthfulness is valuable for collective and political well-being, those reasons do not seem—not yet at least—entirely convincing. Moreover, it seems to me his approach faces a broader problem, which places doubt on the suggestions regarding the value of truthfulness we have discussed. Williams' stated aim is to engage in and give "greater autonomy to distinctively political thought," and he places himself in the tradition of "political realism."[41] But despite his self-identification, Williams' discussion is insufficiently realistic.

An important feature of his approach is the emphasis on "the 'first' political question" we encountered above, "the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation"[42] that comes prior to other political issues and to which a solution must be found ever anew. However, Williams fails to appreciate that the issues he lumps together as "first" have different orders of priority. The tasks of securing internal order, and the protection and safety of citizens, are politically prior to ensuring trust. Trust is certainly important for a relatively happier politics and a powerful tool for the maintenance and even establishment of order, but we should not overlook that, at least up to a point, order can be achieved in its absence—as the example of regimes such as the USSR shows. By contrast, without political order, or indeed at least a minimal level of protection for citizens, we can hardly speak of a political entity at all. Williams' work

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41. Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 3. See also Hans J. Morgenthau's claim that "intellectually, the political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere." Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, rev. Kenneth W. Thompson and W. David Clinton, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005), 13. Allan Bloom writes that "the disappearance of politics is one of the most salient aspects of modern thought and has much to do with our political practice. Politics tends to disappear either into the subpolitical (economics) or what claims to be higher than politics (culture)—both of which escape the architectonic art, the statesman's prudence. Politics in the older sense encompassed and held together these two extremes." Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 188–189.
42. See pages 120–121 above.

contains sufficient hints for a reader to pick up on this; in his introduction to *In the Beginning Was the Deed* Geoffrey Hawthorn underscores that for Williams the first political question was "how to create order out of mayhem."[43] But by including disparate issues in his outline of the "first question," Williams obfuscates this crucial point.

More worrying and problematic, particularly given his aspirations, is Williams' silence on and underappreciation of the structural constraints of political life. Since he does not account for the context in which the first challenges occur, he is not clear enough on their nature. By introducing the first question of politics as "Hobbes's question,"[44] Williams evokes the idea of state of nature—the state before a state—and civil war. But this abstracts from the reality of political existence, and thus results in an idealized picture of the first challenges of politics. The actual challenges present themselves in the context not of a state of nature, but a splintered world of anarchy. It is a world of often conflicting aims and frequent zero-sum competition; a world, as Kenneth Waltz puts it, "with many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own."[45] Since "there is no automatic harmony" under conditions of international anarchy, "all states must constantly be ready either to counter force with force or to pay the cost of weakness," and there is the "constant possibility that conflicts will be settled by force."[46] This circumstance led Hans J.

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43. Geoffrey Hawthorn, introduction to *In the Beginning*, by Bernard Williams, xii.
44. Williams, "Realism and Moralism," 3. See also Williams, "Human Rights and Relativism," 62; Williams, "Humanitarianism," 145; and Hawthorne, xii.
45. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 159.
46. Ibid., 160, 188. This is because of "the absence of supreme authority" (ibid., 188). According to Henry Kissinger, Theodore Roosevelt thought that "international society was like a frontier settlement without an effective police force." In this regard, it is also interesting that Kissinger attributes to Roosevelt the belief that "liberal societies… underestimate the elements of antagonism and strife in international affairs." Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 248–249.

Morgenthau to write that "international politics… is a struggle for power" and that "the struggle for power is universal in time and space."[47] In other words, it is a context in which the existence of the political community is at stake; for the individual it is a matter of death or enslavement. Given this, a genuinely realist conception of politics pushes us to identify an *ur*-problem of politics underlying all the questions Williams' identifies: the problem of survival.[48] That problem requires dealing with internal disruptions as well as external threats. The corollary of civil war and the Hobbesian problem is war with outside forces. And the latter may well be a more persistent challenge: states, by creating political order, can largely master the threat of war within, but their capacity to prevent strife with other states is much more limited.

Only if our perspective on politics takes this into account will it escape idealization and help us think about practical politics in this world. Since Williams' account fails to do justice to the dimension of a world of international anarchy and potential strife, it is not clear enough on the fundamental tasks of political life. And this deficiency raises questions about its appraisal of the value of truthfulness: is his analysis a trustworthy guide to the relation between truthfulness and politics? In particular, it seems important to examine further the impact of truthfulness on a polity's ability to meet its very first challenges properly understood. This is a question I will come back to in the conclusion, where we will find further reason to doubt Williams' apparent optimism.

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47. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 29, 36. Morgenthau also speaks of "successful political action… inspired by the moral principle of national survival" (ibid., 12).
48. Morgenthau writes, "The survival of a political unit, such as a nation, in its identity is the irreducible minimum, the necessary element of its interests vis-à-vis other units.… It encompasses the integrity of the nation's territory, of its political institutions, and of its culture." Hans J. Morgenthau, "Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the United States," *American Political Science Review* 46, no. 4 (December 1952): 973. It is easy to ignore the specter of annihilation, but in doing so we would ignore the experience of history and the possibilities inherent in human nature and would insist on having overcome the prior condition of man.

III. Flourishing and Moving Beyond Williams

It seems to me that Williams' work can only get us so far in the endeavor to discern the true value of truthfulness. Looking beyond his work, what other reasons might there be to think that the qualities Williams calls the virtues of truth are valuable?

We have seen Williams' claim that, in a basic sense, the virtues of truth derive their point "from the human interest, individual or collective" in acquiring and sharing the truth.[49] But why exactly would either activity be in our interest? It is worth observing that in this regard Williams speaks of what is necessary for human purposes *and needs*—most clearly in his construction of intrinsic value.[50] He does *not* speak of what is necessary for human purposes *and aspirations*—highest of which would be the aspiration to live well. An alternative approach, then, would be to reflect on well-being or happiness or flourishing, collective and individual, and the extent to which truthfulness contributes to or expresses them. Williams himself steers clear of this path, even as the thrust of his discussion in *Truth and Truthfulness* leaves the reader with the indelible impression that he deems truthfulness important for living well. But whatever Williams himself would ultimately make of a move in this direction, reflecting on happiness and its possible connection with truthfulness can help us think through the value of the virtues of truth. Such reflection is a great undertaking that would require retracing many of our steps thus far, something I cannot do here. But I would like to note two things regarding this approach.

First, figuring out whether happiness involves Accuracy and Sincerity requires better understanding of both society and individuals. We humans have irrevocably social or political natures[51] and live in communities and polities, today most commonly nation-states. Their success

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49. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 126. See introduction, page 19 and chapter 2, pages 73–74 above.
50. See pages 113–115 above.
51. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2., 1253a1–3.

and flourishing—their survival, security, good governance, justice, and promotion of the common good—is consequently important for our happiness. Assessing the connection between living well and truthfulness requires, then, the assessment of the social and political effects of the dispositions under consideration. This, however, can only be part of the story. After all, we can ask whether cultivating the qualities of Accuracy and Sincerity move us each towards happiness, quite apart from how such cultivation impacts the political community as a whole. Indeed, the possibility cannot be foreclosed that humans can live well even in unjust, unhappy, and weak collectives.

Second, in order to discern whether the dispositions of Accuracy and Sincerity contribute to or express our flourishing, it is imperative above all to understand ourselves. What exactly it is to flourish or live well, and what dispositions that involves, depends on the entity or creature in question. Since in the present case we are talking about humans, it looks like an answer to whether flourishing involves truthfulness, and so whether truthfulness is good for each of us, is a matter of understanding human nature and accounting for the kind of creatures humans are. This is certainly correct up to a point—by virtue of being human beings, we are all in many ways similar. And yet, it is not obvious that what is good for one is also good in the same way for another. Perhaps, when it comes to the flourishing of each, what we share is indeed much more significant than what separates us. Perhaps it is true that either everyone's happiness involves Accuracy and Sincerity, or no-one's does. But this must first be established, and there is the possibility that this either-or does not hold. We should reflect on what is most relevant to our living well, and we should do so with the awareness that we may, but do not necessarily share that with others. In other words, we must understand ourselves better, whoever we are, and only then can we discern whether truthfulness contributes to or expresses our flourishing. The search for an answer thus begins with

the task of self-understanding. And that task inevitably involves understanding our own psychic makeup, and thus entails a move into psychology.[52]

IV. Suspending the Concern for Truth: Winnicott's Intermediate Area

I would like to suggest, in the remainder of the chapter, that figuring out whether and how truthfulness contributes to or expresses living well requires asking a question Williams does not raise. It requires looking at the inverse of the question we have been dealing with, at the importance of *not* being concerned with the truth. The significance of this line of inquiry emerges from psychoanalytic insights and discoveries.

Truthfulness, as is clear by now, exists in the dimension of truth-acquisition and truth-communication. But Williams' account passes over an aspect of this dimension by not considering sufficiently the possible significance for an individual's flourishing of *not* pursuing, acquiring, and communicating the truth. I do not mean by this the idea that those who cannot develop the virtues of truth, whether due to upbringing, circumstances, or constitution, might be better off not trying to cultivate them—the point indeed applies just as much to the person who possesses the virtues. Nor do I mean the thought, present in chapters 1 and 2, that Accuracy and Sincerity are compatible with not pursuing or communicating the truth to the extent they involve certain limits to truth-acquisition and truth-telling, set respectively by one's encounters, interests, and considerations of importance, and by the context of communication and others' desert. Instead, the idea here is that

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52. Nietzsche is concerned, among other things, with the flourishing of at least some individuals, and some groups of people, and in that sense is an ethicist. That ethics requires self-understanding and, so, psychological understanding, can help explain in part his insistence "that psychology… be recognized as queen of the sciences." Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 23. See also Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120 for the idea that what is good for one may not be good for another.

living well requires suspending, to some degree and in certain contexts, one's concern with the truth.[53]

The thought of the British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott points us, it seems to me, in the direction just laid out. I have particularly in mind what Winnicott calls transitional phenomena and the intermediate area of experience. Winnicott explains that transitional phenomena and transitional objects represent the "infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate."[54] They thereby designate "an intermediate area between a baby's inability and his growing ability to recognize and accept reality," "between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived," "between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality-testing."[55] These notions are important for explaining the psychological development of a child, but crucially they retain their significance in maturity as well.

To understand the function and significance of the intermediate area better, we should first briefly sketch Winnicott's account of the child's psychological development. In the very beginning, the infant does not distinguish between the subjective and the objective, the me and the not-me. The mother, assuming she is "good-enough," is almost completely adapted to his needs. Then, at some point early on in his development, the "infant in a certain situation provided by the mother is able to conceive of the idea of something that would meet the growing need that arises

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53. I discuss the matter here in relation to an individual. But if suspending the concern for truth is important from the point of view of individual flourishing, then it is also likely to be significant for collective well-being.

54. Donald W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Playing and Reality*, 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2005), 19–20. According to Winnicott, transitional phenomena and objects begin to show up from about four to twelve months into infancy (ibid., 6). They are "universal" (Winnicott, introduction to *Playing and Reality*, xvi–xvii).

55. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 3, 4, 15 (emphasis altered). The phenomena in question thus predate "established reality-testing" (ibid., 12). It is worth adding that this "intermediate" or "in-between" space points to the psychologically "central position of Winnie the Pooh" (Winnicott, introduction, xvi).

out of instinctual tension."[56] Winnicott's language is somewhat misleading—he is not writing philosophically, which is an advantage and a disadvantage—and we should not take his description to mean that the infant has a distinct or clearly delineated idea of what he needs or that it would come from the outside.[57] Rather, the infant is hallucinating or fantasying something vaguely good and a relief from tension; say, he is hungry and comes to have an "idea" or sense of a warm, satisfying something filling his tummy, taking the bad hunger away. And when he is "conceiving" in this manner of something warm and filling, the mother is right there to provide it: "the mother," Winnicott writes, "places the actual breast just there where the infant is ready to create, and at the right moment." Thus, "the mother's adaptation, when good enough" ensures that "there is an overlap between what mother supplies and what the child might conceive of."[58] The infant is hungry, he hallucinates good warmness (milk) pouring into him—and as he does, the devoted mother's breast is there giving its milk to the child. Due to the mother's adaptation, because she gives the infant almost instantaneously what he needs, the infant comes to experience the breast the mother presents as something he or his need has created—this experience can be called primary creativity.[59] In this manner, if things go well enough, "the baby has some experience of magical control… experience of that which is called 'omnipotence."[60] Of course, "disillusionment" and then "weaning" are crucial if the child is to develop a mature relation to the external world, and so

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56. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 14–16. "Mother" here refers to a functional role and need not be the infant's own mother, though there are good reasons why the infant's own mother would be particularly suited to this task (ibid., 13–14). The same point would apply to the biological versus adoptive mother, given the physiological changes pregnancy brings about; see Donald W. Winnicott, "The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 41 (1960): 594–595.
57. Part of the difficulty is that our language and logic run up against the impossibility of adequately capturing the child's experience. But since these are the tools of understanding, we cannot but rely on them.
58. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 15–16.
59. Henry P. Coppolillo, "The Transitional Phenomenon Revisited," *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1976): 37.
60. Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," in *Playing and Reality,* 63 (emphasis altered).

the mother cannot continue to always be there in the same way. With time, and with "the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration," the good-enough mother "adapts less and less completely." Nonetheless, the prior close adaptation to the child's needs and its overlap with the child's potential creativity is developmentally vital.[61] Only in that event does a situation come about of which we can say that "the baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object." And this "paradox," Winnicott thinks, is the essential feature of transitional phenomena and objects and the intermediate state.[62]

Transitional phenomena, key for "progress to the handling of truly 'not-me' objects," enter somewhere along the line of this developmental story. Something very similar to that which initially happens with the breast happens over time and if things go well with other objects as well. As the infant grows, at some point he begins to use "objects that are not part of [his] body yet are not fully recognized [by him] as belonging to external reality," such as a sheet or blanket that his parents consistently provide him as part of the environment. Sucking the thumb, the infant takes an external object into the mouth, he may or may not suck on to it, and this can be accompanied by mouthing or babbling and other bodily noises as well as fantasying. Such experiences become functionally important for dealing with anxiety, or for bedtime; "there may emerge some thing or some phenomenon—perhaps a bundle of wool or the corner of a blanket or eiderdown, or a word

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61. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 13–14, 17. Winnicott writes also that "the infant can… come to gain from the experience of frustration, since incomplete adaptation to need makes objects real." But "*at the start* adaptation needs to be almost exact, and unless this is so it is not possible for the infant to develop a capacity to experience a relationship to external reality, or even to form a conception of external reality." Though disillusionment and weaning are vital, a prior "area of illusion" is needed: "the mother's eventual task is gradually to disillusion the infant, but she has no hope of success unless at first she has been able to give sufficient opportunity for illusion." Ibid., 14–15, see also 16–17. The process is fraught: there is always the possibility, in Hans Loewald's words, of "too little or too much, too early or too late support." Hans Loewald, "The Problem of Defense and the Neurotic Interpretation of Reality," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, in *The Essential Loewald*, 22–23.
62. Winnicott, "The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identifications," in *Playing and Reality*, 119. For "cathexis," see chapter 3, page 93, note 7 above.

or tune, or a mannerism—that becomes vitally important to the infant for use at the time of going to sleep, and is a defense against anxiety." Parents come to recognize the value of the object, they take it on trips, and as the infant moves into childhood, the original object may still retain its importance and "be absolutely necessary at bedtime or at time of loneliness or when a depressed mood threatens." Psychologically speaking the transitional object straddles the boundary between the inner and outer: "it comes from without our point of view, but not so from the point of view of the baby," but "neither does it come from within" the baby since "it is not a hallucination." And while it is easy to focus on the object, it is not the object itself that matters or interests Winnicott, but the child's first "possession" of the object. The object is simply that through which transitional phenomena occur and that which makes concrete "an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute."[63]

Only in the right environment is it possible to sustain transitional phenomena and to establish "the intermediate area… necessary for the initiation of a relationship between the child and the world." We have already seen the importance of the "good-enough mother." To speak more generally, such development requires "continuity (in time) of the external emotional environment and of particular elements in the physical environment such as the transitional object or objects."[64] Moreover, the paradox mentioned above—"the baby creates the object, but the object was there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object"—plays an essential role.[65]

For the sake of the intermediate area and the child's psychological development, the paradox needs to be "*accepted, tolerated, and not resolved*."[66] According to Winnicott, it should

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63. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 2–7. See also Winnicott's reminder that he is referring to "not the cloth or the teddy bear that the baby uses—not so much the object used as the use of the object" (Winnicott, introduction, xvi).
64. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 18.
65. Winnicott, "The Use of an Object," 119. See page 134 above.
66. Winnicott, "Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self," in *Playing and Reality*, 71 (emphasis mine). See also Winnicott, introduction, xvi, and Winnicott, tailpiece to *Playing and Reality*, 204.

be "*a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question: 'Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?' The important point is that no decision on this point is expected. The question is not to be formulated*." In other words, "we do not challenge the infant in regard to subjectivity or objectivity just here."[67] To be sure, one can ask these questions and push the child to "resolve the paradox" through a "flight to split-off intellectual functioning," intellectual functioning detached from the rest of the child's personality. But the price of doing so is "the loss of the value of the paradox itself."[68]

The paradox does not lose its importance as we grow out of childhood and reach maturity: as Winnicott writes, "this paradox, once accepted and tolerated, has value for every human individual."[69] He explains that "the transitional object and the transitional phenomena start each human being off with what will always be important for them, i.e. a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged." This is not to say, of course, that nothing changes from childhood on. Assuming things go well, the original transitional object is gradually decathected and loses its meaning, and the intermediate area alters its shape with "a gradual extension of range of interest." Over time and in health, "the transitional phenomena… become diffused… spread out over the whole intermediate territory between 'inner psychic reality' and 'the external world as perceived by two persons in common', that is to say, over the whole cultural field."[70] On Winnicott's understanding "there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from

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67. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects, 17, 18. See also Winnicott, "The Use of an Object," 119, and Winnicott, "The Location of Cultural Experience," in *Playing and Reality*, 130.
68. Winnicott, introduction, xvi.
69. Ibid.
70. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 6, 7, 17. Winnicott writes that the transitional object "becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo. By this I mean that in health the transitional object does not 'go inside' nor does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression. It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning" (ibid., 7). Still, "A need for a specific object or a behavior pattern that started at a very early date may reappear at a later age when deprivation threatens" (ibid., 6).

playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences."[71] Play and cultural experiences are located in the intermediate area, which Winnicott also calls "the *potential space* between the individual and the environment."[72] In this space we can find the "substance of *illusion*… which in adult life is inherent in art and religion."[73] Thus, the early transitional phenomena grow over time into the cultural field that contains phenomena such as play, art, and perhaps even religion. And here, as in the case of the child, it is important to leave the paradox of subjective-objective unresolved and the intermediate area unchallenged.[74]

Winnicott thus gives us reason to think that the intermediate area, together with the paradox that is not to be resolved, is highly important and valuable for living well. Its value is most obvious in relation to psychological development. But putting developmental value aside, we can say that the intermediate area is valuable also later in life in at least three distinct ways. First, it is valuable

71. Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," 69. Winnicott thinks that "playing leads on naturally to cultural experience and indeed forms its foundation" (Winnicott, "The Place Where We Live," in *Playing and Reality*, 143). Regarding his terminology, Winnicott writes: "I have used the term 'cultural experience' as an extension of the idea of transitional phenomena and of play without being certain that I can define the word 'culture'. The accent is indeed on experience. In using the 'word culture' [*sic*] I am thinking of the inherited tradition. I am thinking of something that is in the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw *if we have somewhere to put what we find*" (Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 133).
72. Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 135. He also refers to it as the "*third area,* that of cultural experience which is a derivative of play" (ibid., 138). For the location of play see further Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," 55–56, 63–64; Winnicott, "Playing: Creative Activity," 71–72; and Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 129–130.
73. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 18. Of course, many if not most religious people would deny that their religion is in an intermediate space between the objective and the subjective; to the contrary, they would insist that it captures and describes the ultimate objective reality. In fact, Winnicott even suggests that philosophy belongs to the intermediate area—a rather perplexing claim, unless he has in mind something like "personal philosophy" in the sense of an individual's worldview, or deems all philosophy to be essentially like that. But it is not very important whether Winnicott is right to think that a particular cultural product or phenomenon belongs to the intermediate area, as long as his delineation of the area's structure and genesis is accurate and convincing.
74. Winnicott writes, further, that it is "the hallmark of madness" when a person insists others accept the objectivity of his experience and "puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own." However, the situation is different if people come together "on the basis of the similarity of their illusory experiences," finding "a degree of overlapping" intermediate areas. Winnicott calls this "a natural root of grouping among human beings." Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 4, 18.

insofar as it provides rest from the exigencies of normal adult life. Such life requires reality-testing and keeping separate the subjective and objective, inner and outer; as Winnicott writes, "the task of reality-acceptance is never completed... no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality." And the intermediate area provides "relief from this strain," it "exists as a resting-place for the individual engaged in… [this] perpetual human task."[75] The intermediate area with its unchallenged paradox offers a space of recuperation so that we can go on living our adult lives. At the same time, second, it is valuable because it is the sphere for various cultural activities that have value in their own right. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the intermediate area and the paradox accepted make an invaluable form of experiencing possible: only within and through the potential space can we live creatively. The point here is not about creating some *thing*, but about a certain way of experiencing and living in the world; not about "the successful or acclaimed creation," but "a coloring of the whole attitude to external reality."[76] Such coloring is tied up with play and playfulness: "playing," Winnicott writes, "is… always a creative experience," it is "in playing, and perhaps only in playing [that] the child or adult is free to be creative."[77] And the intermediate area of cultural experience is the eventual, adult playing field.

Winnicott's work offers some more specific reasons to judge play, playfulness, and creative living crucial for our happiness. First, even when it leads to quite some anxiety, "*playing*

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75. Ibid., 3, 18.
76. Winnicott, "Creativity and Its Origins," in *Playing and Reality*, 87. The creativity that concerns Winnicott here "is a universal" and "belongs to being alive," except if one is ill or stifled by the environment (ibid., 91). It is no doubt connected to the "'electricity' that seems to generate in meaningful or intimate contact… for instance, when two people are in love" (Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 132). The value of creations should not be downplayed, and the intermediate area can certainly be valued as the sphere that makes possible various cultural achievements, such as great works of art. But Winnicott is primarily interested in the value of the activities themselves and the forms of experiencing they involve, rather than their end products.
77. Winnicott, "Playing: Creative Activity," 71. In discussing the psychotherapeutic process, Winnicott writes that "the reason why playing is essential is that it is in playing that the patient is being creative" (ibid., 72).

is essentially satisfying."[78] Second, such experiences help "tackle the question of *what life itself is about*."[79] They contribute to our sense that life is worth living, rather than merely existing, and having that sense is part of what it is for our life to be worthwhile. Winnicott observes that "we find either that individuals live creatively and feel that life is worth living or else that they cannot live creatively and are doubtful about the value of living."[80] It appears that for Winnicott this sense derives, in part, from the "infinite variability" that exists in the intermediate area of play, as contrasted "with the relative stereotypy of phenomena that relate either to personal body functioning or environmental actuality." Play and creativity, after all, involve the interplay between what is immediately personal or subjective and what is common to all, rather than being derived from just one or the other.[81] They make life worthwhile also by enabling meaningful interactions with the cultural material one finds: when things go well, one can be "creative into and with" such material, drawing from "cultural inheritance" and contributing to the "cultural pool."[82] Such creative living can be contrasted with a compliant relation to the world, in which the

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78. Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," 70. This is not to deny that "there is a degree of anxiety that is unbearable and… destroys playing" (ibid).

79. Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 133. It is not a simple question whether we should regard the intermediate area as contributing to health, or to a meaningful life beyond (merely) being healthy. On the one hand, Winnicott addresses those who fixate on "health in terms of the state of ego defences," and stresses that "it is of first importance for us to acknowledge openly that the absence of psychoneurotic illness may be health, but it is not life" (ibid., 133–134). Indeed, he speaks of the "*third area,* that of cultural experience which is a derivative of play" as being "of great importance in our assessment of the lives rather than the health of human beings" (ibid., 138). On the other hand, elsewhere in his work play and creativity appear to be integral to Winnicott's own conception of health: he writes that "play… belongs to health: playing facilitates growth and therefore health" (Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," 56) and that "in some way or other our theory includes a belief that living creatively is a healthy state" (Winnicott, "Creativity and Its Origins," 88). See also page 140, note 83 below.

80. Winnicott, "Creativity and Its Origins," 95. Also, "it is the creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living" (ibid., 87). Winnicott goes so far as to say that insofar as people "have lost the characteristic that makes them human… they no longer see the world creatively" (ibid., 91).

81. Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 132, 138. The "third area is a product of the experiences of an individual… in the environment that obtains" (Winnicott, "Place Where We Live," 144 [emphasis removed]).

82. Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 136–137. This implies engaging with but not merely repeating or imitating what can be found in culture. As Winnicott notes, "in any cultural field it is *not possible to be original except on*

world—including cultural material—is recognized "only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation," and which brings "a sense of futility for the individual and is associated with the idea that nothing matters and that life is not worth living."[83] Third, play allows us to access different parts of ourselves and "to use the whole personality."[84] Things can go wrong, Winnicott reminds us, both when a person has a weak sense of reality, and when he is "so firmly anchored in objectively perceived reality that… [he is] out of touch with the subjective world and with the creative approach to fact." Such individuals are unlikely to be satisfied with themselves, they "sense that something is wrong and there is a dissociation in their personalities," and what they need from the viewpoint of the good life is "to achieve unit status… or a state of… integration in which there is one self containing everything instead of dissociated elements that exist in compartments, or are scattered around and left lying about."[85] Play and creativity help with this, since they happen between the inner and the outer and bring together a person's internal reality and his external life. They occur in a space in which the exigencies of everyday life are suspended, and so they allow bringing in and making use of different aspects of one's personality that otherwise might not be allowed expression. This can help explain Winnicott's claim that "it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self."[86] Considerations such as these, then, suggest that creativity and play are vital for our flourishing—they are satisfying in themselves, give meaning to life, and allow us to find and make use of different aspects of our personality. And

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a basis of tradition. Conversely, no one in the line of cultural contributors repeats except as a deliberate quotation, and the unforgivable sin in the cultural field is plagiarism" (ibid., 134).

83. Winnicott, "Creativity and Its Origins," 87. Winnicott follows this by contending that whereas "living creatively is a healthy state… compliance is a sick basis for life" (ibid., 88). But see page 139, note 79 above.

84. Winnicott, "Playing: Creative Activity," 73.

85. Winnicott, "Creativity and Its Origins," 89–90. See also Loewald, "Psychoanalysis as an Art and the Fantasy Character of the Psychoanalytic Situation," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* 362–363.

86. Winnicott, "Playing: Creative Activity," 73.

if creativity and play are valuable, then so is the intermediate area of experience in which they take place.

It is worth noting that Winnicott is by no means the only important psychoanalyst to think that psychologically earlier, "pre-objective" ways of experiencing are greatly important for living well even in maturity: the line of thought is reinforced, among others, by Hans Loewald. Loewald's work, in the words of Jonathan Lear, "can be seen as a thinking-through of one idea: namely, that the human psyche is itself a psychological achievement."[87] That is, it attempts to elucidate how one comes to be a self that exists in or in relation to an external reality, and what it is it to have both a self and a world. Loewald shares Winnicott's focus in many ways, and in important respects his developmental story resembles Winnicott's account. Accordingly, the child is not born with a constituted ego or a ready-made external reality it can relate to from the beginning; instead, both emerge over time and if things go well. As Loewald explains, "the boundaries between ego and external reality develop out of an original state where, psychologically, there are no boundaries and therefore there is no distinction between the two."[88] The psychological task is to create such boundaries, and to differentiate the ego and reality from one another. But it is also to maintain connection between the ego and reality as they grow apart, and so "to maintain or constantly re-

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87. Jonathan Lear, introduction to *The Essential Loewald*, x. Lear writes, "The fox knows many things, said the pre-Socratic Archilochus, the hedgehog one big thing. Hans Loewald was a hedgehog. All of his work can be seen as a thinking-through of one idea: namely, that the human psyche is itself a psychological achievement." The parable of the fox and the hedgehog is discussed in Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 1–2.
88. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 11. See also Loewald's description in Loewald, *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual: The Freud Lectures at Yale University*, in *The Essential Loewald*, 553–555. He remarks that the distinction "between inner and outer… together with a host of other distinctions (among them, between past and present, here and there, physical and psychical), gradually evolves from a kind of unitary, global experience" (ibid., 553). This also means that objects are not given and fixed, but come into being with the developing world and ego: "for the child the reality of parents and other objects changes as he matures, he does not simply relate in a different way to fixed, given objects" (Loewald, "On Internalization," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* 77).

establish… [the original] unity in the face of a growing separation from what becomes the outside world for the growing human being."[89] Loewald calls the developed form of unity "a *differentiated unity* that captures separateness in the act of uniting, and unity in the act of separating"; Winnicott's term for it is a "separation that is not a separation but a form of union."[90] On Loewald's view, the "fully developed" ego "has an objective reality, detached from itself, before it, not in it, yet holding this reality to itself," while "in earlier stages… the ego… lives in and experiences the various stages of narcissistic and magical reality" where the ego and reality are still intermingled and lack separation.[91]

The developmental goal, as Loewald understands it, is not to get to the last stage and lose all traces of the earlier ones, but to attain a more complex ego organization all the while retaining the ability to make use of the earlier forms of psychic functioning. After all, we can never leave our past fully behind anyway, due to what Freud terms the "problem of preservation in the sphere of the mind." According to Freud, "in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish," and so "what is primitive is so commonly preserved alongside of the transformed version which

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89. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 11. The ego "mediates, unifies, integrates… on more and more complex levels of differentiation and objectivation of reality, the original unity" (ibid.).

90. Loewald, *Sublimation*, 463 where he also cites Winnicott's formulation approvingly; Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 132.

91. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 19–20. According to Loewald, the ego itself plays an essential role in the developmental process, "organizing both the environment (external reality) and the psyche itself (inner or psychic reality)" (Loewald, "Ego-Organization and Defense," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 175). Two psychic mechanisms are particularly important for this organizing activity: defense and internalization. They both maintain ego and reality organization, guarding against the loss of reality (and the loss of ego) that occurs "if the ego is cutoff from objects… [or] if the boundaries of ego and reality are lost," and so against processes through which "the ego-reality integration… regresses to an earlier level of organization" (Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 16–17). But while defense does so by "warding off of inner or outer demands or influences on the ego," internalization does it through "assimilation or inclusion of these influences within the ego organization"; thus, defense can be seen as "the ego's protection of its own status quo, whereas internalization… involve[s] expansion, further and richer organization of the ego" (Loewald, "Ego-Organization and Defense," 176). That is, "in internalization… the ego opens itself up, loosens its current organization to allow for its own further growth" (Loewald, "On Internalization," 75–76).

has arisen from it."[92] Loewald too is deeply concerned with such preservation, and the survival of earlier stages of ego development alongside and to some extent underlying later ones. Thus, he remarks that "in psychic development early levels do not disappear," and writes that "the conscient forms of mentation… are founded on, and are further differentiation of, mental processes of a more ancient cast… not only 'past history,' something we have overcome or are bound to put behind us. These unconscious forms of mentation or experience are with us now."[93] To some extent, then, it is inevitable "that people shift considerably, from day to day, at different periods in their lives, in different moods and situations, from one such level to other levels."[94] And if the earlier stages survive, then they can either be appropriated and made part of the ego organization of an individual or excluded from it.

Earlier psychological stages characterize, at some level, who one is, and there remains the question of what to make of that and how to appropriate and incorporate their form of mentation into how one lives. For Loewald, whether things go well is largely a matter of integration of the different levels: "the so-called fully developed, mature ego… integrates its reality in such a way that the earlier and deeper levels of ego-reality integration remain alive as dynamic sources of higher organization."[95] This integration can be conceptualized in terms intrapsychic communication, and Loewald writes that "in the healthier adult, communication and interplay

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92. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 21 (1927–1931), *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 68–69. Freud adds that what is preserved can "in suitable circumstances (when, for instance, regression goes back far enough)… once more be brought to light" (ibid., 69).
93. Loewald, *History of the Individual*, 560, 565–566. According to Loewald, "we are so familiar and at home especially in our scientific age" with the conscient forms of mentation (ibid., 565).
94. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 20. See also ibid., 9–10, as well as "On Internalization," 81–82 where Loewald notes Ernest Kris' notion of "regression in the service of the ego."
95. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 20. Consider also Loewald, *History of the Individual*, 569: "it is not a foregone conclusion that man's objectifying mentation is, or should be, an ultimate end rather than a component and intermediate phase of vital significance."

between the world of fantasy and the world of objectivity, between imagination and rationality, remain alive."[96] Indeed, "the range and richness of human life is directly proportional to the mutual responsiveness between these various mental phases and levels": "the richer a person's mental life is, the more he experiences on several levels of mentation, the more translation occurs back and forth between unconscious and conscious experience."[97] But his thought also points to the value of earlier forms of mentation taken by themselves. For one, such mentation is key for psychic growth. Discussing ego development later in life, Loewald explains that consolidations of ego organization "follow periods of relative ego disorganization and reorganization, characterized by ego regression."; indeed, psychoanalysis itself, as "an intervention designed to set ego development in motion… is achieved by the promotion and utilization of (controlled) regression."[98] To grow and develop one must make use of earlier forms of mental functioning. Moreover, such controlled, temporary regression is valuable as a source of our sense of aliveness—a clear parallel with Winnicott. Though people inevitably move between levels, the capacity to do so varies, and Loewald writes that "the more alive people are (though not necessarily more stable), the broader their range of ego-reality levels is."[99] It stands to reason that some of these more primitive, and yet psychologically no less valuable levels of ego-reality depend on ambiguity

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96. Loewald, "Psychoanalysis as an Art," 363. In the less healthy cases, there is too little communication between the two spheres and "we have each in its own corner: a conscious and/or unconscious fantasy life which proliferates on its own (a kind of malignant growth), and opposed to it what we call objective reality which tends to lose meaning as it seems to gain in objective rationality" (ibid.). Of course, the precise nature of intrapsychic communication needs to be fleshed out further. For an account of such communication, see Jonathan Lear, "Integrating the Nonrational Soul," in *Wisdom Won from Illness: Essays in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).
97. Loewald, *History of the Individual*, 550, 568–569
98. Loewald, "On the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 223–224. This has wide-ranging significance for psychoanalysis as a therapy, since "the analyst… must be able to regress in himself to the level of organization on which the patient is stuck, and to help the patient, by the analysis of defense and resistance, to realize this regression" (ibid., 241–242).
99. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," 20.

regarding the source and objectivity of one's experience, regarding its truth of the matter, and so on something like the paradox Winnicott articulates,

Winnicott's and Loewald's work suggest, then, that in considering the value of truthfulness, we must take into account the importance of *not* asking for the truth. The intermediate area requires accepting the paradox Winnicott describes, and that means *not* trying to get to the bottom of one's experience, not attempting to discern what is really the case and wherein lies objectivity, not testing reality, and so not concerning oneself with the truth and falsehood regarding what one is experiencing. This has a key developmental function in helping us towards psychological maturity and mature objectivity, and thereby towards the virtues of truth themselves. Getting to and communicating the truth requires the capacity to distinguish and keep separate the subjective from the objective, what is internal to me and what is part of external reality, and transitional phenomena are a step in the development of such a capacity. It would be an error, however, to regard the intermediate area as merely a stepping stone to be overcome and left behind. The strain of reality-testing remains considerable even in maturity, we need rest and respite from the attempts to discern what is and is not the case, and the intermediate area with its the paradox is valuable as a space for such rest. Most importantly, the suspension of the concern for truth is also good in its own right, and not just as a developmental step or a means for re-invigoration. At times accepting and tolerating the paradox allows us to live playfully, creatively, and culturally, and these modes of experience seem vital for a life well and happily lived. Insisting on the truth, then, does not always put one on the path to flourishing. Consequently, if we are to live well, we cannot be subject to an irresistible need or desire to form true beliefs, and we must be able to withstand such an impulse and sometimes *not* raise the issue of truth and falsehood. And insofar as we care about the well-being of others, we must not make the mistake of thinking that in pushing

them to formulate a belief or examine its truth, or in communicating openly and revealing our own beliefs, we are necessarily doing them a favor. Knowing when to suspend our concern with the truth, when to withhold from acquiring and telling it, is no less important for our and others' happiness than knowing when to seek and communicate it.[100]

These reflections bring out the need for a better sense of the proper limits of truthfulness—at least if we are to regard it as contributing to or expressing a good life. Williams considers how the dispositions to truth-acquisition and belief-communication are circumscribed in order to express the *virtues* of Accuracy and Sincerity: Accuracy is responsive to encounters, interests, and considerations of importance, and does not require endless investigative investment; Sincerity is attuned to considerations of desert and context. But he does not give thought to the possibility that entirely suspending, for some time and in some contexts, the pursuit and communication of truth may be valuable. It appears now that flourishing requires the ability—indeed the disposition—to move and live in an area where the issue of truth is *not* raised and the paradox Winnicott speaks about is accepted. The account of truthfulness should be sharpened with this in mind.

The recognition of the intermediate area's importance for flourishing can impact one's conception of truthfulness in two ways. Either one can maintain that flourishing involves limited

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100. A further possibility emerges from Winnicott's work, though he does not develop it. Winnicott writes that "the intermediate area of experience… throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to *creative scientific work*" (Winnicott, "Transitional Objects," 19 [emphasis added]). This suggests that science, at least in some respects, takes place in the third area of life between the subjective and the objective. On the face of it, the suggestion seems strange given that science tends to think of itself as an activity preoccupied with the objective reality and the *discovery*, rather than invention, of truth. It is possible Winnicott rejects this self-understanding and sees science as a creative endeavor like art. But such an extreme conclusion is unnecessary, and we can acknowledge that though science, on the whole, is different from art by virtue of its pursuit of objective truth and knowledge of the external world, it contains certain "artistic" or "creative" moments. Very broadly speaking, science pursues the truth by formulating and testing hypotheses, drawing inferences, and building theories and models. It may be, then, that the "creative scientific work" refers to the way a scientist invents hypotheses and synthesizes his findings and constructs a model—and that the intermediate area is the space for these sorts of activities. This does not mean, however, that science does not aim at discovering how things really are independent of our experience of them, or that the creative moment in the intermediate area is not followed by vigorous reality testing.

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truthfulness, and that there can be *too much* truthfulness and the virtues of truth can be *over*developed. Or one can hold that truthfulness involves a more limited acquisition and communication of truth than Williams thinks, and that the virtues of truth lead a person, at times, not to pursue the truth about an object of his concern and not to share his beliefs with deserving others. To speak more poetically, one is compelled to affirm either that the will to truth may be excessive or that it contains the will to its own suspension.

In the first instance, one accepts the shape of the virtues outlined by Williams, acknowledging that in themselves they imply nothing about the tendency to experience in the intermediate area. If this is the case, then some further tendency or quality of character is needed to ensure the acceptance (in the appropriate measure and context) of the paradox Winnicott proffers, and so to limit appropriately the dispositions to get to the truth about topics one deals with (Accuracy) and to communicate one's beliefs to (deserving) others (Sincerity). Without such countertendency limiting or holding the virtues of truth in check, a person will struggle to accept the paradox and to play and live creatively. The first option implies, thus, that the virtues of truth can be too strong or overdeveloped when it comes to living well. This may seem strange: if virtue is an excellence, then how could it not lead one towards flourishing? And yet, Williams signals his acceptance of that idea, rejecting as he does the notion that "virtues can never be misused."[101] This is another reminder that Williams is not an Aristotelian.

The second option, on the other hand, is to maintain that the limits on the acquisition and communication of truth required for living well are internal to truthfulness itself. The genuinely virtuous dispositions are such that they ensure the appropriate acceptance of the paradox Winnicott

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101. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9. In that context Williams explicitly mentions "the so-called executive virtues, which do not so much involve objectives of their own as assist in realizing other objectives—courage, for instance, or self-control." Truthfulness is not an executive virtue, but it is not clear on what grounds Williams would think it cannot be misused.

discusses. In other words, on this approach, having or exhibiting the virtues of truth implies both characteristically getting to and communicating and characteristically *not* concerning oneself with the truth when and insofar as that is conducive to flourishing. With this, however, something like the Aristotelian notion of the "mean" that Williams rejects makes a comeback: truthfulness is not just a matter of characteristically getting to the truth about the questions one deals with and sharing one's beliefs with those who deserve them, but doing so neither too much nor too little, neither excessively nor deficiently, but as much as is needed for happiness (which includes creative life and play). Adjudicating between these two options would require delving deeper into virtue theory and the question of how exactly one should conceptualize virtue. It is clear that if we are interested in human flourishing, and if we accept the psychoanalytic insight regarding the importance of the intermediate area, then further work is needed to strengthen our understanding of truthfulness.

How do these reflections tie back to our very beginning, the challenge of the so-called post-truth phenomena? It may seem that our discussion of the ethical importance of not being concerned with the truth has very limited value to someone hoping to tackle that challenge. Indeed, if the problem is that people do not concern themselves with the truth sufficiently, then does our discussion not make matters worse? And yet, it is worth asking whether the problem is simply that we do not care about truth, or whether we may have lost the ability and space to both concern and *not* concern ourselves with the truth in the appropriate ways. At the very least, we should recognize that focusing only on one side of the issue is too narrow. If we care about living well, we cannot simply fixate on people's concern for the truth; it is no less important to ensure that they are able to suspend such concern. Focusing on truthfulness should not blind us to the truth that there is a time for truth, and a time for other things.

CONCLUSION

Truthfulness and Hope

The preceding chapters have aimed to improve our understanding of truthfulness, of what it would mean to cherish the truth and live well—a topic that deserves our attention today, and not only today. We have looked at Bernard Williams' account of the virtues of truth, pointed out some problems it faces, explored features it leaves out, and discussed his reasons for judging truthfulness valuable. This has thrown light on the components of truthfulness and helped recognize the potential for conflict between them. It has also indicated challenges to establishing the value of truthfulness, and drawn attention to the importance, for living well, of not concerning oneself with the truth. Clearly, much work remains, but I hope this has won us something in terms of understanding and insight.

As a conclusion, I would like to return to two themes I raised at the beginning. An impetus for our inquiry came from the diagnoses of post-truth and exhortations to care about and concern oneself with the truth, exhortations that echo Williams' apology of truthfulness. Given our now better understanding, in what sense does truthfulness exemplify the concern for truth? I also noted Williams' and others' hope that respect for truth can thrive again. But what should we make of this hope, and can we be sure it is not merely blind hope?

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Williams, as we have seen, thinks that truthfulness implies a respect for the truth,[1] and our discussion has equipped us to apprehend more clearly what that means. We can say that the truthful person, the person with the virtues of Accuracy and Sincerity, respects the truth in the sense that he characteristically acquires and communicates true beliefs. On the one hand, he forms correct and true beliefs and, furthermore, correct beliefs that adequately encompass or capture the truth of the matter (the subject, question, or issue) he deals with. We might say that he respects the truth in that he characteristically aims and succeeds to grasp the things within his purview as they are. What exactly he deals with varies, and is a function of his environment, social and cultural context, his interests, sense of what is important, and so on. But it is also a function of his humanity; there are questions or topics humans as humans face, and the genuinely truthful man will not evade them. On the other hand, when it comes to truth-communication, the virtue of Sincerity on its own implies only that one shares, openly and without deception, one's beliefs (appropriate to the context of the communication) with deserving others. Independently of Accuracy, Sincerity implies only the telling of one's actual, rather than false beliefs. But since the truthful person is Sincere *and* Accurate, his beliefs are characteristically true, and this means that he characteristically shares with others the true beliefs that he truly holds. He communicates the truth of the matter about questions he has investigated and about which he has formed accurate beliefs, and when some other or further question comes up, he demurs—whether for good or until he discovers the truth about it too.

It is important to note that truthfulness, and the respect for truth it implies, do not exhaust the idea of being concerned with the truth. In chapter 1 we saw that there is at least one further

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1. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 11. See also introduction, page 5 above.

way to be concerned with it: inquisitiveness. It encompasses and expresses the concern to find out and learn the truth about ever more things, to expand the range of questions on which one seeks the truth. This latter concern is clearly rather different from that which truthfulness implies, the concern to discover and communicate the truth within one's range of affairs whatever they happen to be. This difference is evident if, echoing our discussion in chapter 1, we compare a truthful scholar with an inquisitive one. The former is focused on getting to the truth of the matter about a thinker he studies (or an element of the thinker's thought), and being open about his findings with deserving others; he does not care to learn about history, physics, psychology, economics, or even other thinkers, unless understanding them is relevant to his specific task. The inquisitive scholar, on the other hand, finds himself looking into another, and another, and another thinker, or spending a great deal of time on material outside of his field of study altogether. He has an impetus to broaden his horizon and acquire truths, however incomplete, about ever new matters.[2]

We can say, based on this, that a person who is truthful *and* inquisitive would not only aim and succeed at getting to the truth about the topics he considers, but also actively expand the range of his concern with the truth. He would be driven to investigate new and new questions, and so

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2. We might elucidate this difference also in terms of Aristotle's famous distinction between *kinesis* and *energeia*, process and activity. *Kinesis* aims at something beyond itself and so at its own termination; thus, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. An example might be building a house, a process which ends when the house has been built. *Energeia*, by contrast, does not aim at anything beyond its own perpetuation, it is not temporally structured like *kinesis*, and it is an activity complete in every moment. An example of *energeia* might be living at home. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1048b18-35; Jonathan Lear, "Wisdom Won from Illness," in *Wisdom Won from Illness*, 26. The truthful person, given his Accuracy, characteristically gets to the truth about whatever question he considers, and to this extent we can speak of a *kinesis*: his actions aim at an end (accurate and adequate belief) that brings an end to the process—the answer is obtained, the question is solved, and the search finishes. Of course, he engages in this process over and over again, as new questions emerge. But each individual case, the pursuit of truth with respect to every new question or topic, follows the structure of *kinesis* just outlined: it has a beginning and, when one acquires the truth, an end. On the other hand, the inquisitive person's pursuit of ever new questions and truths is not limited in the same manner. He perpetually looks into new things, and inquisitiveness, as we have discussed it, captures this constant, endless expansion of his investigative investment. His activity, then, is more akin to *energeia*.

overcome ignorance about more and more issues.[3] Truth appears to structure the pursuits and life-orientation of such a person much more than of him who characteristically overcomes ignorance only about that which he happens to be concerned with. One may wonder, perhaps in a reverie or overtaken by a flight of fancy, whether the person combining truthfulness and inquisitiveness does not exemplify a love for truth. At any rate, it is significant that concern for truth does not end with being truthful. One hoping to rekindle such concern should not focus solely on cultivating truthfulness; the latter is important, but there are other qualities that should not be ignored. This also means that a discussion of truthfulness such as ours can only take us so far.

Things are complicated further when the goal is to live well. The discussion in chapter 4 suggested that the concern for truth should be *limited* if it is to genuinely contribute to or express our flourishing. Living well appears to involve the ability to move in and around what Winnicott calls the intermediate area, where ambiguity about what is true and false is to be expected and the issue of truth is not to be raised. When it comes to happiness, we cannot focus solely on being concerned with the truth and must consider also the value of *not* being concerned with it—the value of suspending such concern and, as it were, shifting gears.

Our examination of truthfulness naturally raises various questions. Here I would like to note two topics for further investigation. First, while we touched on the motivations for truth-pursuit in chapter 1, their nature, structure, and how they function can certainly be understood further. In particular, there is the question of how the "higher" concern with the truth connects

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3. Admittedly, inquisitiveness must be moderated for its combination with truthfulness to be successful, and so for a person to exhibit concern for truth in both senses. There comes a point at which investing into further questions begins to undermine truthfulness. Overinvesting in a great number of questions can strain one's ability to ensure the correctness of one's beliefs. The failure to observe the appropriate limit can be regarded as a failure of gullibility or credulity; on the other hand, if one barely expands one's range of investigative investment, then the attribution of inquisitiveness is dubious. Thus, the successful combination of truthfulness and inquisitiveness requires being neither excessively nor deficiently inquisitive. What the correct measure or mean is, is hard or impossible to say in general.

with and emerges from our more basic, instinctual life. It seems to me that psychoanalysis can help address the issue, particularly given it has much to say about both our "higher" and "lower" pursuits. Psychoanalytic understanding also complicates the picture in an interesting and fruitful way.

Speaking psychoanalytically, some but not all activities exist to remove instinctual tension. Hans Loewald explains that Freud's considered instinct theory implies three different principles of psychological functioning: "the Nirvana principle, the pleasure principle… and the reality principle."[4] The aims of Nirvana Principle and the pleasure principle are, respectively, "a quantitative reduction of the stimulus-load" and "a qualitative characteristic of it." Loewald points out that despite Freud's early instinct theory, which has remained influential in psychoanalysis, Freud did not think later in life "that the aim of an instinct is in every instance satisfaction *by removal of* stimulation" and so of tension. He came to realize that satisfaction obtains not just when tension is eliminated or reduced, but also when it is maintained and "bound."[5] After all, as Freud wrote in 1924, "there are pleasurable tensions and unpleasurable relaxations of tension." This realization also has consequences—even if Freud himself did not draw them—for the conceptualization of the third, reality principle, which is a modification of more basic psychic functioning under the pressure of reality, representing thus "the influence of the external world." While Freud maintains that the reality principle aims at "a temporal deferment of the discharge of

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4. This paragraph follows Loewald's discussion in *Sublimation*, 466–469, which is based on Freud's formulations in "Das Ökonomische Problem Des Masochismus," *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet*, vol. 13 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1940), 372–73. See also Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," in *Standard Edition*, vol. 19 (1923–1925), *The Ego and the Id and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 160–161. I have followed Loewald's translation. "Instinct" in the passage stands for the German *Trieb*, which can be translated, more accurately, as "drive." The Nirvana principle might also be called an "unpleasure principle," as Loewald suggests (Loewald, "Book Review and Discussion," in *Papers on Psychoanalysis,* 62–63), following the use by Max Schur in *The Id and the Regulatory Principles of Mental Functioning* (New York: International Universities Press, 1966).
5. Loewald writes also that "if life instinct has any meaning it must mean that excitation, tension inherent in life processes, is sought and not simply abolished or fended off" (Loewald, "Book Review," 63).

the stimulus and a temporary acquiescence in the unpleasure of tension," if we take seriously the existence of two kinds of basic principle, the Nirvana and the pleasure principle, then it is reasonable to think that the reality principle can modify either of them. And insofar as it modifies the latter, Loewald explains, it is "in the service of the second-named aim of attainment of 'a qualitative characteristic of the stimulus-load,'" and so, presumably, reshapes that qualitative characteristic.[6] If this is right, then psychoanalytically speaking our mental functioning aims, whether immediately or deferred, at two quite distinct things—at reducing unpleasurable tension or at sustaining pleasurable tension.[7]

This understanding of mental functioning complicates the picture of the truthful person's characteristic activity. What does it aim at—tension, its removal, or a mixture of both? The answer is far from clear. To focus just on truth-acquisition, does the truthful person pursue the truth in order to rid himself of the threatening, overwhelming, and, in short unpleasant tension arising from the awareness that he lacks a true belief on some question—the awareness of his ignorance about something? Taken on its own, this is unlikely to be enough for genuine *truth*-pursuit: the tension in question might be eliminated, after all, also by convincing oneself that one's answer is true, even when it is not. This sort of "solution" does not work only assuming one is so committed to truth and so good at avoiding wishful thinking that a merely convincing (but not necessarily true) answer fails to remove the unpleasant tension.[8] Only in that case does eliminating the tension

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6. Incidentally, Loewald's discussion suggests that the phenomenon of play we discussed in chapter 4, section 4 (esp. pages 137–142) is linked to the second, pleasure principle. Loewald writes that "Winnicott's phenomena that have no climax appear to show an 'aim' that consists in a qualitative characteristic of the stimulation load" (Loewald, *Sublimation*, 469), i.e. the aim of the pleasure principle. Winnicott is adamant that play is non-climactic at Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," 70, and Winnicott, "Cultural Experience," 132–133.

7. Interestingly, the earlier Aristotelian distinction between *kinesis* and *energeia* (see page 152, note 2 above) seems applicable here too. Eliminating unpleasurable tension has the form of *kinesis*: there is a beginning in the onset of the tension, the process aims at its elimination, and once the tension is eliminated, there is a situation of rest. Sustaining pleasurable tension, on the other hand, is closer in shape to *energeia*: the tension may have a beginning, but the ensuing activity aims at no further end than itself.

8. That is, we might say, only assuming one has a highly developed intellectual conscience.

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arising from not knowing lead to the characteristic acquisition of truth. Or, does the truthful person pursue the truth because such pursuit is charged with pleasurable tension? This too, taken on its own, seems inadequate as far as truthfulness is concerned: if the search for truth is pleasurable, then one has reason to sustain rather than end it by getting to the truth. Of course, one can find the pleasurable tension anew after obtaining a true answer—one only needs to consider a still unknown topic. But it is not clear how the pleasurable tension by itself would cause one to actually acquire the truth. The psychoanalytic account of the two kinds of instinctual aims raises, thus, more questions than it solves. But it offers, it seems to me, a fruitful further line of inquiry into truthfulness and related qualities.

I would like to mention a second issue that further inquiries would do well to look into. Are we sure we have accounted for all the components of truthfulness? We can imagine a person who gets to the truth of the topics he deals with and communicates his beliefs to deserving others, and yet whose life seems peculiarly out of sync with the true beliefs he holds. It seems possible, after all, for someone to be unresponsive in the way he lives to what he accurately believes, or even to act contrary to it. Take, for instance, a climate fighter who believes in global warming, is convinced that each individual has a moral duty to reduce his carbon footprint, and voices this belief to friends, on the internet, and at conferences, and yet who consumes as anyone else, throws out as much trash, flies by plane, and so on—and assume the beliefs he professes are true. Or take an avowed non-cognitivist who believes that moral claims cannot be true or false and regards the opposing view as obscurantism, and yet who in his philosophical and everyday conversations appears to assume that moral assertions do have truth value, arguing for instance that all people

are equal.[9] Of course, not every such apparent opposition between beliefs and actions reveals anything about one's relation to truth: it may be that one's beliefs are untrue, or that appearances are misleading and upon a closer look no tension really exists. Nevertheless, tension does seem possible: one may act contrary to one's true beliefs and one's true beliefs may have little or no impact on one's deliberate action.[10] In such cases a person fails to bring what he accurately believes to be the case to bear on how he lives, and so we might say that he is untrue to the true beliefs he holds. And we might wonder whether this is alright from the viewpoint of truthfulness.

If truthfulness expresses respect for truth, then we may well think that it is about more than forming and holding and communicating beliefs. Human life is full of activity other than belief-formation and communication, and prima facie it appears possible to respect truth in these two spheres without being respectful towards it in many other parts of life—for instance, when it comes to shaping one's habits, dispositions, and desires. Can we really attribute to someone a genuine respect for truth if his life does not express and align with the true beliefs he has acquired? The person who integrates the truth into his practical life, who ensures it enters his deliberations and who shapes his habits and desires in light of what he correctly takes to be true—is he not better off in terms of truthfulness? His life, after all, appears to express a more thorough concern with the

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9. The second example is modified from an earlier version of Eric Schwitzgebel's paper, "Acting Contrary to Our Professed Beliefs or The Gulf Between Occurrent Judgment and Dispositional Belief," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (December 2010): 531–553. The earlier version, from September 25, 2008, can be found at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.498.6316&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

10. I am assuming here that it is possible to act contrary to one's genuinely held beliefs. Admittedly, there is some disagreement on the question in the literature. For the view that it is possible see e.g. Aaron Zimmermann, "The Nature of Belief," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14, no. 11 (2007): 61–82, and Tamar Szabó Gendler, "Alief and Belief," *Journal of Philosophy* 105, no. 10 (October 2008): esp. 637–641. For an opposite view, according to which purported examples of the phenomenon only evince "in-between" belief or fluctuation from belief to nonbelief, see Schwitzegebel, "Acting Contrary," 537, or Darrell P. Rowbottom, "'In-Between Believing' and Degrees of Belief," *Teorema* 26, no. 1 (2007): 134–135. Zimmermann's paper is a good overview of the debate in the literature regarding belief-attribution.

truth than the life of a person who holds true beliefs only in an intellectual mode without their impacting his actions. We should consider the possibility that respect is deficient if truth has little significance to much of practical life.[11] Needless to say, these are very preliminary remarks and require much more development.

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It is significant that Williams concludes *Truth and Truthfulness*, the concluding work of his life, on a note of hope. As we have seen, his hope is "that the virtues of truth… will keep going… in something like the more courageous, intransigent, and socially effective forms that they have acquired over their history," that "the ways in which future people will come to make sense of things will enable them to see the truth and not be broken by it."[12] I have suggested that the diagnosticians of post-truth share a similar attitude. Behind the diagnosis that truth has lost its importance and we lack commitment to it, one can sense a hope, often more latent than explicitly stated, that people can live truthfully, that they can see the truth and not be broken by it, and that truth will matter again.

Williams' appeal to hope is striking, expressive, even moving. But it would feel wrong to stop the inquiry here and leave this ground untrammeled. The appeal, after all, is intended to stir

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11. The point becomes even stronger if we take seriously the idea that *truthful* implies *being characterized by* truth. This implication is suggested by a moment's linguistic reflection. The suffix "-ful" implies that the subject has or is characterized by the term in the first part of the adjective (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "-ful, *suffix*," accessed April 23, 2019, http://www.oed.com/). In the present case this means having or being characterized by truth ("to characterize" means "to define the character or identity of, to mark, distinguish; to be typical"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "characterize, *v.*," accessed April 24, 2019, http://www.oed.com/). One might interpret this in a relatively narrow sense so that the truthful person is one whose belief and speech are characterized by truth. But such delineation seems quite arbitrary: the idea that a person is characterized by truth does not in itself suggest that the person is characterized by truth only in some respects or in some of his actions and pursuits. It seems more compelling to say that the person as a whole is characterized by truth, and that what matters from the viewpoint of truthfulness is, more broadly, the connection of truth to the way he leads his life. Belief and speech are just one part of life, though one in which the issue of truth and falsity arises particularly poignantly.
12. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 268–269. See introduction, pages 8–9 above.

the reader—it is an invitation to join Williams in hoping. But should we? Williams himself suggests that it is not foolish not to share his hope: "reasonable people can believe, contrary to the ideals of liberalism, that human beings cannot live together effectively, at least on any culturally ambitious scale, if they understand fully what they are doing." Nonetheless, he continues, these reservations "may not be true" and so "we can still live in the hope… that they are not."[13] And yet, a worry remains. Not sharing Williams' hope is not foolish, but might his hope be? Whatever the reason for suspicion—pessimism about our current state, contemplation of man's nature, history, and apparently endless capacity to ignore and falsify the truth, or even some minor madness making one wary and doubtful of all hopeful proclamations—one can go a step further than Williams and turn his remarks on himself. Upon critical reflection, is Williams' hope reasonable, and does it make sense for us to join him?

Whether it does, depends on what it is to hope and what it is that Williams hopes for. To begin with the latter question, there is some ambiguity in Williams' expression of hope. His hope is that the virtues of truth can flourish, and that people can make sense of things in a way that allows them to see the truth without being broken. But is the hope that *some* people will be able to do these things, or that *many*, perhaps *most*, can? Is it about certain individuals or society at large? To hope that some individuals, perhaps a select few, can live truthfully is very different from hoping that society can become (more) truthful. Both hopes can be examined, of course, but it is important to know which is Williams'. And it seems that just like the diagnosticians of post-truth, Williams is most concerned about the developments in society at large. Thus, in hoping Williams speaks of the "*socially* effective forms" of the virtues of truth and of "*institutions*.… that will both support and express them." And, in the important chapter titled "Truthfulness, *Liberalism*,

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13. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 232. See chapter 3, pages 105–106 above.

Critique," he contrasts his hope with those who "believe, contrary to the ideals of liberalism, that human beings cannot live together effectively… if they understand fully what they are doing."[14] It is unlikely that Williams, or others following him, would be content if only a select few could live truthfully. The goal seems to be a more truthful world, where more and more people exhibit the virtues of truth. And Williams invites the reader to hope it comes about—and perhaps to help create it.

But what is it to hold such a hope? As an attitude, hope lies somewhere between belief and wish.[15] R. S. Downie writes that "the criteria for 'hope that'… the minimum conditions, for all genuine hope—are desire for the object of hope and belief that its attainment lies within a range of probabilities which includes what we ordinarily call improbable."[16] This points to two things. First, like a wish, hope entails desire for the hoped-for object. Or, to make the point slightly differently and as Williams does, in hoping one "entertains the idea… with a positive… attitude."[17] That is clearly not necessarily true of belief. But in the case of hope though not always the wish, the desire is for what is possible or probable (physically, not merely logically); we may, after all, wish for the impossible, whereas hope is for the possible, even if "against all odds." This means, second, that unlike a wish but like a belief, hope involves considerations of possibility or probability. As Williams writes, hopes "involve at least some rudimentary kind of probability

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14. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 232, 269 (my emphasis).
15. This point was suggested to me by Robert Pippin.
16. R. S. Downie, "Hope," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24, no. 2 (December 1963): 249–250. Downie adds a third criterion associated with being "hopeful that…": "a belief that the object of hope is likely to be attained" (ibid., 250). Notably, hope does not involve knowledge or conviction that a state of affairs *will* come about, since in that case there would be little point to hoping.
17. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 196. Williams writes also that "if the agent simply does not know whether P, but he recognizes that it would be very good for the satisfaction of his desires if P, then it is presumably one of his hopes" (ibid., 196–197). This formulation is somewhat misleading since it risks turning hope into a more purely intellectual stance than it is. In hoping, one does not merely "recognize" that some outcome would be good given one's desires; one would also like it to come about.

estimate" in a way that wishes do not, even though the "degree of probability [one] assigns… is less than enough to warrant… belief," as beliefs are "states (or rather their content) which [a person] is committed to holding true in the context of his deliberation."[18] And yet, while the hope that something would happen falls short of the belief that it will, hope nevertheless involves a belief: not that the hoped for thing will come about, but that it *may*. In other words, unlike a wish, hope involves a belief, implicit or explicit, that a state of affairs is probable or possible. This belief and the probability calculus connected to it, in turn, depend on further beliefs one holds; when it comes to human things and possibilities for us, it depends on beliefs about human nature, psychology, and politics. And all those beliefs, of course, can be questioned—even if we assume that desires are beyond rational evaluation, beliefs are clearly not.[19]

Whether we should join Williams in hoping depends, then, on two things. First, do we share his desire that the virtues of truth spread widely, his desire for a truthful society? Second, do we deem Williams' hoped-for state of affairs possible or probable? To address the first question first, whether we share his desire depends on what we make of his hoped-for outcome. As noted, the desire is certainly not unique to Williams and is shared in some form by many of those who warn about a post-truth world. Whether one shares it depends on one's ideals, idiosyncrasies, and, perhaps, prejudices. And yet, it is possible to take a step back and ask whether the thing desired is, in fact, desirable—indeed, whether it is good. Once we contemplate joining Williams' and others' hope, that question in effect forces itself on us. After all, why should we hope for something that

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18. Ibid., 196–197. Perhaps some of this in mind, Williams likens hopes to "optimistic beliefs" in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. He ends the work with a brief discussion of the "hopes" it expresses: "a belief in three things: in truth, in truthfulness, and in the meaning of an individual life" that rests "on assumptions that some people will think optimistic." Williams proceeds to touch on truth, the "hope for truthfulness," and his "third optimistic belief… in the continuing possibility of a meaningful individual life, one that does not reject society." Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 198–201).
19. Of course, one may wonder whether desires could not or should not be examined as well—at least insofar as they are more than mere preferences and aim at what is good. A desire for what is good rests, after all, on beliefs about the good, and beliefs can be rationally examined.

is not actually desirable? Thus, what we make of Williams' hoped-for state of affairs depends on whether we deem truthfulness desirable, valuable, good, and whether we think it is desirable, valuable, good that it spread. One may ask, of course, good *for whom*? Most obviously, good for those who reflect on these questions, but also—at least assuming motivations that are not merely egoistic—good for all those others who would develop the "characteristic patterns of desire and motivation"[20] that we have regarded, following Williams, as virtues. We explored this topic in the previous chapter, and it certainly deserves reflection in the future.

But how about the second question—whether or not Williams' hoped-for state of affairs is realistic? Can people indeed make sense of things in a way that allows them to see the truth, and can they avoid being broken by it? If not, or if a truthful society is not a genuine possibility for us humans, then the hope for it will be in vain. It will be a false hope. Even if it is possible, however, there is still the question of probability—how realistic is Williams' hope? It is not senseless to hope for something possible but highly improbable, and yet recognizing that it is hard to come by is likely to impact our attitude towards it. Even if we keep hoping for it, we are likely to invest less in our hope. The judgment of possibility and probability, as mentioned above, rests on various beliefs one holds, each of which can be examined. How realistic it is that a society or community will come about in which the virtues of truth flourish and people can see the truth and thrive depends on one's view of human nature, psychology, and politics.

Evaluating Williams' hope, then, requires going a very long way. In a sense, it demands wading into the old quarrel I mentioned in chapter 3, between those who think society inevitably rests on opinions and myths and those who think it can be based on reason and truth.[21] Clearly, we cannot go very far in this direction here. But our study has contributed to such an endeavor by

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20. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 9.
21. See page 105 above.

clarifying what the hoped-for state of affairs would involve. And I would like to point out a few reasons for skepticism—reasons for thinking that the obstacles to anything like a truthful society are serious. We might say they involve reasons to doubt the stability of truthfulness in practice. Some of them arise out of our inquiry thus far, while others are new.

Chapters 2 and 3 showed problems with Williams' account that place doubt on truthfulness as a composite virtue of the kind he discusses, and this poses a challenge to his hopes. In chapter 2, we saw a lacuna in Williams' analysis of deserving the truth, a notion critical for his elaboration of Sincerity. Until that lacuna is addressed, the reflective stability of Williams' account is shaken— at least assuming the person reflecting exhibits Accuracy. Unless the Accurate person is convinced the claim that others are owed the truth is true, he will not believe that they are owed it, and if he does not believe that, then it seems unlikely that he will tell the truth in the ways required by Sincerity. This challenges the belief that both virtues of truth can flourish. The challenge can be met by convincingly addressing the lacuna, or by showing that Sincerity rests on some basis independent of belief about desert or can flourish simply through the power of habit and regardless of any associated beliefs. But Williams' account does not achieve that. This does not yet entail that it is impossible to combine the two virtues of truth or for that combination to be widespread, and so Williams' hope is not baseless. But questions arise regarding its reasonableness.

Chapter 3 raises another reason for hesitation: there we saw that the consistent combination of the virtues of truth is fraught given the problems of persecution and social barriers to goods needed for Accuracy. Though it is tempting to deem these problems solvable, indeed think that they have been solved by today's liberal democracies, we also saw some reason to wonder whether they are not an ineluctable part of human life together. One might hope to solve them precisely by cultivating truthfulness at the level of society and by creating institutions that sustain it: the hope

is that this would both reduce the likelihood of being persecuted for telling the truth and increase the access to goods needed to acquire it. But the attainability of such a solution remains in question and we are led back to the old quarrel I have referred to. The outcome of that quarrel thus seems key for discerning whether Williams' hope is realistic.

In different ways both chapters 2 and 3 suggest that the conditions for sustainably exhibiting the virtues of truth are difficult to attain. But the challenges they present are by no means the only challenges to the spread of truthfulness and the realization of Williams' hoped-for truthful society. Two others, in particular, seem worth articulating—one at the political level, one pertaining to individual psychology.

At the level of politics, the difficulty concerns the long-term impact of cultivating truthfulness on the ability to meet and overcome the challenges that political life—and political health—involves. The truthful society, like any society, must exist in a particular political unit that faces various pressures and tasks, some of which any genuine polity must meet and others more specific to its circumstances. As we saw in chapter 4, the first and perhaps most pressing burden is to find solutions to the basic political problems—survival, order, security, and so on. We might understand the ability to find such solutions over time in terms of *political health*. And the problem is that the cultivation of truthfulness risks damaging the bonds vital for political health, bonds that become especially significant in times of crisis.

To make this clearer, I should first clarify what I mean by political health. One can fairly regularly hear talk about the health of a community, state, or society, but the notion tends to be employed as a generic and somewhat elevated term for collective well-being of some kind, dependent on the speaker's favored criteria and without much thought given to what makes it *health*. Admittedly, the idea of health is not an easy one to define or delineate, even if we

comfortably employ it daily with respect to ourselves, or at least with respect to our bodies. But it seems we can confidently say at least two things about it. First, notwithstanding the common broad use, health refers to something narrower than well-being or happiness in general. When it comes to individuals, we naturally distinguish between their being healthy and their living well; health is necessary but neither sufficient for nor identical with the latter. As Leon Kass notes, "while poor health may weaken our efforts, good health alone is an insufficient condition or sign of a worthy human life."[22] The second consideration helps explain more clearly the importance and value of health: health is tied to life, and the ability to stay alive. Whatever it is to be healthy, it is to be in a condition that allows one to go on living. To be more precise, it specifies a certain kind of *internal* condition—the way, for instance, the parts of an organism relate to one another so as to sustain rather than to diminish life. These two considerations point to a legitimate use of health in relation to politics: the internal condition of a polity such that the polity can survive and sustain itself over time. With this in mind, the notion of political health can be tied to the first questions of politics and the ability to find answers to the basic matters of survival, stable order, and so on. There is, of course, more to politics and the life of a collective than solving the first political problems—though they are first, they are by no means the last. But only if one has attained adequate solutions to them will one be in a position to address further questions. Only if there is (political) health can one pursue (collective) well-being more broadly.

The primary political motive of *mutual loyalty* seems particularly important for political health. As Yoram Hazony writes, "the mutual loyalty of individuals to one another is the most

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22. Leon R. Kass, "Regarding the End of Medicine and the Pursuit of Health," *The Public Interest*, no. 40 (Summer 1975): 42. Kass remarks that "health, while a good, cannot be the greatest good" and that "it is not mere life, nor even healthy life, but rather a good and worthy life for which we must aim" (ibid.).

powerful force operative in the political realm."[23] According to Hazony, the bond of mutual loyalty

is established when individuals take each other within their extended selves and come to "regard

themselves as a single entity," and so to some extent recognize each other's hardships and triumphs

as their own.[24] We are most familiar with such extension of self in the case of family when one

regards family members as integral parts of oneself, but a similar, though generally weaker,

process takes place also at the level of tribes, nations, and groups more generally.[25] The effect of

mutual loyalty is to "pull individuals tightly together… in much the way that the force of

gravitation pulls molecules together." Indeed, according to Hazony, "the *cohesion* of human

collectives" amounts to "the bonds of mutual loyalty that hold firmly in place an alliance of many

individuals, each of whom shares in the suffering and triumphs of the others, including those they

have never met."[26] It is not hard to see the political value of such mutual loyalty and cohesion:

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23. Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 69. See ibid., pt. 2 for an extensive discussion of the importance of mutual loyalty. The failure to acknowledge its significance is, for Hazony, a failure of a certain kind of political thought. "Liberal philosophy," he writes, "ignores mutual loyalty as a motive, suppressing the most powerful cause operative in political affairs" (ibid., 82–83). This, then, might be another way in which liberal political theory is deficient in realism. For the first, see chapter 4, pages 126–128 above.

24. Hazony, 65. This does not mean the individuals in question "entirely cease to be independent persons" (ibid.).

25. Ibid., 9. Hazony calls the family "the strongest and most resilient of all small institutions known to human politics, precisely due to the existence of such ties of mutual loyalty between each member of the family and all of the others" (ibid., 66). Moreover, Hazony notes that "we have never seen… a genuine tendency towards a mutual loyalty among all human beings," and he thinks that it "could only form under conditions in which all mankind stood together before a joint adversity" (ibid., 69). This is not to deny "the possibility of sympathy toward other human beings, or toward other living things in general" (ibid., 255n12). Nevertheless, such "acts of sympathy and kindness toward strangers… tend to be short-lived and cannot compete with the ties of mutual loyalty that are the foundation for political order" (ibid., 97–98).

26. Ibid., 68–69. Hazony adopts the term "cohesion" from John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, in *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government, Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy*, ed. Geraint Williams (London: Everyman, 1993), 241. Hazony also suggests that mutual loyalty gives rise to "the health and prosperity of the family, clan, tribe, or nation." He identifies three elements of such health and prosperity: "physical and material flourishing," "internal integrity" (which is similar to cohesion), and "the extent and quality of the cultural inheritance that is transmitted by the parents and grandparents to the children." Hazony, 71–72. However, only the central one—integrity—seems clearly a matter of political health as I have outlined it. The other two features appear to be that which health makes possible. We might say, to correct Hazony, that political health, and thus internal integrity, is crucial for prosperity, and so for physical and material flourishing and the extent and quality of the cultural inheritance. Overall, Hazony's references to "health" reflect the common type of use, where "health" is used in some vague, but positive sense without thinking through the term's meaning (see page 163 above).

viewing one's fellow citizens more as family members than as business partners is advantageous for coming together and solving various political challenges.[27] Among other things, mutual loyalty is important for "enduring and resilient institutions."[28] But perhaps its most consequential role and "most characteristic expression" can be found "in the effort to defend the members of a particular collective against threats from outside."[29] It is in questions of life and death, the very first questions of politics and so the stuff of political health, that the importance of mutual loyalty becomes especially clear. If one views others as parts of oneself, then one is likely to have the will to fight for them and to protect the political community. Although the strength of a state is commonly conceived in terms of resources—warships, materials, technological advancement—we should not forget that in the absence of such will these are worth only little. There have been many examples, after all, of overwhelmingly powerful empires being beaten by a rag-shag group of brigands protecting their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. Mutual loyalty, then, seems crucial for robust political health—for ensuring the survival, safety, and order of a polity, things necessary for a truthful society just like any other.

The problem, however, is that the cultivation of truthfulness, and more specifically of Accuracy, appears to have an impetus to damage the basis of mutual loyalty. Mutual loyalty, it seems, inevitably involves shared narratives about the group in question—about who "we" are— as well as shared "thick" value concepts[30] that are used to make sense of the world, evaluate

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27. Hazony, 87–89.
28. Ibid., 66. Discussing more specifically "free institutions," Hazony writes that in establishing them "our first concern must be for the cohesiveness of the nation. This mutual loyalty, which is derived from genuine commonalities of language or religion, and from a past history of uniting in wartime, is the firm foundation on which everything else depends" (ibid., 140, see also 137–140). Hazony thinks that at the foundation of a "free state" are "the strong bonds of mutual loyalty that are characteristic of the family, rather than the weak bonds of consent that are the essence in a business enterprise" (ibid., 88–89, see also 159).
29. Ibid., 97.
30. See chapter 1, page 33, note 35, and chapter 2, page 80, note 66 above.

persons, and orient actions—courage, cowardice, gratitude, and so on. To begin with the former,

narratives of self-understanding are unlikely to be wholly true.[31] Some aspects of them may be

based on outright falsehoods, while in other respects they may be mythic. And since Accuracy

involves questioning the beliefs one holds, it means questioning the beliefs on which the narratives

one accepts rest. To the extent those narratives are revealed to rely on false beliefs, or only partially

true beliefs, individuals exhibiting Accuracy will refrain from believing them. And that is likely

to weaken mutual loyalty, given that such narratives underlie and support it. On the other hand,

Accuracy puts pressure on shared thick value concepts. As Williams explains, such concepts are

descriptive, evaluative, and action-guiding: their application depends on "what the world is like"

(for instance, on how someone behaved), it "usually involves a certain valuation of the situation,

of persons or actions," and the values tend to "provide reasons for action."[32] Those who share thick

concepts have a shared way of understanding and engaging in the social world, and such a shared

world orientation is likely to support their mutual loyalty and social cohesion. But, as Williams

himself writes, "reflection characteristically disturbs, unseats, or replaces those… [thick]

concepts."[33] And Accuracy encourages such reflection by prompting one to query one's beliefs:

insofar as one is Accurate, one will ask whether one's beliefs are true, and so whether the things

one takes to be good or bad are indeed good or bad. This is likely to disturb the thick value notions

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31. The point is often made in relation to nationalism. It is popular today, at least among educated Westerners, to regard narratives of nationalism as particularly harmful. The irony, of course, is that just thirty years ago many in the same group were hoping for the fall of the Berlin wall and the demise of the USSR—developments that were only possible given peoples' desire for their own national states. For Poland see Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy*, 142–143; for Lithuania, see Skomantas Pocius, "In Defense of Ethnic Nationalism," *American Conservative*, March 29, 2018, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/in-defense-of-ethnic-nationalism/.

32. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 129–130, see also 140–141.

33. Ibid., 148. Williams contends even more strongly, for reasons we do not need to get into here, that "*reflection can destroy* [ethical] *knowledge*" (ibid.). See further A. W. Moore, "Williams on Ethics, Knowledge, and Reflection," *Philosophy* 78, no. 305 (July 2003): 337–354.

one shares with others, and so negatively impact mutual loyalty. And by weakening mutual loyalty, it erodes an important basis of political health.[34]

In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Williams raises the prospect of practical, ethical "convergence, on a shared way of life," a way of life "we could live stably and reflectively in."[35] If shared narratives and values can be preserved, perhaps even strengthened, under conditions of widespread truthfulness and "the need for reflection and its pervasive presence," then there is much less reason to fear for mutual loyalty. According to Williams, such reflective but stable ethical life hinges on having sufficient "confidence"—a notion we saw in chapter 2—in answers to ethical questions, with confidence being "basically a social phenomenon" requiring certain "kinds of institutions, upbringing, and public discourse."[36] But Williams' account leaves it very much open whether such convergence is realistically attainable, especially in this day and age—a fact that may help explain his recourse to hope rather than assertion of belief. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine how individuals disposed to Accuracy could confidently hold ethical notions and narratives unless they examined them and were sufficiently convinced that they did not involve falsehoods. And this brings us back, once again, to the old quarrel about the politically possible and the prospect of a regime of truth. For the time being, and until we discover the outcome of that quarrel, we must be mindful of the potential effects of Accuracy and reflection on mutual loyalty, the strongest political motive, and so on political health.[37]

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34. In "Naturalism and Genealogy" Williams writes about the impact of "a truthful historical account" on ethical ideas. Such history, he contends, "is going to reveal radical contingency in our current ethical conceptions." Bernard Williams, "Naturalism and Genealogy" in *Morality, Reflection, and Ideology*, ed. Edward Harcourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155. It stands to reason that such revelation will not have a positive effect on their vitality.
35. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 171–172.
36. Ibid., 170. For confidence see pages 79–80 above.
37. See further Meier, *On the Happiness*, 324–326.

Of course, we should not ignore the other, more positive, ways in which truthfulness can impact the ability to solve the basic challenges of politics. On the one hand, Sincerity may support mutual loyalty, and so the impact of the virtues of truth on the attitude is unlikely to be altogether negative. By increasing open communication between people Sincerity seems well placed to encourage greater acquaintance between individuals, and as Aristotle writes in his *Politics*, "acquaintance begets mutual confidence."[38] On the other hand, truthfulness may help solve political problems quite apart from its impact on mutual loyalty. For instance, the respect for truth goes hand in hand with the scientific attitude and scientific pursuits, which help with the struggle for survival (a F-22 beats a howitzer beats a musket beats a bow and arrows) as well as the creation of social order (science contributes to prosperity and prosperity helps remove at least some sources of strife). Still, the difficulty described above remains. And until a way around it is found, or it can be explained away or shown to be considerably less worrying, there is reason to query the relation between truthfulness and political health in the long run, and so reflect further on the hope that truthfulness will spread.

A challenge to Williams' hope exists even if we withdraw from the political and concentrate on the individual alone. Even as Williams hopes that people will be able "to see the truth and not be broken by it,"[39] we must appreciate just how psychologically challenging and disruptive the process of scrutinizing one's beliefs and getting to the truth generally is. Some of our beliefs are deeply cherished by us—this is particularly so with what I called, in chapter 3, strongly cathected beliefs, especially regarding good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust.[40] Examining these and considering the possibility that they are false can be deeply painful.

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38. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1313b5-6.
39. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 269.
40. See chapter 3, page 92–93 above.

Moreover, the examination can affect our conviction in them and in our ethical orientation more broadly. Conviction at the level of the individual, just like ethical convergence in society, arises on Williams' view out of confidence,[41] and reflection unsettles that confidence. To be truthful and to live Accurately, we must evaluate and so reflect on the truth of our values, self-understandings, and other cherished beliefs, and this can shake our faith in them. Of course, we may regain our confidence, move it onto something else, or live without ethical conviction altogether, but such loss—temporary or permanent—is likely to be discomposing. This raises the question to what extent humans can bear such disruption. An answer to it requires a deeper delve into psychology and a more thorough examination of human nature. But the pain from challenging cherished ideas and the prospect of losing confidence and conviction seem like considerable obstacles to developing and sustaining the virtue of Accuracy—one needs exceptional courage and ability to deal with and master discomfort.

A dramatic depiction illustrating some of these difficulties can be found in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and specifically in Zarathustra's encounter with his "shadow."[42] The shadow calls himself a "wanderer" who has "flown and followed for the longest time" after Zarathustra. He has shattered whatever his "heart had revered," overthrowing "all boundary-stones and images," and unlearned his "belief in words and values and great names." He has thereby

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41. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits*, 169–171. See page 169, and chapter 2, pages 79–80 above.
42. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 4.9 "The Shadow." This example is instructive, even if the shadow is not the paragon of Accuracy. For instance, his self-description as Zarathustra's "shadow" suggests the motivation to follow Zarathustra, whether or not that leads him to the truth. Moreover, his motto, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted," is not one we would associate with truthfulness. Nevertheless, we should not make the error of thinking that the shadow does not care about truth. For one, he reveals that "too often… did I follow hard on the heels of the truth: then it kicked me in the face." And he avows that through his travels he has entered, with Zarathustra, into "everything forbidden, the worst, and farthest," and has "feared no prohibition"—a confession that reminds us of Nietzsche's later proclamation in *Ecce Homo*, "*Nitimur in vetitum* [We strive for the forbidden]: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what one has forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been—truth alone" (Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, preface, sec. 3). Indeed, the shadow's motto itself should probably be understood less as a definitive statement that there is no truth, and more as a mantra to help him reject his former beliefs.

distanced himself from and rejected things he holds dear. And this has engendered a certain kind of despair. After describing his travails, the shadow goes on to mournfully lament, "Ah, where has all my goodness gone, and all shame and all faith in those who are good! Ah, where is that mendacious innocence that I once possessed, the innocence of the good and their noble lies!" The loss of his former faith in the good is clearly painful. It is also disorienting and detrimental to his confidence: "Too much has become clear to me: now nothing matters to me anymore. Nothing lives any longer that I love—so how should I still love myself? 'To live as it pleases me, or not to live at all': thus I will it… But woe! how can anything still—please *me*?" The shadow's wandering has thus left him with "a heart weary and bold; an unsteady will; fluttering wings; a broken backbone." He has hollowed out so much that at first Zarathustra is frightened by him: "so thin, swarthy, hollow and, time-worn" did he look. The shadow is left exclaiming, "Oh eternal everywhere, oh eternal nowhere, oh eternal—in vain!"[43]

Zarathustra offers the shadow his cave as a haven, but he first indicates the danger the shadow faces—a danger that the pursuit of truth involves. "To such restless creatures as you," Zarathustra tells him and us, "even a prison will at last seem bliss.… Beware that some narrow belief, a harsh, severe illusion, does not catch you in the end! For you are now seduced and tempted by anything that is narrow and firm."[44] That is, the pain and loss of confidence that result from the rejection of one's beliefs and values may be so strong that one is driven to seek solace in some comforting prejudice—or, indeed, to return to that which one rejected. As Williams himself notes,

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43. These words show the severity of his state, since within the drama of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* they represent a sickness that arises from the realization that the world lacks the meaning and value one previously ascribed to it. Zarathustra himself suffers from it but is able to begin convalescing after confronting his disgust at the prospect of the eternal return and the notion that nothing is worthwhile. See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 3.13 "The Convalescent."

44. Ibid, 4.9 "The Shadow."

when reflection leads us to conclude that "a given value is not stable," it does not always follow "that we give up on it, or lose confidence in it. We may merely stop reflecting on it… give up on transparency.… keep what we actually have, even if it does fail under reflection."[45] The person striving for Accuracy does not necessarily have to abandon his cherished beliefs since they may be true. But they may be false, and in reflecting on and evaluating his beliefs and values for their truth, he must take some distance from and be ready to say no to them. And in doing so, he exposes himself to a similar despair and danger as the shadow.

These, then, are some of the obstacles to the realization of the hope that the virtues of truth become widespread and that we can live in a particularly truthful society. On the one hand, truthful life is only sustainable under certain, perhaps quite rare, conditions. Questions remain about the reflective stability of Williams' account, and even if it can be stabilized, history suggests that the pressures on sincere speech are considerable and the consequences for truthfulness potentially crippling. On the other hand, even if distinct individuals can live truthfully, difficulties stand in the way of the widespread proliferation of the virtues of truth. Their cultivation is likely to disrupt the confidence and conviction that is important for common political action, and such disruption can be exceedingly difficult to bear psychologically. This is not to say that Williams' hoped-for state of affairs is impossible, but those thoughtfully hopeful must grapple with the problems we have raised. How realistic, in the end, Williams' expressed hope is—whether it is considered hope or immoderate optimism—depends on a more precise analysis of these challenges, and society's and individuals' ability to deal with them.

Where exactly, then, does this leave us with regards to the hope Williams and others call us to? Clearly, further reflection and investigation is needed—concerning both the value of

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45. Williams, "Naturalism and Genealogy," 160.

truthfulness and the likelihood of its spreading and flourishing. Work remains. I certainly do not mean to suggest that hope about truthfulness is wholly unreasonable or that it has no time and place. I am not preaching hopelessness—men "have always to hope and… not to give up in whatever fortune and in whatever travail they may find themselves."[46] But it is imprudent to be buoyant when sailing into a storm unless one has seen into and through its eye, and those who aim to understand should not close their eyes in hope. It seems that for now, at least, we should remain somewhat careful and conservative—moderate—with our hopes regarding truthfulness.

My study has addressed the concern that we lack concern for truth, and it has done so by examining truthfulness and its component virtues. It has hopefully helped avoid errors and form some true beliefs. The task of getting to the truth about truthfulness, however, continues.

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46. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2:29.

APPENDIX: RESPECT FOR TRUTH AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

Liberal education—and liberal arts education[1]—is almost as old as Western civilization, has been hugely important over the course of its history, and remains influential even today despite facing pressures. It was once viewed as the education of the free man, the gentleman, who has sufficient wealth and leisure to separate him from not just slaves but also those living like slaves,[2] though today it is more commonly considered the prerogative of free citizens and vital for a liberal, or liberal-democratic, society.[3] Despite disagreement over its nature and aims, practically all agree that liberal education is distinct from professional, technical, or vocational education. It is

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1. There may be a subtle distinction between the terms "liberal education" and "liberal arts education." The latter is commonly employed in discussions of college curricula; the former seems well suited to emphasize the virtues, sensibilities, and character that the education instills. But there is no hard and fast rule, and it is not easy to discern a clear pattern in their use.
2. Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Mass Democracy," in *Higher Education and Modern Democracy: The Crisis of the Few and the Many*, ed. Robert A. Goldwin (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), 76–77, and "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 10–11. In more recent times, Michael Oakeshott has maintained that liberal education is "'liberal' because it is liberated from the distracting business of satisfying contingent wants," a conception that betrays a link to gentlemanliness and leisure though now without insistence on specific social relations. Oakeshott, "A Place of Learning," in *The Voice of Liberal Learning* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 15.
    The term "liberal education" is often traced back to the Ancient Greek word *eleutherios*, which was used to contrast free men from slaves (two other possible derivations are from *skhole* and *enkuklios paideia*). Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers: History of the Idea of Liberal Education*, expanded ed. (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1995), 15. Robert Pippin notes that the Latin root term *liber* is also the noun for "book." He traces the first use of "liberal" in English to 1375, when it was employed "as an adjective in 'the liberal arts' and designated '*the objects of study worthy of a free person*.'" Pippin, "Liberation and the Liberal Arts," *The Aims of Education: Selected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 165.
3. E.g. Martha Nussbaum, "Liberal Education and Global Community," *Liberal Education* 90, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 42–47. The changes in the English meaning of "liberal" are instructive in this regard. In the 16th century, "liberal" is still "applied to the activities of gentlemen who were free by virtue of having leisure," a traditional notion, while the sense of "free from restraint" is mainly used pejoratively to mean "licentious." In the 18th century the latter sense comes to be understood more positively, and "liberal" takes on contemporary connotations of "free from… prejudice, open-minded." Kimball, 115; Kimball relies on Sheldon Rothblatt, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education: An Essay in History and Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), chap. 3.

generally accepted that liberal learning offers students more than a specific set of skills, and something higher than other forms of education.

In *Orators and Philosophers*, Bruce Kimball argues that the history of liberal education consists in a centuries-long debate and battle between the "oratorical" and the "philosophical" tradition: between those who explain liberal learning in terms of the "appropriation of a high tradition" and the cultivation of civic virtue, and those who are motivated by the ideal of uncompromising pursuit of truth and see inquiry for knowledge as the aim of liberal education.[4] The origins of a recognizably liberal education, Kimball explains, lie in Latin antiquity and orators like Cicero. Its subsequent history takes one through the work of authors such as Cassiodorus and Isidore and the normative *artes liberales* curriculum of the Middle Ages that accommodates Christianity, to scholasticism that relies on newly discovered texts of Ancient Greek philosophy and challenges this earlier oratorical tradition. In the Modern era, the oratorical tradition sees a resurgence through Renaissance humanism, and is then confronted by the philosophically minded Enlightenment which, looking back at the Socratic and Pythagorean philosophical traditions, brings about a new "liberal-free ideal" to bear on liberal education.[5] Though the debate thus

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4. For the oratorical tradition see Kimball, 37–38, 53–56, 87–89, 111–113, 126 *inter alia*; for the philosophical see ibid., 73, 116, 119–122 *inter alia*.
5. As Joseph L Featherstone outlines in his foreword to the 1st edition of *Orators and Philosophers*, by Bruce A. Kimball, xvii–xviii, the oratorical tradition can be traced from Isocrates and Cicero to Isidore, the *artes liberales* of the Middle Ages and Renaissance humanism, Matthew Arnold, and some (especially humanities) teachers and religious colleges today. The line of the philosophers' tradition can be drawn from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to Boethius, the schoolmen of medieval Paris, the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, T. H. Huxley, modern science, and today's research universities.
    Leo Strauss' stylized contrast between "liberal education in the original sense" and liberal education "in the light of philosophy" offers a somewhat similar story. The former is education of "the gentleman" that "not only fosters civic responsibility: it is even required for the exercise of civic responsibility." On the other hand, "in the light of philosophy, liberal education takes on a new meaning… comes to sight as a preparation for philosophy." And "philosophy transcends gentlemanship" for the reason that "the gentleman as gentleman accepts on trust certain most weighty things which for the philosopher are the themes of investigation and of questioning." Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 13, also 10–14.

undergoes different iterations over time, the underlying disagreements remain and, on Kimball's view, are expressed in today's controversies about liberal education.[6] Those of us who spent the better part of the 2010s on university campuses will recognize the increasingly impatient disputes over whether the guiding light of liberal education should be truth or something else, such as social justice.

If Kimball is right, then, at least on one view of liberal education, the cultivation of something like respect for the truth is a key goal. If one assumes the "philosophical" perspective, if liberal education aims to get students to pursue and become capable of pursuing the truth, then it must also inculcate respect for it. But to what extent is this reflected in contemporary conceptions of liberal education?[7]

There exists a wide variety of different perspectives on liberal education, its aims, and value. While I do not claim to offer a comprehensive survey of the landscape of views, certain general trends are worth highlighting. Some think that liberal education should aim at a broad development of students' qualities. For instance, according to William A. Neilson the goal is "the development of the whole personality,"[8] while James Freedman calls liberal education "the surest instrument yet devised for developing… civilizing qualities of mind and character," an education that prepares students for "the responsibilities of citizenship and leadership."[9] The supposed connection between liberal education and the exigencies of good citizenship, not to say the right

6. See Kimball, chap. 7, "A Typology of Contemporary Discussion."
7. I intend "contemporary" here quite liberally to refer to the last hundred years or so, though at least in one case further back than that. Such a time frame seems entirely appropriate given the long history of liberal education.
8. William A. Neilson, "For 'Personality Development,'" *New York Times Magazine*, March 7, 1937, available at http://www.ditext.com/hutchins/times37.html.
9. James O. Freedman, *Idealism and Liberal Education* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 1, 3. In another text Freedman writes that liberal education prepares students "to grow morally and intellectually." Freedman, *Liberal Education and the Public Interest* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003), 70.

kind of politics, is indeed important for many advocates of liberal democracy. Most famously, Martha Nussbaum argues for liberal education on the grounds that it promotes abilities "crucial to the health of any democracy internally and to the creation of a decent world culture," namely, "the ability to think critically; the ability to transcend local loyalties… as a 'citizen of the world'; and, finally, the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicament of another person."[10] On the other hand, others, often more conservatively minded, have emphasized the role of liberal education in teaching, transmitting, and maintaining "culture." Thus, Russel Kirk defends the idea that "a liberal education is intended to free us from captivity to time and place: to enable us to take long views, to understand what it is to be fully human—and to be able to pass on to generations yet unborn our common patrimony of culture."[11] Michael Oakeshott writes that "a culture is… a variety of distinct languages of understanding" and "liberal learning… is learning to recognize and discriminate between these languages."[12] And for T. S. Eliot, it is an aim of education in general to maintain cultural continuity.[13]

For our purposes, however, the relevant views are those that see the promotion of students' rational and intellectual development as the aim of liberal education. These views are often

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10. Martha Nussbaum, "Tagore, Dewey, and the Imminent Demise of Liberal Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55. Nussbaum cites John Dewey and Rabindranath Tagore as inspiration.

11. Russell Kirk, "The Conservative Purpose of a Liberal Education," in *The Essential Russel Kirk: Selected Essays*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007), 399. Kirk attributes the idea in question to James Russell Lowell and T. S. Eliot. Moreover, according to Kirk, "liberal education is conservative in this way: it defends order against disorder. In its practical effects, liberal education works for order in the soul, and order in the republic. Liberal learning enables those who benefit from its discipline to achieve some degree of harmony within themselves." This is achieved, he continues, through "the cultivation of the person's own intellect and imagination, for the person's own sake.… True education is meant to develop the individual human being, the person, rather than to serve the state." Ibid., 400.

12. Oakeshott, "A Place of Learning," 28–29. Oakeshott denies that undergraduate education is "the acquisition of a kind of moral and intellectual outfit to see… [one] through life." Oakeshott, "The Idea of a University," in *The Voice of Liberal Learning* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 113.

13. T. S. Eliot, "The Aims of Education," in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 119.

influenced, directly or indirectly, by Cardinal Newman and his *Idea of University*.[14] We can divide them further into two categories. The first tend to understand the intellectual development in terms of a growing ability to obtain the truth; the second view it more in terms of the acquisition of critical thinking skills, whose connection to truth is not immediately and always evident.

According to some, then, there is a direct relation between liberal education and truth—not because it provides truth and knowledge, but because it aims to cultivate the virtues, aptitudes, and attitudes that enable one to attain the truth. Newman wrote that "liberal Education… is simply the cultivation of intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence"; "the end of a Liberal Education is not mere knowledge, or knowledge considered in its matter," but it prepares for the knowledge and helps develop "intellectual eyes to know withal, as bodily eyes for sight."[15] In a similar vein, Robert Maynard Hutchins understood good college education as "the cultivation of the intellect" and famously argued that "the common aim of all parts of a university… should be the pursuit of truth for its own sake."[16] On Mortimer J. Adler's view, the liberally educated person is "the one who manifests... the goods which belong to the intellect… the truth and various ways of getting at the truth," and "the direct product of liberal education is a good mind, well-disciplined in its processes of inquiring and judging, knowing and understanding,

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14. See D. G. Mulcahy, "Newman's Theory of a Liberal Education: A Reassessment and its Implications," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42, no. 2 (2008): 219–20. Mulcahy writes "that the conceptions of liberal education and the justifications presented in both of these documents [the *Yale Report of 1828* and the *Idea of a University*] still dominate in the debate on the subject and in practice especially in the United States. The idea of a liberal education articulated by Newman in the *Idea of a University* in particular has been widely drawn upon as both an ideal and a justification for programs of general, liberal, or liberal arts education" (ibid, 219).

15. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 90, 95, 104. Mulcahy argues, nevertheless, that there is some ambiguity in Newman's views on moral formation in higher education, and that in his later works Newman views positively the role Oxford colleges have in tending to students' spiritual needs and development (Mulcahy, "Newman's Theory," 223–224, 230).

16. Robert Maynard Hutchins, "For 'Intellectual Discipline,'" *New York Times Magazine*, March 7, 1937, available at http://www.ditext.com/hutchins/times37.html; Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 95.

and well-furnished with knowledge, well-cultivated by ideas."[17] More recently, John Mearsheimer

has contended that transmission of truth and the provision of moral guidance are "non-aims" of

liberal education, and that the expectation is for students "to figure out the truth, if there is one."[18]

Lastly, we might also place Leo Strauss' view in this category. "Liberal education," Strauss writes,

"is education in culture or toward culture… 'Culture' means derivatively and today chiefly the

cultivation of the mind, the taking care and improving of the native faculties of the mind in

accordance with the nature of the mind." At least in the best case, this implies philosophy, and

"understood strictly," philosophy means "quest for the truth about the most weighty matters or for

the comprehensive truth or for the truth about the whole or for the science of the whole."[19]

Accounts such as these sometimes also emphasize the importance of developing a manner

of intellectual orientation in life, an ethos of truth. Newman himself writes that "Liberal Education

consists in the *culture* of the intellect," and speaks of the cultivation of "*talents* for speculation and

original inquiry… [and] the... *habit* of pushing things up to their first principles."[20] Somewhat

differently, but in a way that makes the point even clearer, Jonathan Lear says that college

education helps students develop into persons "good at examining and learning from the world,

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17. Mortimer J. Adler, "Liberal Education: Theory and Practice," *University of Chicago Magazine* 37, no. 6 (March 1945): 10–11. Adler's formulation includes the *possession* of knowledge and ideas, thus suggesting the importance of transmission of knowledge, but he advocates moving away from true-false exams towards "the direction of the mind by questions and the methods of answering them, not the stuffing of it with answers" (ibid, 11).
18. John J. Mearsheimer, "The Aims of Education Address" (lecture, University of Chicago, September 23, 1997), https://college.uchicago.edu/student-life/aims-education-address-1997-john-j-mearsheimer.
19. Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, 3, 6; Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," 13. According to Strauss, "we cannot be philosophers, but we can love philosophy; we can try to philosophize" (Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?," 7). Moreover, for Strauss "liberal education is the counterpoison to mass culture… the ladder by which we try to ascend from mass democracy to democracy as originally meant… the necessary endeavor to found an aristocracy within democratic mass society… [that] reminds those members of a mass democracy who have ears to hear, of human greatness" (ibid., 5). His account indicates thus a civic and cultural value of liberal education, in addition to its promotion of the virtues of the mind.
20. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 115–116 (emphasis altered).

other people, and… [their] own experience," but that to be a student is really a "life-task" of being "committed to holding… [oneself] open to the lessons the world has to teach."[21] And Allan Bloom remarks that good liberal education "feeds the student's love of truth and passion to live a good life."[22]

By contrast, others highlight the importance of intellectual development without focusing directly on truth or its pursuit, and rather stress the value of critical thinking skills. Liberal education comes to be understood in the Kantian "critical" sense, implying the discovery of "the limits of reason" as well as the liberation from "'self-incurred immaturity.… inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another.'"[23] The prize is liberation from authority and prejudice, and freedom at the individual and collective levels. In this vein, John Searle writes that "one of the most liberating effects of 'liberal education' is in coming to see one's own culture as one possible form of life and sensibility among others," and he emphasizes the role of such education in "liberating from the stuffy conventions of traditional American politics and pieties."[24] Giving more content to this idea, Robert Pippin mentions the "truism" that liberal education is

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21. Jonathan Lear, "The Aims of Education Address," *The Aims of Education: Selected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 122, 124 (emphasis removed). In fact, this ethos pertains not just to students but also to professors who teach in liberal arts programs: by having to confront "the open, questioning minds" of undergraduates, professors are involved in a "form of truthfulness" (ibid., 118).
22. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 345. Bloom writes that "liberal education puts everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything" (ibid., 370).
23. Bernard Harcourt, "Question the Authority of Truth (the Aims of Education Address)" (lecture, University of Chicago, September 22, 2011), https://college.uchicago.edu/student-life/aims-education-address-2011-bernard-harcourt. In his discussion, Harcourt cites Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 54.
24. John Searle, "The Storm Over the University," *New York Review of Books*, December 6, 1990, available at http://www.ditext.com/searle/searle1.html. Noteworthy in this regard is the answer Woodrow Wilson, at the time the president of Princeton, purportedly gave when asked what the aim of liberal education should be: "To make a person as unlike one's father as possible." Freedman interprets Wilson to mean that such education "ought to make a person independent of mind, skeptical of authority and received views, prepared to forge an identity for himself or herself, and capable of becoming an individual not bent upon copying other persons." (Freedman, *Liberalism and Public Interest*, 56.

meant to enable the student "to become a freer person and this by showing... how to 'think for yourself,' to be able to reflect critically on what… heretofore [was] just taken for granted."[25] For Pippin, this is largely a matter of "increasing *the quality of reasons,*" since "better reasons make for freer lives."[26] And Nussbaum suggests that classrooms teaching "the virtues of critical analysis and respectful debate" help overcome the tendency to "hasty and sloppy thinking" and form citizens "who can think for themselves rather than simply deferring to authority, who can reason together about their choices."[27] In short, liberal education is meant to develop "the capacity for Socratic self-criticism and critical thought about one's own traditions."[28]

In either case, whether intellectual development is understood in terms of truth-pursuit or critical thinking skills, respect for the truth is important. Developing the aptitudes and ethos of truth requires learning to recognize the true from the false and to shape beliefs accordingly, as well as commitment to examining things and picking up what the world has to teach. A certain kind of attitude to truth is thereby established, one we can call respect. But such respect has a role even when the focus is less on truth and more on liberation: without respect for truth critical reflection can easily be distorted and lose its power to free. For a start, if one misunderstands the object of reflection, fails to see it for what it is, then one's reflection is hardly giving one stronger or better reasons with respect to it. If one adopts a political position after some reflection, but does so based on a misunderstanding of the position and its implications, that is hardly an example of critical

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25. Pippin, "Liberation," 165.
26. Ibid., 180, 183. This is clearly related to the idea of autonomy, for which critical reflection is generally thought to be key. For this view of autonomy see e.g. Gerald Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. 20; Marilyn A. Friedman, "Autonomy and the Split-Level Self," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 19–35; S. I. Benn, "Freedom, Autonomy and the Concept of a Person," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76 (1975–1976): 126–129; Joel Feinberg, *Harm to Self*, vol. 3 of *The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 32–34.
27. Nussbaum, "Liberal Education," 44. Such education "'liberates' students' minds from their bondage to mere habit and tradition" (ibid, 45).
28. Nussbaum, "Tagore, Dewey," 55. Nussbaum thinks this will lead towards a society that can overcome barriers of race and class, to name just a few (ibid., 56).

reflection gone well—the kind liberal education may be thought to aim at. Moreover, it is also important to understand the influences and motivations behind one's reflection itself. If one judges a view backward or unenlightened, but the judgment is influenced by antipathy towards traditions that one associates with one's parents against whom one is psychologically rebelling, then this is not the critical reflection intended by its promoters. Indeed, reflection in itself is not necessarily liberating, since it may be merely the distorted expression of some unreflected motive: Jonathan Lear has written about cases where the reflective stance is employed for "hiding and preserving one's irrational emotional life."[29] Truly critical reflection, it seems, must respect the truth about the object of reflection and about the reflection itself.

This brief discussion and summary reveals, then, that respect for truth can be deemed a key aim of liberal education. At the very least, it appears important when liberal education is understood as the cultivation of intellectual truth-seeking abilities and an ethos of truth, or as the education into undistorted and genuine critical reflection—though we cannot rule out the possibility that it is relevant under other conceptions of liberal education as well. If respect for the truth is an important aim of liberal education, then those advocating for such education should aim to understand what such respect involves. That leads to truthfulness and the virtues of truth we have discussed.

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29. Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 53–54. Lear's account of irony and experiences of irony is meant to show how this type of ersatz rational reflection can be disrupted and overcome.

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